



## “I am not alone in this”

The experience of one person reveals how the DiaBuddies program can change how you live with diabetes

## Be a Mentor

The list of people seeking a DiaBuddy mentor far outweighs the number of mentors in the program. We are actively seeking mentors to meet the overwhelming need.

## Don't Miss Part II

For a look at the impact of the DiaBuddies program on young adults and teens with diabetes, be sure to read Part II of this series in the next BDI newsletter, due out in May.

In this two-part series, we surveyed the impact of BDI's DiaBuddies adult program on the lives of real people.

### Part I : “I'm not alone in this”

Cathleen Mill's father died of complications from diabetes. Her brother was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes not too long after that. Despite her family history, Cathleen was taken aback by her own diagnosis as a Type 2 in late 2007. It came on the heels of emergency surgery for glaucoma. Coupled with the circumstances and the view, still too prevalent today, that diabetes can be a death sentence, Cathleen was left with feelings of fear, helplessness and foreboding.

Once she had been diagnosed, she immersed herself in diabetes education and became familiar with the disease. With a master's degree in education, Cathleen is no stranger to research and is a quick study, to be sure. Still, after the diabetes education course ended, she felt terribly unsure of the future. And alone. Despite her family history, Cathleen says she didn't really know anyone with the disease. As Cathleen recalls, her dietician showed her the BDI website, and they talked about the DiaBuddies program. It was the first step in a completely new direction for Cathleen. Within a few weeks, Cathleen had been matched with Joan Kapitzke, a DiaBuddy mentor and retired nurse who also has Type 2.

Before they ever met, Cathleen and Joan talked on the phone. “We talked for five months, actually” said Cathleen. Sometimes, the two would talk every day, and at other times, they would just connect when something was triggered in Cathleen, and she needed to talk it out. Over the months, the mentorship became a friendship, and the two began to share their diabetes stories – successes and failures, alike. Joan was there to support Cathleen in those first critical months after diagnosis. Their relationship picked up the slack where diabetes education left off. “It's not like it's somebody who doesn't know telling you what to do,” said Cathleen. “It's one thing to have a health care provider or a doctor tell you how to manage the disease. It's another to hear it from someone who has been there.”

The two did finally meet in person, and soon after, they agreed to take a class together. In the fall of 2008, Joan and Cathleen enrolled in BDI's six-week workshop “Feeling Good Again: Defeating the Diabetes/Depression Connection”. It was a good way for the two to get face time, and the class has opened even more doors for Cathleen. “I was so glad to have a DiaBuddy, so glad to have Joan – and now, through this class, I feel like I have twenty DiaBuddies. We all get each other.” Cathleen is learning to thrive with diabetes, not just survive, and she's doing it with all the support she can get. She's well aware now that diabetes is a lifelong challenge, but not necessarily one she has to face alone.

for more information, please visit  
[www.behavioraldiabetes.org/DiaBuddies-mentor-program.html](http://www.behavioraldiabetes.org/DiaBuddies-mentor-program.html)