



## Health Awareness for BKs:

### Health Psychology and Taking Care of Diabetes

#### Global Co-operation House, Saturday 29 July 2017:

This year, the health awareness event at GCH consisted of a morning session focussed on ideas from the field of Health Psychology and *how we think about illness and health* as well as exploring wellbeing and other aspects of diabetes healthcare.

The Health Psychology component (presented by Dr Kala) considered ideas such as where we get our attitudes to illness and health from. We touched on how we obtain information on health today – but spent more time looking at how much control *we feel* we have when it comes to health. This was encapsulated in the idea of a personal ‘locus of control’... This is an idea from psychology which describes where we think *responsibility for or control in our life* comes from. We might have an internal or external locus of control or something on a continuum in-between. It can be part of a general attitude to life and a simple question to ask ourselves is: do I control my destiny or am I controlled by it?? – Think about the locus of control for your health and for your life goals: Is it different? The audience was asked to reflect on this and how this influences decisions they make.

Another way to look at it is: Am I *passive or active* in my approach to health? The audience were invited to check themselves by trying out a ‘test’ on-line on the *Mind Tools website* or to try the link below: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/tests/personality/locus-control-attributional-style-test>.

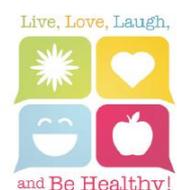
Other topics covered included examining our health beliefs a little more by asking questions of ourselves such as:

- Do I believe I have a condition?
- Do I believe that there is a treatment for this?
- Do I believe it is the right treatment for me?
- Do I believe that if I take it the condition will improve?
- Do I believe the treatment for this condition is worth it to me?

We also looked at personal psychological factors and how these might affect the outcome in our coping with illness. These factors can be complex, and are really about the attitudes we adopt when unwell:

- Hopeful.... Or optimistic outlook.
- Passive and giving up; not hopeful.

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◦In denial – resistive and angry perhaps .... But determined to not be defeated.

◦Accepting of treatment and diagnosis, and the prognosis and giving up when the time has come? (Thoughts of sadness perhaps?)

There are many thoughts about illness causation and health around today, from the modern, evidence-based and often very physical focussed causes to the *sub-clinical*, and the *subtle* or *energetic level*. There are many alternative and complementary therapies around to help facilitate care with some of these conditions.

We also looked at attitudes that can help us be proactive and some ideas from the murli that can help were shared, eg that we are looking after the body as an instrument, this is important, it is a Karmic account—and I am settling it and its OK. On a creative level, I can help others and accrue blessings or generate positive actions generally as an insurance for my future; or ensure I take care and health advice if necessary eg exercise or treatments and so be proactive in managing health.

We also looked at things in the context of chronic health and that many people become *more passive when illness is long-term or becomes longstanding*. This was an important reflection point and made a natural link to the session on diabetes. We ended by doing a workshop in which 90% of participants chose to discuss the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the following 3 questions.

~What actually influences me personally when I choose healthcare options? Consider personal factors, country, culture, past experiences.

~Given the choice, which health care system would you prefer for acute or chronic health and why?

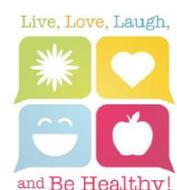
~ Is everything destiny? Or do I have a choice? And if I make a choice--can it make a difference?

#### **DIABETES CARE – A PROFESSIONAL AND PATIENT PERSPECTIVE**

The diabetes session started with a medical overview with an explanation of pre-diabetes, diabetes Type 2 and how Type 1 is different, AND how important it is for long-term health to control diabetes well, (avoid development of complications and ‘metabolic syndrome’). Some discussion of causes of diabetes were ‘floated’- the most recent being *inflammation of the pancreas* and Dr Isabella explained that it may be possible for us to control some of this inflammation by eating correctly. She outlined some foods that help fight inflammation in the body and also shared that there is new research in this field.

Two sisters shared their own stories –Shipra ben explained how taking anti-diabetic treatment and paying good attention to her diet and taking any opportunities she could to exercise - such as walking places rather than driving a car, using the stairs, regular exercise

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sessions etc - can help to control it well. She discussed some of the challenges and how in the past, it was appealing to neglect one's health needs due to demands on time and pressures of life. However paying more resolute attention now, she finds it has been possible to avoid the hazardous complications of diabetes (despite having lived with it for over 25 years). She talked confidently about the benefits of a balanced diet and well-adjusted life-style, with various activities and mentioned especially the role of taking responsibility and staying busy, so that there is little time for repetitive thoughts dwelling on illness and health.

Sister Davina shared how she was given a diagnosis and a blunt statement about 'life-long illness' and she decided she would not and could not accept that 'hanging over my head'. After an important meeting with her local doctor, she set herself the 'impossible' task of overcoming diabetes and much to other people's surprise, she has found that it was possible to 'beat it'! She acknowledged that certain factors may have worked in her favour, eg she has a more recent diagnosis and that she saw it as and was ready for a 'challenge', however a key factor in her success has been paying great attention to her diet and her attitudes, as well as exercise routines. Davina has in fact set up her own programme (on-line) to beat diabetes and many participants voiced interest in the details of her programme. The programme offers hope of being free from diabetes, but we note it is not a 'walk in the park' and in fact requires continuous attention to diet, workouts and '*self-unlimiting*' beliefs.

Nayan bhai, who is a specialist in foot care, joined the panel of diabetes presenters to answer questions from the audience about general healthcare and specific ideas for diabetes and chronic ill-health. He shared some of his wealth of experience and afterwards informed us about a very useful booklet *on diabetes and foot care* put together by The Society of Podiatrists; an e-version of this can be downloaded from the website <https://www.feetforlife.org>

It was concluded that we had a rich meal with both professional and patient perspectives and that there may be many pitfalls in managing our own illnesses. We need a strategy to manage chronic illness in particular and that includes taking a positive attitude as well as treatment and care. Being 'yogi' helps and so we finished with silence and some healthy snacks and toli.

Many thanks to MC Samantha and the BK Health professionals team of the day, who respectfully sailed us through the event, giving flexible time for each session, for breaks and closure, and to all brothers and sisters for their joyful participation.

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