Note from the Editor: Danae is our newest member of the PLAID team, taking on the role of Production Editor. This is her first exposure to working full-time around people with diabetes, so I asked her to share her thoughts on what she has experienced so far. Her words below share a valuable outside-looking-in perspective, and gives us, people living with diabetes, an opportunity to walk around in the shoes of someone who cares about us and wants to see us thrive.

The first interaction that I can remember with diabetes was in the 6th grade when I would visit my best friend’s house whose father had diabetes. I remember we were in her room when her cell phone rang and it was her father calling. He was at the opposite end of the house, and needed help. “I need to help my dad with something, it will only take a second,” she told me as I confusingly followed her to her parents’ bedroom.

At that time, I had only seen her father a few times; he was a doctor at a nearby hospital and was rarely home when my friend and I were together. As we entered the bedroom her father was laying on the bed, still wearing his tie and slacks from work that day, and he looked completely exhausted. Seemingly not disturbed by her father’s state of being, my friend quickly went to get something from the other side of his room and took a seat next to him on the bed.

As his eyes were covered with a wet cloth, and without missing a beat, she took his hand in hers and checked his blood sugar. Completely foreign to me at the time, she repeated a number to him, told him he was low and that he needed to eat something. The next few minutes she helped him get a snack, and moments later we were back in her room continuing whatever it is 11 year olds do for fun in their downtime.

Today, as an adult and a professional having taken on the role of Production Editor for The PLAID Journal, I am amazed at how large of an impact diabetes has on the population as a whole. Diabetes has grown more than I could have imagined, and it seems like it touches someone we know in some way no matter which direction you look. It’s present at a child’s birthday party, bustling with activity, and filled with treats that require some Olympic-level carb
counting to manage. It’s seen in emotions of a coworker or family member who feel defeated by their new diagnosis, and are overwhelmed by the new, healthy lifestyle changes that they must embrace to stay healthy. It’s even seen in a complete stranger standing in line at the grocery store, appearing nervous and slightly confused because their blood glucose is dropping too low thanks to a longer than normal line to pay for a snack.

What I find most interesting in my interactions with PLAUD readers is how often they are taken aback by our enthusiasm toward living well with diabetes. So many publications focus on the doom and gloom of diabetes, its complications, and its lifestyle limitations. Although those things are certainly a reality and important, I am energized by the more positive tone that we take toward diabetes here, and how it releases the people with diabetes that we talk to from judgment. They know, in just seconds of talking to us, that they are among friends who understand, and who “get it.”

I hope that by focusing on the positives, sharing advice and insights on how things can be better, and presenting ourselves as a partner to people living with diabetes we can help change the inner-voice of diabetes to one that is more fulfilling and encouraging, rather than laced with doubt. Instead of carrying the weight of concerns alongside a diagnosis, we urge our readers to use it as a spring board for motivation and persistence, to get yourself where you want to be and how you want to feel. We believe that remaining positive yields positive results and an overall healthier, less stressful life.

Now more than ever, whether diagnosed with diabetes or not, I believe we should be asking each other: How can I help? How can I better understand and be a support for you? Are you comfortable with sharing, and in what ways would you like me to share with you?

Diabetes is life changing, and continues to have life-altering consequences no matter how far away a person gets from diagnosis. Just as my friend knew it was her place to help her father carry the burden of his diabetes, we shouldn’t be hesitant to offer our strength to those we see around us who also need a helping hand, whether they have diabetes or not. People with diabetes are so much more than just the person with diabetes. They are family members, significant others, friends, coworkers, roommates, classmates, and anyone who shares in the life of or as a person with diabetes. To overcome any struggles and live a long, productive, and healthy life, we rely on each other, and as I’m learning in each day that goes by in our work on this publication, shining a light on those partnerships is what makes The PLAUD Journal unique to any other diabetes publication out there.

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