Living Your Best Life (With Diabetes!)

Common Questions and Answers:

**1. What makes group education a helpful tool for many people trying to make lifestyle changes?**

* In a group class, participants are able to learn and benefit from the wisdom and experiences of the other participants, in addition to the group facilitator.
* A group of participants attending the same class means people are likely dealing with similar issues. In this way, group education classes can double as a type of support group.
* When new behaviors form within a group, they become accepted as a group, and then “normalized”. It is often easier for a person to attempt a new behavior, when people around him or her are also trying and adopting similar behaviors. Instead of the person feeling “weird” because they are trying to eat differently or they are trying to do other new activities…. They feel “normal”, because the people around them are trying these same activities. Thus the NEW health behavior becomes the NEW “normal”, making LONG-TERM behavior change easier.

**2. What is the group education philosophy for the Living Your Best Life (With Diabetes!) curriculum?**

1. Each participant has a unique vision of what it means to be live well with diabetes.
2. Each participant is the expert in his or her own life, and will determine the goals and action plans that will work for them, in their life.
3. Each person either has or can develop the skills and resources to make successful behavior change to reach their personal goals.
4. The facilitator sets the general structure and creates a non-judgmental, supportive atmosphere.
5. **How does group education lessons fit with participants overall healthcare needs?**

Part of supporting participants to make healthy changes, is making sure other health professionals in your town know the work you are doing, your role, and how you are working to supplement what they are trying to do in a clinical setting. Set up times to meet with your town’s local dietitian and diabetes educator. Invite them to class so participants can get to know them.

1. **How do I stay within my role as a health facilitator?**

It is important to understand the scope of your role. In a health related class, people will often want your advice about personal health issues. It is important to NEVER provide personal health advice. Even when the answer seems simple, we never know a person’s circumstances. All medical and personal health questions should be answered with the answer, “That is a great question. Who is someone who can help you find the answer to that question?” Help participant come up with the health professional who will be able to look at their personal medical information and help them find an answer. If you don’t know who this person is, a safe bet is their provider or diabetes educator. One of the most important pieces we want people to gain from attending these sessions is that they learn to engage with their healthcare team.

A helpful tool to support your role as a facilitator is to know what resources are available within your community. Do you know where a person needs to go to get food stamps? What types of information will they need to provide to get food stamps? Where can a person go to learn more about housing assistance, mental health counseling, etc... ? When you know the resources available, you can refer people to the agency or person to best help them with their issue.