

Chapter 1 - Introduction

June 3, 2000. Saturday. My friend Nicole slept over. She ran around, rode our horse, went swimming, and did all the things a normal fifth-grade girl would do, while I dragged myself around after her and, at one point, took a nap. She couldn't understand why I didn't want to play.

June 4, 2000. Sunday. Nicole went home, disappointed because we'd planned to stay up all night watching movies and I'd fallen asleep at 8:30 pm and hadn't gotten up until 11 am.

June 5, 2000. Monday. I pulled myself through school, trying to stay awake and cut down the number of times I got up to get a drink from the water fountain and go to the bathroom. After school, my mom picked me up and told me that we were going to see the doctor because I'd been so tired. Three hours and about a pint of blood later, I was in a hospital bedroom, crying and clutching my new stuffed animals.

If someone gave you this book, and you chose to read it, chances are you had a similar experience. Maybe you were only two years old when you were diagnosed and you don't remember it at all. Maybe you were seven and it's a faded memory. Maybe you were my age and it's still fresh enough to be slightly raw. Or maybe (and if so, you have my heartfelt

sympathy) you've just been diagnosed. No matter what your circumstances, it sucks.

But this book isn't about pity parties (which, by the way, can be extremely fun and are highly recommended every once in a while. See Chapter 7 on diabetes burnout). This book is about learning to make diabetes a normal part of your normal life, and maybe – possibly – turning diabetes into an advantage. Don't laugh. It's possible.

I am not a big believer in the whole “every-cloud-has-a-silver-lining” theory. I've seen plenty of bad things happen with zero benefit. Diabetes, though, does come with certain benefits, and that's why I wrote this book – to help you figure out how to use them.

WHO I AM

I'm seventeen. In June of 2000, I was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes. All I knew about diabetes at the time was what I'd learned from the Baby-Sitters Club book. One of the babysitters, Stacey, ends up in the hospital after eating some chocolate.

It took me a good amount of time of hating diabetes and rebelling against it to realize that I was being counterproductive. I could have been using that energy in a much better way. So I wrote this book to help you avoid my mistakes. Once you know how to deal with it, diabetes can get filed under “another irritating hurdle in your life.” Don't waste your time snapping at your endocrinologist and being

irresponsible just to irritate your parents – please, put it to better use. Make diabetes work for you.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Unless you've only just been diagnosed with diabetes and are still in the hospital, you really don't need to read straight through the entire book. I understand that you have homework to do, friends to see, a life to have...and there's no benefit gained by strapping yourself to a chair and reading this for however long it takes you to finish it.

The Diabetes Survival Guide is designed so that you can read what you need, when you want, and still get all the benefits. Each Chapter is self-contained; read Chapter 6 when school and diabetes collide or Chapter 7 when you start to burn out on diabetes. Keep this book around for when you're a couple years into diabetes and – like me – need an occasional reminder as to what you're supposed to be doing.

If you've just been diagnosed with diabetes, I recommend that you work your way straight through the first six Chapters. I put them in that order because that's how you usually will run into the assorted issues and problems, and I promise that it will make better sense that way.

Finally, remember that what I'm telling you isn't your doctor's advice. All I can do is share with you, from the point of view of another teenager, a sense of how I've handled nearly 6 years of diabetes and what I've learned from it.