



UPSIDE



of  
Living  
Positively  
with  
Diabetes

Kristi Morrish, PhD.



# The UpSide of Living Positively with Diabetes

By Kristi Morrish, PhD.

Copyright © 2002 Kristi Morrish. All rights reserved.

2nd Edition 2016

Cover and Book Design by Crissy Smith.



To my best friend and husband, Mike.



These are thought pathways you can take on the way to seeing your life with diabetes as a gift with a reason rather than a burden without purpose.

This collection of poetry and free prose is for you, living with diabetes, or for others whose lives are touched by diabetes. It is also for anyone who shares some of the same challenges, struggles, or needs to survive, grow and shift. Each page is a quick thought, a gift to yourself, to tuck away and go on with your day.





# The UpSide of Living Positively with Diabetes

Choosing Sides .....	1
Why Me? .....	2
Discovering Loss .....	3
Finding Self .....	4
Thought Monsters .....	5
Universal Frustration .....	6
Don't Blame it on Your Blood Sugar.....	7
What About High Glucose Readings? .....	8
There is Always Another Way.....	9
Your Barometer For Change .....	10
Freedom and Luxury.....	11
Deprivation or Not? .....	12
Creative Silence .....	13
Just Glucose .....	14

*continued*

The Reason.....	15
Here You Are .....	16
Zero Visibility.....	17
Healthy Forgetting .....	18
Who Am I Now?.....	19
You Are Now An Expert.....	20
Matching Thought Words.....	21
Unplugged.....	22
The Message .....	23
Taking Time .....	24
Mud Puddle Faces.....	25
Everyday New .....	26
It's Contagious!.....	27
Give Something Away .....	28
What If.....	29
Silence .....	30
Diamond Shadows.....	31
About the Author .....	Inside Back Cover

## Choosing Sides

You choose the side  
from which you wish  
to view your life...

the

UpSide

or

the

Down Side

## Why Me?

Your life is already full of major challenges  
How can you deal with diabetes too?

It's too hard, too confusing, too upsetting, too frustrating,  
too complicated, too demeaning, too...

...this is where you stop and choose.

You can choose to accept this challenge,  
or not.

You can choose to self-reconstruct,  
or to self-destruct.

You can choose to grow to a place of understanding,  
or remain stuck in a place of pity.

You can choose  
your attitude,  
your lifestyle,  
your perspective on diabetes,  
your evolvment.

or you can sit down and wait for  
another bus.

The one with the "cure."

## Discovering Loss

I remember when I first learned that my life now included diabetes.

Suddenly I was instructed to change my eating habits and lifestyle.

I was tossed into a world of insulin, glucose monitors, syringes, vials, dieticians and exchange lists.

As I grasped for bits and pieces of understanding and a touchstone of comfort in a radically changed lifestyle, I discovered something.

To suddenly shift from a person living without diabetes to a person living with it is to experience a major loss. And it's OK to go through a grieving process.

## Finding Self

(DENIAL) “There must be some mistake. I’m fine! I don’t really have diabetes. It will go away.”

(ANGER) “This is outrageous! I won’t change my lifestyle for anybody.”

(BLAME) “If only Mom had paid more attention to healthier eating habits, I wouldn’t have this crummy disease.”

(REALIZATION) “It is so hard to change. I can’t do it alone.”

(ACCEPTANCE) “Finding another person with diabetes pushed me past lonely and lifted me to laughter.”

## Thought Monsters

The monsters that used to live under your bed  
and come out some nights,  
Now live inside your head  
and come out some nights,

Lying alone in the darkness, tiny irritations become life  
threatening conditions in a matter of seconds.

You can let thoughts get exaggerated into monsters  
or

You can turn on the light and write a note to yourself:  
“Check under the bed in the morning.”

## Universal Frustration

There is frustration in “timing” your glucose level with your dinner partner’s appetite.

There is frustration in juggling your exercise, your eating and your medication.

There is frustration when your self-worth is wrapped around glucose test numbers.

There is frustration in not being as spontaneous with food as your friends can be.

There is frustration in living with diabetes.

AND, DON'T FORGET...

There is frustration in living without diabetes.

As you learn to accept your own frustrations, they become opportunities to live in harmony with differences.



## Don't Blame it on Your Blood Sugar

You stepped in a puddle  
and slipped on a curb.

Your umbrella was broken  
and the neighbor was rude.

You misplaced your keys  
and spilled lunch in your lap.

Now your blood sugar's high  
and you'd rather just nap.

You need to let go  
and know it's OK

To just go ahead  
and have a bad day!

## What About High Glucose Readings?

The ones we like to pretend don't happen.

The ones we would rather ignore.

The ones we try to hide from the world.

The ones we quickly lower.

The ones we feel most guilty about.

The ones we forget to mention.

The ones our doctors prefer we record.

The ones that need our attention.

It's not too late to be good to ourselves.

When glucose readings are high.

Look at them as reminders or signs.

Make adjustments and get back on-line.

## There is Always Another Way

Are you finding it difficult to let go of familiar but unhealthy habits?

Me Too.

Sometimes the alternatives just aren't as satisfying somehow.

So how do we create new habits?

Hold the thought  
that there's another way,  
and stay open to answers for  
more than just one day.

## Your Barometer For Change

Are you mostly happy?

Are you mostly not happy?

Which would you rather be?

What obstacles have you created to keep yourself from being what you would rather be?

What rewards are you getting by staying stuck behind obstacles?

Are your fears of change greater than the security of staying stuck?

Do you want to do anything about that?

If so, here is one small action step you can take: SMILE!

## Freedom and Luxury

The freedom and luxury of living with diabetes: no pressure from friends, family, co-workers, or hosts, to sample foods.

Diabetes is the ultimate excuse to say  
“No, thank you”  
to food-pushers without offending them.

## Deprivation or Not?

If you think of diabetes as deprivation...

STOP!

Diabetes is a new beginning. You get a chance to start over and improve your quality of life.

Just know...

If everyone pretended to be living with diabetes, we would all be healthier.

## Creative Silence

Deep within the swirling storm of confusion  
and the smothering wedge of pressure  
lies the very solace you are seeking.

Let go to the chaos.  
Let it pass through you.

Give up your struggle for answers  
and feel your own stillness.

You have the creative silence of this moment.

Trust that your answers will come  
when you release the questions  
and walk away.

## Just Glucose, Not You

The swab, the stick, the prick,  
the squeeze.

Then aiming the drop  
'til the monitor's pleased.

If the sample's rejected  
or reads higher than it seems,

Just remember...

It's measuring glucose,  
not self-esteem.



## The Reason

There's a lesson here somewhere  
There's a Reason for this challenge.

Now it's time to live,  
as though the Reason matters.

Discover all the goodness  
of your Self with diabetes.

## Here You Are

You are here today because scientists dared to persevere and discover insulin.

You now have the tools and knowledge to live in harmony with diabetes.

Do you have the desire?

What if you did?...

...now what?

## Zero Visibility

Not testing glucose levels is like driving with ZERO visibility.

Even after lots of years with diabetes I still cannot always tell by my body signals when my blood sugar is high or low.

Testing lets me know where I am in order to make better choices about where to go from here.

## Healthy Forgetting

Do you forget sometimes that you're someone living with diabetes?

The kind of forgetting that happens because your life is full and you have contentment.

Not the deliberate kind of forgetting because your life is empty and you have resentment.

## Who Am I Now?

I used to fit in this box on forms:

☒ Healthy Person

Now I fit in this box on forms:

☒ Diabetic

Who am I now really?

☒ Healthy Person Living With Diabetes!  
(and happy to be among a unique group)

## You Are Now An Expert

You are now an expert, an ambassador, an educator and a diplomat with answers for the curious people your life touches.

They all want to know what it's like to live with diabetes:

“What does blood sugar mean?

Do the injections hurt?

What foods can you eat?

What do I do for you in an emergency?

Do you always have to think about food?

Does diabetes last all your life?

Was it in your family?

Will I get it if I eat too much sugar?

What's a low blood sugar reaction?

What were your symptoms?

You have a perfect opportunity here as well as a delicate choice to make. Do you respond with a “poor me” attitude or with “I’m happy to help you understand how I live with diabetes.”

## Matching Thought Words

The words in your heart are in a dialogue balloon over your head, that only you can see.

The words you say don't always match your balloon.

Your new challenge is to pop the balloon and SAY the heart words.

## Unplugged

Communication gets plugged up  
by my view of you.

When I remove the filters of  
judgement, and see you as I  
would want you to see me,  
communication flows.



## The Message

The message  
gets lost  
when  
the messenger's  
attitude  
speaks louder  
than words.

## Taking Time

It's time to lift your head, look beyond yourself  
and the all-consuming daily routines.

You are living with diabetes, not for diabetes.

It's time to:

ponder spider webs

peek around corners

jump sidewalk cracks

count clover leaves

surprise friends

give out smiles

laugh 'til it hurts

listen to silence

sing out loud

make faces in the mirror

and remember the best things that happen today.

## Mud Puddle Faces

Find a mud puddle  
some sunny day.

Peer over the edge  
Smile at the face.

Reflections of you  
are all the same

In mirrors, in crystal,  
or mud puddle panes.

It's from inside out  
that you reflect change

Then mud puddle smiles  
feel new in some way.

## Everyday New

Yesterday may have been  
full of bad choices,  
resulting in upsets and downs.

Today is ready, forgiving and waiting  
for your new set of choices  
to turn things around.

## It's Contagious!

Smiling is the first symptom.

Giggling is the next.

And if you don't catch it in time,  
laughter is outrageously contagious.

It's a healing epidemic  
that you can help spread.

Laugh out loud today!

## Give Something Away

Give something away today  
without lingering for gratitude  
or pausing for a “thank you.”

Thank yourself, and move past  
your own desire for recognition.

Keep giving until the giving is  
gratitude enough.

Give something away today.

## What If...

When you begin a thought with  
“What if”...

Where does it tend to go first?

Toward the negative or the positive?

WHAT IF...

## Silence

surround sound  
to those who  
enjoy quiet listening

## Whispers

words  
walking  
in slippers

## Pause

a silent semicolon  
interlocking whispers.



## Diamond Shadows

When yet another facet of you catches a sun ray  
and illuminates another facet of me,  
Shadows disappear into brilliance.



## About the Author

Kristi Morrish, MEd, PhD, has been living with diabetes since 1970. She had a private counseling practice and consulted in the field of nutrition and fitness.

She has been a leadership trainer and coach in the public and private sectors for more than 25 years, helping leaders increase their focus on positivity. Kristi created *The UpSide of Living Positively With Diabetes* for anyone wanting “a little lift.”



In 2015-2016 Kristi published the UpSide Series through her employer, the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries. The series included four books: *The UpSide of Work*; *The UpSide of Down*; *The UpSide of Conflict*; *The UpSide of Change*.

