



Giving thanks

Carla Williams RD

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Dear Dr Jonathon Werier,

It is hard to believe that 13 years ago to this date I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. I came to your office on a Monday morning with a long list of the beverages I had consumed the day and night before: water, juice, milk, and more water. The list covered a full sheet of paper. I was thirsty, tired, had lost weight, and was going to the washroom frequently. As my mom and I described my symptoms, you immediately tested my blood sugar with the glucometer in your office. My blood sugar read approximately 25 mmol/L. You knew I had diabetes—a condition about which I knew nothing.

From there, you arranged for my family to meet with the children's diabetes team (consisting of a nurse, dietitian, social worker, and doctor at the pediatric diabetes centre). I went there straight from your office. I remember driving in the car with my mom wondering how I should feel about all of this. One feeling my mom had was relief, along with the other feelings that a parent might have after her child is diagnosed with a chronic disease: guilt, fear, anger, and, most of all, a desire to take it away from her child.

On arrival at the pediatric diabetes centre, I was greeted by the team. My family and I felt welcomed and, within 3 days of intense diabetes education, we learned the survival skills to manage my diabetes, with ongoing support and encouragement from the team.

Thirteen years have passed since that day, and I always take a little time on January 16 to think about how I felt before diagnosis, at diagnosis, and how I feel now about my diabetes. Sometimes I celebrate that day, happy to live another healthy year with diabetes but without the dreaded complications of which I am often reminded. This year I thought I would take a moment to thank you, my family doctor, who knew the symptoms of type 1 diabetes, acted immediately, and directed me to the specialized care that my family and I needed to manage the disease I would have to live with for the rest of my life. Over the past 13 years you have always shown a genuine interest in my diabetes, from adolescence to the anxiety of university, during the pregnancy of my son, and throughout adulthood.

I have always respected your thoroughness as a doctor, but now, having worked as a dietitian at a pediatric diabetes centre and having seen children and adolescents being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes each week, I appreciate your thoroughness so much more. I have seen some children and adolescents at diagnosis who have made me grateful that I was diagnosed when I was, before becoming as sick as I could have become.

Looking back, I have come a long way with my diabetes over the years. I finally feel comfortable saying "I hate it!" I cannot remember living without it. And, most important, I would never give it up. I know it has made me the daughter, sister, mother, friend, and diabetes educator that I am today.

Thank you so very much, Dr Werier.

Yours sincerely,

Carla Williams

Ms Williams is a registered dietitian in Winnipeg, Man.