

## Raising 3 children with type 1 diabetes

Julie DeFrusco\*



I am a mom of 3 children with Type 1 Diabetes. My daughter was diagnosed at 2 ½ years old and 2 years later my 2 sons were diagnosed at 11 and 14 years old. I remember shortly after my 3<sup>rd</sup> child was diagnosed having someone come up to me and say your “Genes must suck”. How insensitive can people be! At that time I decided that our children may have Type 1 diabetes but they can do anything.

As parents of children with diabetes we struggle with our emotions on a daily basis, all while trying to make sure that our kids are safe. It’s very hard for people to see and understand what a family of children with diabetes go through. My daughter would have extreme highs and lows, she would be up half the night while we struggled to bring high blood sugars down. Is it any wonder that a day after that she would be moody? Not making excuses but our children live day to day combating the highs and lows.

I have found and have tried to teach our children that they need to find the positive in everything. Every family deals with something it could be a divorce another illness, etc. There is always something going on with other families and people that we do not know or understand. The best we can do is to show compassion and not to judge others and try to find the positive.

Throughout my children’s school years we have been fortunate to have a 504 plan in place that protected them. I often hear people say we don’t need a 504 plan because everything is great at our school. I love that some schools are treating and handling diabetes in the best interest of the child, however without a 504 plan in place if something happens and you do not have a

plan in place you really don’t have any recourse. You then have to start at stage one and often a child can miss an event by the time everything is settled. A perfect example where a 504 plan helped us was when my daughter was told because she was late for school due to a diabetes doctor visit she could not participate in a school event. Because we had a 504 plan in place we were quickly able to get that decision reversed and she was able to participate.

Our children are subject to growing up fast and as parents we want to take the hurt away. I have witnessed our children not being invited to sleepovers, being excluded from things because other parents did not want to be responsible for the diabetes, these things happen. I have however taken it upon myself to educate, educate and educate. As a mom I have found the following things to make a huge difference in raising children with diabetes:

Teach with a positive attitude, teach our children diabetes care, and teach our teachers and people that have contact with our children. Educating people is the first step in protecting our children.

Volunteer where possible. Volunteering at various events and trips that our children attend helps keep our kids safe and give you more opportunities to teach.

Be the solution to the problem, I have always found that when met with something that the school or my child is dealing with diabetes related, if we as a family can come up with a solution and work together with the school we always have a better outcome. Always have and offer suggestions on things that will help solve the situation.

Co-Owner Pump Wear Inc. Latham, New York

\*Author for correspondence: [pumpwear@gmail.com](mailto:pumpwear@gmail.com)

Watch for Bully's you may not think that your child is being bullied but there are many ways that this happens, some are as simple as not being invited to things when the whole class is, others could be making fun of medical equipment that our children have to use. I have found talking to my children when these things occur is very important and finding ways to make sure that bullying does not continue.

Be your child's advocate! We have to be the ones to ensure that our children have what they need to be safe, this could mean that you have to go above and beyond to advocate for them.

My children have grown and are now 26, 29 and 20! Amazing how quickly the time goes by. As

our children get older we face a whole different set of issues such as going away to school, living alone finding jobs with good medical insurance.

If we teach our children compassion and continue to educate them about their diabetes. I know that they will thrive in what ever they choose to do.

If you would like to view our "Diabetes Tidbits" please feel free to check them out here, these are bite size video's of everything from 504 plans, sleep over's and more, all things that have helped us along the way!

<https://www.pumpwearinc.com/page/diabetes-school-504--48.html>