

GOING **FWD** FORWARD


FRIENDS WITH DIABETES

ח'שנת ה'תשס"ח Purim '08

VOLUME II ISSUE 2

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FOREWORD

ד"ר ט

Like a young sapling that provides a limited amount of beauty and shade, Friends With Diabetes started out 10 years ago, focusing on providing a close circle of “sweet friends” with support and information. Over the years, the sapling grew, expanding its shade and changing colors throughout the seasons as needed. FWD expanded its services and continues to reach out to more and more individuals and families.

Recently, some new fruits began to sprout on the FWD tree, enhancing our organization with newfound flavor and beauty. Our educational articles and seminars have brought a strong response from the non-diabetic community. People from all over the world are expressing interest in the health-topics that were previously exclusively discussed among people with diabetes, such as controlling carbohydrates intake and other lifestyle issues.

FWD turned into a global organization to which people from all over, with diabetes and without, turn to for updated health information that focuses on truth instead of simply reiterating the popular hype.

For over a year, FWD has been contributing regular articles (in the Yiddish Language) to the *Hamaspik Gazette*, a health-information newspaper that is distributed to 45,000 households all over the world. More recently, we’ve started to give bi-weekly health discourses on the popular *Kol Mevaser Information Line*, which has approximately 40,000 callers. These articles and lectures generate strong responses from the worldwide Jewish community, in the form of

questions, comments and yes – even lifestyle changes!

Slowly, yet persistently, FWD is helping people take the necessary measures to improve their health and prevent problems before they occur. Our philosophy is that proper nutrition and balanced dieting, which includes controlling carbohydrates, is for everyone, not just for people who have health concerns. Perhaps we can *הצבע* help stem the tide of the soaring numbers of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diagnoses, at least within the Jewish community.

With proper education, we can dispel the false notion that many people have, namely that sugar is a health hazard chiefly for people with diabetes. To illustrate how more awareness can help writers and editors spread the word; we will quote from an article by D. Shapiro that was recently published in the *Lakewood Voice*:

“Prior to writing this article, I was considering writing an article about the challenges facing a child with diabetes on Purim. But after speaking to several people with diabetes, I realized that, at least for type 1... if the diabetic knows how to control his disease, Purim does not pose any special problems.

“The challenge, however, is for those people who have developed type 2 diabetes, or, for that matter, for anyone who is trying to stick to some type of healthy diet... Rabbi Hirsch Meisels, head of Friends With Diabetes, pointed out that there is an overall rise in adult onset diabetes (type 2), which research has shown is caused by a combination of



inactive lifestyle and a poor diet. “Everyone must be concerned about this. Everything has become so easy; we’re totally inactive and tempted by hundreds of different types of nosh. ...The situation has become out of hand. Twenty million people have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and there are another forty million in serious danger of developing it. Thanks to our unhealthy life style, diabetes has reached epidemic proportions, and it’s not even contagious!

“Purim is a time to begin change, to make a quiet revolution and begin sending healthy foods. Instead of sending candy bars and sweetened beverages, send nuts, fruits, whole wheat health bars. There is no mitzvah to ruin our health and the health of our children.”

FWD is proud to be at the forefront of educating the community. We pledge to do our best to provide only well-researched and intelligent health information to the broader public. We hope you benefit from the fruits of our blooming and thriving tree.

May we all merit a happy, healthy Purim and a *simchas tamid!*

Sincerely,

Rabbi Hirsch Meisels

Ask Rabbi Meisels

AD'LO YADA HELPLINE



Q Hi, my name is Mrs. L. Now that Purim is around the corner, I'm concerned about all the nosh my nine-year-old daughter with diabetes will eat. What can I do to ensure that she has a safe Purim?

RABBIM Wait a minute – about how much extra nosh are we talking? A few candies or chocolates here and there?

MRS. L Well, you know what Purim is like... They get bags and bags full of sweets from their teachers, friends, and neighbors, not to mention all the pastries and cookies they manage to get their hands on...

RABBIM What seems to be the problem? All packaged foods will list their carbohydrate facts, so just make sure you cover the extra carbs with enough insulin.

MRS. L But isn't it potentially dangerous to keep on injecting additional doses of insulin every half hour or so?

RABBIM You are raising a valid concern. Stockpiling insulin doses one on top of the other could po-

tentially create overdosing, causing low blood sugars. However, newer pumps – when used correctly – have the ability to keep track of all the doses and avoid over insulinating.

MRS. L Putting low blood sugars aside, I'm still concerned about the large amount of insulin. Isn't it a problem to have too much insulin circulating in the blood stream?

RABBIM Think about it - doesn't the same thing happen when a person without diabetes eats starches and sugars all the time? They're just unaware that the pancreas is giving them insulin over and over again.

MRS. L Are you trying to say that too much nosh – and insulin – is unhealthy for everyone?

RABBIM Absolutely! Let's get this clear: of course it is unhealthy to keep on getting additional doses of insulin in order to cover such a great surplus of carbohydrates. But this is not only true for chil-

Purim Questions

dren with diabetes. The bodies of healthy children are also overwhelmed by such limitless amounts of sugar. Their natural insulin production also needs to respond to the unusual demand. The point is, sugar and carbohydrates without a sensible limit is bad for everyone.

MRS. L Come to think of it, my seven-year-old son is overweight and often hyperactive. I think I should be equally concerned about his sugar intake on Purim.

RABBIM Exactly. Although you should definitely pay close attention to what your daughter is eating, she should not be the only one to hear, “No, I don’t want you to have any more candy for now.” Just because the other children’s bodies seem to handle the extra sugar, doesn’t mean that it’s good for them. It would be wise to put everyone’s nosh out of sight after a certain amount has been eaten. At night, you can purge the contents of their bulging bags, leaving enough treats to last them through the coming week or two, when giving them one or two a day at the most. The obligation to take care of our bodies does not only apply to people with diabetes. All that junk is just as poisonous for everyone.

MRS. L I see. I think my daughter will more easily accept her restrictions on nosh if her brother’s sugar intake is equally controlled. Thank you, Rabbi Meisels.

RABBIM Hatzlocha and a freilichen Purim.

Q Hello Rabbi Meisels. Should I allow my teenage son with type 1 diabetes to get drunk on Purim?

RABBIM If he will honor your telling him no, then of course, go ahead and do so.... If he absolutely insists and you would have given him permission if not for the diabetes concern, then you can allow him to drink, with one crucial condition: He must be around with another person, who will not be drunk, and who knows how to care for someone with diabetes – i.e. checking blood sugars and administering insulin. If this condition cannot be met, then drinking is not a safe option.

The reason why this is so important, is that if n”i he goes extremely low, other people will confuse the symptoms of a low glucose level by thinking he is just acting a little shikur. Given the amount of exercise one does when going around collecting money or distributing Mishloach Manos, not to mention all the dancing, the chance of experiencing a low is very high, even though food is available galore.

MR. F Thank you, Rabbi Meisels. I’ll discuss this with my son, and pray and hope for the best. I wish my son would realize how concerned I am over his health.

RABBIM Just one more word of caution: Please be aware that drinking alcohol can cause low blood sugar levels even 24 hours after drinking, so be extra careful with him on Shushan Purim, too. A freilichen, safe Purim! ■

PURIM WITHOUT

Purim presents some special challenges for children with diabetes. They want to have a grand time, noshing and hoarding candies and sweets all day, just like everyone else.

Just because a child has diabetes doesn't mean that he or she can't enjoy Purim along with everyone. The following are some tips and points to consider:

» First and foremost, it is important to remember that Purim is not only about nosh. Think back to your own childhood – what do you remember most about Purim? Probably the dressing up, the singing and dancing, the *lebedikeit* in the streets, visiting family and friends, and even shooting snaps during *megillah leining*. Emphasize all of these things to your child. Involve him or her in choosing a costume and try to plan the day to include visiting teachers or favorite relatives. Your child will stay with wonderful memories of this special Yom Tov.

» Yes, you're right, Purim *does* involve lots of nosh – too much, in fact. There's no reason for your child not to have a moderate amount of Purim treats. Discuss this issue in advance with your doctor or di-

etician and make sure to plan for Purim sweets.

» Have a talk with your child before Purim, and come to an understanding about the effects too much sugar can have on him. It is best to agree beforehand what he will do with the extra candy, so that you don't end up "stealing" his candy after ownership has been established. You can suggest rationing the treats, saving some candies for low blood sugar situations, sharing some of it with siblings and friends, or putting it aside to be eaten over time.

» Be realistic. Having only perfect BG numbers for the entire day will not happen. The goal should be to prevent any extremes.

» If there's too much junk in the house, just dump it! There is no *issur of bal tashchis* on throwing out jelly beans, wiggly worms or sour sticks. Some children eat all of these inedibles even if they don't





PENALTY

like them, because nobody tells them to stop.

» If limiting nosh is going to be the order of the day, don't make any exceptions. Children without diabetes should also not overload on sweets. Set limits for everyone in the family, and it will become less of an issue for your child with diabetes.

» Create a happy Purim atmosphere in the home. Don't be a nervous wreck about how you'll handle the sugar. Instead, turn on the music, dance with the kids, and have a great time!

» An excellent idea that parents and children alike recommend, is to trade in the nosh for toys or other gifts. You can either pay your child in coins and dollars for his *mishloach manos* treats, or pre-determine a certain prize for the whole collection.

» When you prepare your own *mishloach manos* baskets, be mindful of your friends and neighbors. Most people would prefer not to receive junk food. When your kids go out to buy nosh for the gift-bags they give to their friends, help them

choose sugarless mints and candies or little prizes. Possibilities are endless. Instead of stuffing the bags with nosh, you can buy stickers, little *graggers*, simple toys, fun pens or pencils, necklaces, or any other inexpensive toys and whimsical items you can pick up at the dollar store. After all, you surely don't want to be passing out things you don't want for your own children...

» *A mother of a 6-year-old with diabetes shared with us how she handles Purim:*

It is definitely a very challenging day, but we make the best of it. I allow my daughter to pick 2-3 things from the mishalach manos that she can eat in the course of the day. Most importantly, I make sure that she eats breakfast and lunch during the day so that she doesn't go hungry. Purim is a very hectic day and meals are often forgotten, so I pay special attention to this.

And about the extra candies? Some of it we put away for Shabbos treats, others we pass on to friends or donate to organizations. I also allow her to trade in the candy for a present. As a matter of fact, the nosh rules are pretty much the same for her older sister that doesn't have diabetes.

A freilichen Purim!





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Sweeter THAN Sugar?

Adapted with permission
from a blog by

Drs. M.R. & M.D. Eades

Most people are aware of the health-hazards that come with sugar consumption. Still, sugar restriction is difficult in our generation, which has developed a strong sweet tooth. For those who want to, or must limit sugar, there is an extensive variety of sugar substitutes on the market.

There is much confusion as to the safety, pros and cons of these sugar substitutes. Often, consumers are faced with a full dictionary of names and terms, and making the right choice becomes very difficult.

As a general rule, and regardless of which sugar substitute you use, it is best to curb the sweet tooth. Most of us can no longer perceive the natural sweetness

in foods such as almonds or snap peas, for instance. By bombarding the sweet receptors of the tongue with high intensity sweetness, we overwhelm that natural perception ability. By cutting down on sweet additives, life loses nothing of its sweetness; on the contrary, you may discover a new dimension to the natural flavors in many of your favorite foods.

Sugar, technically called sucrose, has an entire spectrum of metabolic consequences apart from its sweetness: elevated blood sugar, which is itself harmful to the kidney's filtering apparatus, excess insulin in the blood to counter that elevated blood sugar, which has a Pandora's Box of associated problems. There are a hundred





reasons to avoid eating much sugar.

As to artificial sweeteners, they all have their drawbacks: bitter aftertaste, bloating and gas, excitotoxic potential for the brain and nervous system, allergic reactions, etc. According to many doctors, for most people, Splenda is the best choice if used in moderation, but there are definitely some people who cannot use it. Of the sugar alcohols, many notorious for unpleasant intestinal side effects, probably erythritol (sold as Z Sweet) and xylitol (sold under a variety of names and in bulk bags in many health food stores) have the fewest of these side effects, if used in moderation. The sweet herb, stevia, and even plain old saccharine don't have a lot of intestinal side effects, but do have

a bitter aftertaste if you use even slightly too much.

The best advice is to find the artificial (or natural in the case of stevia) non-sugar sweetener you tolerate best and not use much of it. Bit by bit taper the amount of sweetness you add to foods and let the natural sweetness shine through.

The following is a short reference glossary of alternative sweeteners:

Acesulfame K

An accident of chemistry was responsible for a discovery in 1967 by a Hoechst Company researcher in Germany, who noticed a sweet taste on his fingers, while reacting a couple of chemicals. (As you'll see from the entries that follow, this is how more than a few artificial sweeteners got discovered. There seems to be a pattern among chemists to stick their fingers in their mouths, a habit which seems to violate every basic tenet of safe laboratory behavior.) Acesulfame potassium, or AceK as it is often

called, is a synthetic, white, crystalline powder about 200 times sweeter than sucrose. Positives include having no demonstrated health risks so far (approved in the US in 1988) and good stability; it's not thought to decompose and is excreted unchanged from the GI tract. Drawbacks: really no serious ones, except that it is truly 'artificial' which, all by itself, is enough to turn some people off. It's sold commercially under the name NutraSweet. Most doctors believe there is no problem with its use in moderation, as all sweeteners should be used.

Aspartame (Equal)

Sold under the brand name NutraSweet, the com-



ponent was also an accidental discovery in 1965 by a chemist at Searle & Company. (Another finger sucker, apparently.) It is a synthetic, white, crystalline powder, made of two amino acids (L-aspartic acid and L-phenylalanine) with about 160-220 times the sweetness of sucrose. Positives include a clean taste without metallic bitterness. Drawbacks include its notorious instability

in non-acidic aqueous solutions or when heated, at which point it loses its sweetness and potentially becomes toxic. When the molecule disassociates (breaks apart) one potential decomposition compound is methanol or 'wood alcohol'—the stuff sometimes in moonshine that makes you go blind if you drink it. Just imagine what could be happening to those aspartame molecules inside all those cans of diet soda in the back of a delivery truck on a sweltering August day in Atlanta. There has been witnessed a startling array of clinical ills anecdotally attributable to its use, ranging from severe and reproducible stomach cramping to sleeplessness to hives to emotional disturbance to memory loss. There's some anecdotal evidence that these potential ills might even be of greater risk to people on a low carb dietary structure.

Cyclamate

Another accidental discovery, in 1937 by a graduate student at the University of Illinois. Cyclamate is a synthetic, white, crystalline powder about 30 times sweeter than sucrose. Drawbacks include: a bitter-tasting breakdown product and questionable health risk. Based on studies in the late 1960s that suggested the product might cause bladder cancer in rats, cyclamate was banned in the US in 1970 never to return. Subsequent studies in the 50 plus countries

that didn't ban the product—and where it is still sold—showed no carcinogenic potential, but its petition for reinstatement in the US still languishes 35 years later.

Erythritol

A naturally occurring sugar alcohol (found in small quantities in mushrooms, pears, melons, grapes and wine) that is produced commercially by fermentation of table sugar (or other sugars) in a process somewhat akin to making yogurt. It's only about 70% as sweet as sugar but has only a fraction (about 0.2) of a calorie per gram, basically low enough to qualify it as 'zero calories'. Erythritol is a small molecule, rapidly absorbed by the small intestine, meaning little of it gets to the colon to cause the typical intestinal misery common to other sugar alcohols. On the good side, research has shown that more than 90% of what's absorbed is excreted unchanged in the urine within 24 hours. (That does beg the question of what happens to the other 10%, but let's not split hairs.) Positives: Most people feel it has a clean taste. Some perceive a slight cold, faintly metallic taste that disappears to a large extent when it's added to a food or beverage.

Saccharine (Sweet'n'Low)

Discovered, again by accident, in 1878 at a Johns Hopkins University laboratory, saccharine is a

synthetic, white, crystalline powder 300-600 times sweeter than sucrose. Drawbacks include: bitter aftertaste and questionable health risk. The substance had been shown in a 1977 Canadian study



to cause bladder cancer in male rats fed an amount of saccharine equal on a human scale to that in 800 to 1000 cans of diet soda per day. Subsequent study on humans has failed to show a connection. According to Ms. Nelson's book, President Theodore Roosevelt, who championed the cause of keeping saccharine available to the American consumer, is said to have remarked: "Anyone who says saccharin is injurious to health is an idiot!"

Sorbitol, Mannitol, and Maltitol

All are sugar alcohols produced by the fermentation of corn, wheat, or potato starch into either a crystalline powder or syrup. Depending on how the starch is broken down (by which enzymatic reaction and for how long) the same starch can yield any of these sugar alcohols. Glucose converts to sorbitol, mannose to mannitol, and maltose to maltitol. None are as sweet as sug-



ar, though maltitol comes closest at 90%. Positives: they have fewer calories than sugar (about 1.5 to 2.5 per gram versus the 4 per gram in sugar). Drawbacks: All these sugar alcohols cause the notorious intestinal side effects common to the group – intestinal rumbling, gas, bloating, and often diarrhea – if consumed in more than small amounts, which limits their usefulness. Although some food purveyors will completely subtract all grams of any sugar alcohol they use in a product from the carbohydrate total, that’s probably not entirely correct, since some portion of the substance does get absorbed (although there’s no good data on how much of which one) and therefore has to at least count as calories in. Although not double-blind, placebo controlled research data, it’s long been advised to count sugar alcohols as contributing about a third of a gram of carb per gram of sugar alcohol (or 3 grams for every 10) which serves to curb intake somewhat in people watching their carbs.

Stevia

First extracted in the early 1900s from the leaves of a South American plant, *Stevia rebaudiana*, but used as an herb for centuries before that to sweeten bitter medicines. The leaves are about 30 times sweeter than sucrose and the purified extract (the stuff sold in little green packets in stores nowadays) is about 200 times sweeter. Positives include its natural origins and purported safety demonstrated by its lengthy use in folk medicine. Drawbacks include its bitter afterbite, which make it difficult to cook with, since just enough to make a dish properly sweet is a molecule away from the too much that makes it bitter. A good Stevia cookbook is a worthwhile purchase for anyone wanting to use this product. Stevia extract has been denied GRAS (Generally Recognized As Safe) status from the FDA (for who knows what rea-

sons) and, therefore, can only be sold as a dietary supplement, not a sweetener. *These companies like to use the phrase "Why sweeten your coffee? Supplement it!"*

Sucralose (Splenda)

One of the few artificial sweeteners actually developed on purpose (by

Elizabeth

College in

London),

sucralose, is

a synthetic

compound

made di-

rectly from

the sugar molecule by

selectively replacing three hy-

droxyl (-OH) groups with chlorine

(-Cl) molecules to produce a sub-

stance about 400 to 800 times

sweeter than the molecule it came

from, sucrose. Positives include its

clean taste, stability both in solu-

tions across a wide range of pH

values and at high temperatures.

Additionally, it is minimally me-

tabolized, being mostly excreted

in the stool, unchanged – i.e. with

all its added chlorine molecules

still bound in their positions, not

wandering around in the body

somewhere as some alarmists

would have you believe. To date,

there has been seen no credible

published evidence to indict this

sweetener as a health risk. There-



Xylitol:

A sugar alcohol, derived from xylan (a complex sugar chain, sort of like cellulose, which is found in corncoobs, straw, almond shells, and birch bark) which is then broken down into individual units of a simple sugar, called xylose, which is then hydrogenated to make xylitol.

Positives are that its sweetness is exactly equal to sugar (but only half the calories) and so measures exactly like sugar spoon for spoon, making for easy recipe conversion. Additionally, there are a pretty good number of research studies that point to its actually being of some health benefit for preventing cavities and ear infections in children. Drawbacks: users have reported the typical intestinal side effects of sugar alcohols, such as gas, bloating, rumbling, and diarrhea, although some people aver less misery with it than with other sugar alcohols, except, perhaps, erythritol. Additionally, some users perceive a slight cold, faintly metallic quality to its taste, although other people describe it as a clean

taste. Once only found in chewing gum, it's now being manufactured in bulk and in individual single serving packets. If you tolerate using it, and many people do, it's probably among the least offensive of the sugar alcohols.

Each of the five FDA-approved non-nutritive sweeteners (sucralose, acesulfame-K, saccharin, aspartame and neotame) provide no carbs to foods. It should be noted that all 'consumer' versions of the high-intensity sweeteners (those with sweetness hundreds of times greater than sucrose) require a bulking agent to be used. This is because it would be difficult for any consumer to measure out an amount that would provide the desired sweetness. For example, less than 1/100 of a teaspoon is needed for any of these sweeteners to provide a sweetness equivalent to a teaspoon of sugar. Most of what's in the little packets of any color is the bulking agent, most often maltodextrin and/or dextrose. They still qualify to be called No Calorie sweeteners, because the amount of bulking agent is not great, having less than 5 calories per serving. When 'manufacturers' use non-nutritive sweeteners in beverages and other food products, they indeed are carb free, as they contain no bulking agent.

For carb counters it is recommended to count the half a gram of carbohydrate in each Splenda packet, and 24 grams of carbohydrate in a cup of granular Splenda.

Enjoy life's sweetness in the best of health! ■

The insulin connection

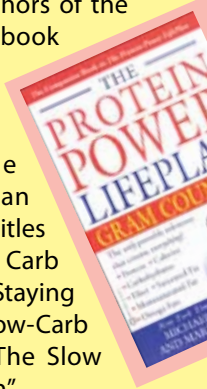
In a study published in November 1998, a group of Belgian researchers demonstrated that saccharin (as well as other bitter-tasting artificial and herbal sweeteners i.e. Acesulfame K, Cyclamates, and Stevia) stimulates the pancreas to release insulin, not a particularly beneficial effect for people trying to keep their insulin levels controlled.

Drs. M.R. & M.D. Eades

Drs. Eades are the authors of the best-selling diet plan book "Protein Power". Also "Protein Power Lifeplan" and the carb counting book "The Protein Power Lifeplan Gram Counter". Other titles of theirs are "The Low Carb Comfort Cookbook", "Staying Power", "The 30 Day Low-Carb Diet Solution", and "The Slow Burn Fitness Revolution".

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A vintage microphone with a mesh grille is positioned on the left side of the page. Below it, a stack of newspapers is visible, with some pages showing text and images. The background is a warm, golden-yellow gradient with faint icons of a play button and a right arrow.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

What we can do to combat MEDIA IGNORANCE

by Simcha D. Schonfeld

In recent months, a number of frum media outlets have run human interest stories about Diabetes in our community. Certainly, the fact that these publications were willing to discuss a topic that has been taboo for so long is commendable. Without question, education is the best medicine. Yet when journalists and writers accept assignments on matters of which they know very little about, the potential for making misstatements and providing incorrect information to a broad cross-section of the population is quite real.

A recent and admittedly inspiring article about a teen with Juvenile Diabetes falsely implied that insulin has to be administered in clinics and hospitals and that people with diabetes are compelled to live out their days with no access to “ice cream and cheesecake”. While the intentions of the author were undoubtedly noble, the information conveyed was based on antiquated notions of medical science that were long ago abandoned. The properly managed person with diabetes of the twenty first century is not a prisoner of

medical appointments and need not deprive him or herself of culinary delights.

Another article in a separate publication written in the voice of an overweight child contained the following language. "Dr. B. told my mother that if she didn't start watching my sugar intake, she'd have a potential case of juvenile diabetes on her hands." That sentence is stunningly inaccurate. As stated on the Canadian Diabetes Association website, "the cause of type 1 diabetes remains unknown. However, it is not preventable, and **it is not caused by eating too much sugar.** The body's defense system may attack insulin-making cells by mistake, but we don't know why."

These articles represent only a small sampling of a greater corpus of inaccuracies, distortions and misinformation being fed to the general public with alarming frequency. As the premier Diabetes organization in the frum community, it is imperative that the members of FWD embark on a campaign to educate the media and its members about Diabetes and ensure that future articles about Diabetes are written with greater accuracy. Allowing misinformation to be disseminated *en masse* serves to unfairly augment the challenges that Diabetics already face.

FWD has grown exponentially in recent years. Rabbi Meisels has often been in contact with publica-

tion editors, and has written many articles himself. In letters to the editors, Rabbi Meisels often clarified misconceptions and pointed out mistakes. Yet regulating the media can never be a one-man operation.

It would appear that the most efficient way to address the issue would be to form a committee of FWD members who would act as liaisons to the media. Ideally, those with a connection to a media outlet would be most suitable for these tasks, though that need not necessarily be the case. Their purposes would be threefold. First, to inform the various media outlets of the existence of FWD. Second, to foster a relationship between the media and FWD so that when an article about Diabetes is considered for publication, the author will consult FWD to ensure that it contains only accurate information. Finally, members of the committee may be called upon from time to time to respond to an inaccurate statement or a skewed por-



trayal that does appear in the press.

Essentially, this article is an appeal to get involved. When it comes to matters of monetary and financial

“ Misinformation in the media is not only damaging for its inherent falsity but it allows for the perpetuation of phobic and stereotypical notions of diabetes that are dangerous and hurtful ”

Misinformation in the media is not only damaging for its inherent falsity but it allows for the perpetuation – and even creation – of phobic and stereotypical notions of diabetes that are dangerous and hurtful. A handful of caring people with the right connections can make an enormous difference. If you are inclined to join this committee – and I implore you to do so – please contact Rabbi Meisels.

Some 400 years ago, the British Scientist Sir Francis Bacon said that “knowledge is power.” In light of the fact that the media plays a significant role in providing its readership with knowledge, it follows that they wield significant power as well. It is our job to make certain that the power of the pen is used properly and positively. ■

disputes in *halacha*, there is a concept known as “*shtikah k'hodaa*” – referred to in modern legal jargon as “Admission by Silence”. The concept is grounded in the obvious supposition that where a false statement or accusation is leveled, the subject of the falsity would naturally respond. Failure to do so lends significant credence to the statement. While this publication is not one that focuses on *halachic* disputes, the perils of “*shitakah k'hodaa*” are applicable to the members of the FWD family just the same.

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FWD Events

TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE

AT THE RECENT GIRLS' SHABBATON, F.W.D.S
LEARN THAT INTEGRATION BEATS ISOLATION

At the 5th FWD Girls Shabbaton exclusively for girls ages 12 and up, members of Friends With Diabetes, an international support group for frum diabetics, learned the critical value of camaraderie in the face the often-difficult challenges presented by daily life with diabetes.

The Shabbaton was held on Shabbos Parshas Va'eira (Teves 26-28, 5768/January 4-6, 2008) at the home of Rabbi and Mrs. Meisels in Monsey, and attracted 25 girls from as close as Brooklyn, New Jersey, Monroe and Monsey itself and as far as Colorado, Canada and England.

The event was the culmination of months of planning by Rabbi Meisels and staff, who together collaborated on the Shabbaton's theme: "Tovim shnayim min ha'echad." They also extensively consulted members'

school-year calendars to determine that Shabbos Parshas Va'eira would allow the most girls to attend.

"The point was that we should be together," explains one staffer. "We wanted it to be fun."

Early planning began in October. The serious planning work was executed in late November and all through December of 2007. Names of female members between the ages of 12-20 were culled from FWD's extensively



Welcoming Sign

organized membership database, and 60 print invitations, followed by e-mails and phone calls, were dispatched.

By the time Parshas Va'eira showed up, over two dozen girls—with the majority between 14 and 18 years old—had affirmatively responded.

Although official arrival time was 2:00-3:00 p.m., vehicles of all sorts pulled up to hosts' homes beginning the afternoon of Thursday, January 3 and all Friday long, disgorging excited passengers who were eagerly looking to the morale-boosting weekend.

Upon settling into their quarters, the girls were delighted to discover personal gifts from FWD on each of their beds, courtesy of one of our devoted mothers: exquisitely arranged, elegant gift baskets painstakingly and lovingly filled with all sorts of treats.

With Shabbos approaching and participants constantly arriving, the exhilarating, camp-like atmosphere continued to build. The girls converged on the Meisels' residence at 31 Herrick Ave. at 4:00 p.m., with many meeting each other for the first time as Rabbi Meisels officially opened the event with a formal greeting and introduction.

An indication of things to come was then seen and felt as Mrs. Meisels lit candles at the 4:26 p.m. sunset, with an almost-palpable spirit of unity and warmth descending on the group as they wished each other a heartfelt "Good Shabbos."

Once Shabbos HaMalka was ushered in, the girls settled down for friendly icebreaking conversation, forging the first links of what is sure to be lifelong friendships.

Following davening of Kabbolas Shabbos, the event's first official feature began with Neesha R., a highly popular Certified Diabetes



Personal gifts for each FWD

Educator affiliated with Borough Park's Maimonides Hospital, delivering a stimulating presentation on the basics of living with diabetes.

A delicious—and interactive!—Shabbos meal then followed at 7:00 p.m., with fabulous fare cooked up by Mrs. Meisels (and just a few temporary kitchen assistants). The girls all had fun honing their carb-counting and insulin-injecting skills as Rabbi Meisels

LETTERS

L'chvod Rabbi and Mrs. Meisels,

This is just a small note to say a massive thank you. We feel honored that you hosted us in your own home. We gained so much from this absolutely AMAZING Shabbos. It was worth every penny to come all the way from England...! It was a wonderful experience. THANK YOU!!!

We can't wait to let you know when we are on the pump!

With much appreciation and gratitude,

R.G. and M.L.

Dear Rabbi Meisels,

I wanted to thank you for the wonderful Shabbos N. had in Monsey. She came home in such a great mood and made so many new friends. You put such an effort into it and it truly showed. Thank you, S. B.

...No amount of words will ever suffice,
No present will ever pay the price,
Our hakoras hatov is boundless
For giving such an inspiring and terrific Shabbos!
...May Hashem repay you...
B'ahava Rabah,
Girls Shabbaton
Parshas Va'eira, 5768

Dear Rabbi and Mrs. Meisels,
Saying thank you cannot adequately express what this shabbaton has done for me!

When you called to invite me to the shabbaton, I really wasn't very interested in coming. I had gone to support groups in the past, and for whatever reasons, didn't really enjoy them. ...Baruch Hashem, you did a good job at convincing me to come, and I did! Now I regret not having come to other shabbatons, but better late than never!

So, let me tell you what I have learned and gained. There was a period in my life when I really wasn't in good control. I had no patience to deal with my diabetes and felt resentful that I had to be bothered with it every single day of my life. Believe it or not, until last week I thought I was one of very few who have those feelings, and now I see that others go through it at one time or another. Just knowing this gave me so much chizuk. I wasn't alone...

I never really thought of my diabetes as such a big deal, and so I never thought I needed a whole support system. But I couldn't have possibly imagined the feeling I would get from being together with so many other girls that are all going through the same things I am, even if diabetes is not such a terrible disease!

Reviewing all the basics like carb counting was also really helpful. I also learned so much from everyone's ideas, suggestions, stories and problems.

The most important thing is that I made friends. I'm sure I'm not the only one who feels that they now have friends who really understand them, and that together, everything is so much easier than when alone!

Hashem should continue to bench you with siyata dishmaya in every project you undertake! Thank you again for everything!

Name Withheld

had everyone guessing carb numbers to common dishes and drinks throughout.

The delicious repast was capped by an inspiring and thoughtful Dvar Torah by FWD Nechama and officially concluded with an informative, interesting presentation by Rabbi Meisels, himself a highly experienced carb-counting Type I diabetic, entitled “COUNTING your way to better diabetes control.”

The highlight of Rabbi Meisels’ speech was his mention of having received an award 25 years ago from a doctor for lowering his A1C—and announcing a brand-new, informal contest to see who could lower her A1C the most. The prize? A classy, specially-framed FWD certificate, to be mailed to the winner before Pesach, אִי”ה.

But it was only after Rabbi Meisels’ talk and Birkas Hamazon that the significance of the event—over two dozen formerly-isolated girls getting together to lend one another unconditional love and support—really hit home, as the participants grew their friendships by leaps and bounds as they chatted, talked and shared for hours on end on living with diabetes and life in general. Some literally stayed up all night!

Shabbos day began with a 9:15 a.m. breakfast at the Meisels residence, to which the two-dozen-plus girls

had trekked from their gracious hosts, braving the cold outdoors. After ample helpings of cereal with milk, fresh fruit, pastries and other goodies, the girls joined in davening, their spiritual forces buoyed by each other’s presence.

At promptly 10:30 a.m., having just completed their personal conversations with Hashem, the



participants were treated to guest speaker Mrs. Gelbman, who spoke on the subject of “using your unique situation to become closer to Hashem.” Mrs. Gelbman also discussed nisyonos, which she compared to solos in a choir—one ideally is to use her adverse experiences to complement and benefit those around her as a single voice adds so much to a chorus, rather than negatively turn that experience inward. “You grow from nisyonos,” Mrs. Gelbman pointed out.

The talk, which left the girls deeply inspired and newly viewing their “situations” as spiritual opportunities, not physical liabilities, was fol-

lowed by the event's second of five meals: seudas Shabbos!

The tables were beautifully set and bedecked with ample servings of delicious challah, fish, salads, meat, cholent and more, with participants once again learning the carb counts of those typical Shabbos staples. "Who knows how many carbs are in a bowl of cholent?" asked Rabbi Meisels as he held aloft a serving of the Shabbos favorite. The girls were delighted in attempting to correctly respond, learning as they did the numbers frum diabetics need to live healthy, flourishing lives.

Amid the feasting and friendship across the four tables filling the Meisels' dining/conference room, Tzila delivered a scintillating Dvar Torah that got everyone thinking. Birkas Hamazon then followed, and the meal broke up into small clusters of conversing friends.

The afternoon break, which some girls spent relaxing at their hosts' homes and others at the Meisels, was followed at 3:00 p.m. by an Oneg Shabbos get-together and Shalosh Seudos, highlighted by a Dvar Torah by Henny. More socializing and connecting ensued in the brief break between the end of Shalosh Seudos and a 6:00 p.m. Havdalah recited by Rabbi Meisels.

At 6:30 p.m., the 25 young participants sat down in the "Meisels



A table centerpiece

Family Convention Center" for the Shabbaton's final event—a keynote address by the gifted and talented speaker Mr. Avi Shulman of Monsey, who graciously contributed his gifts to his neighbor and guests.

Mr. Shulman's talked centered around a single commentary by Rashi on the years of Sarah Imeinu's life: "Kulan shavin l'tovah"—they were all equally good, Rashi writes. But how, Mr. Shulman asked, can a life filled with hardships be called good? Considering Sarah Imeinu's experiences being kidnapped twice, enduring the pain of childlessness and Hagar's rebellion, and other troubles, it might make more sense to say that our Matriarch's life was not exactly good, Mr. Shulman pointed out.



S. had an amazing time, although I didn't yet get to hear all the details... In her own words: "I had the most amazing Shabbos of my life..."

Thanks, C. C.

Dear Rabbi Meisels,

Thank you for inviting me to the Girls' Shabbaton this weekend. It was an amazing experience, and I had a wonderful time! My favorite part was seeing the girls interact in a place where diabetes was not an issue; making friends, sharing stories and tips, and taking others under their wings to help guide them. It reminded me very much of diabetes summer camp! While I was sharing my expertise with them, they were also teaching me, about Jewish tradition and custom. A few of them even whispered translations of Hebrew and Yiddish words to me to help me understand better.

Keep up the good work! The community is blessed to have such wonderful people as the two of you.

Best Regards, Neesha Ramchandani
(diabetes educator who joined the girls' Shabbaton)

Dear Rabbi and Mrs. Meisels,

... Our tremendous hakoras hatov for the beautiful shabbaton that our daughter attended is still very much at the front of our minds and hearts. Truthfully, we don't think any letter could possibly express how we feel about that Shabbos or what an unbelievable impact it had both on her life, and ours. Not only did it show her that she's B"H still "normal," but she also now feels part of a very special group of girls who are all, like her, working on accepting Hashem's ratzon as their own. And then of course, the way that the entire Shabbos, from start to finish was so beautifully set up, organized, decorated and FUN, made every minute of the trip to get there definitely worth it! From our perspective as parents, we can only say that this entire shabbaton was priceless, worth every drop of our effort to get there, and an unbelievable reflection of all the effort that were so obviously put in by you. All we can possibly say is a gevaldige yasher koach...

Sincerely, The S. family, Canada

But yet, “Kulan shavin l’tovah”—because Sarah Imeinu had the right attitude.

“Your outlook defines your situation,” explained Mr. Shulman. “It’s the way you take it. You can be a nebuch, or you can be a hero.” The girls came away profoundly moved by his message of optimism, faith and good cheer no matter what happens.

But the inspiration didn’t start or end there. Throughout the Shabbatons, participants and staff alike were witness to several special moments that bordered on minor miracles.

At various points, the unity that drove the event turned into actions of the most inspiring kind as the girls rallied around various participants who arrived with specific diabetes-related problems—leaving them brimming with love, support, practical advice and effective tips, tricks and techniques provided without asking by a bevy of newfound friends.

“It was so warming to my heart that the girls felt responsible for the others; they felt it’s their job,” says Rabbi Meisels, proudly adding that by the time some girls went home, their medical situations were drastically improved to levels they had never attained in their lives. “The upbeat unity and achdus was a sight to behold.”

At another special Shabbaton moment, one diabetic girl reported that since she began rigorously watching her carb intake levels thanks to her membership in FWD, her entire family got into the act—radically changing their diet, dramatically losing weight and making blood sugar control and overall health the new watchwords of their family life.

The goal of the Shabbaton, according to Rabbi Meisels, was two-fold: diabetes management education, and peer support. “It is just important to get together and get everyone inspired that they are in a group,” he says. When asked what stood out the most and made the greatest impression on the girls, one staff member says, “[the fact of] everyone making friends. Now they have someone to call.”

Commenting on the theme, Rabbi Meisels concludes that everyone has strengths, and that the goal of the Shabbaton was for members to benefit from each other’s “tovim,” or strengths: the resources of love and experience they can offer.

“I never had such a Shabbos where the seriousness and fun were so well balanced,” he adds.

Thanks to one Shabbos weekend in Monsey, diabetic girls the world over now know they are never never never alone. ■



Seeing THE Big Picture

I was sitting on the floor, helping my four-year-old Henny finish her Lego tower, as 2-year-old Avrumi ambled dangerously nearby. Henny eyed him nervously as she placed her Lego pieces one by one, and for good reason.

Avrumi is a walking hurricane. His chubby hands and feet move far quicker than would seem scientifically possible. One moment he's on the counter looking for candy, and the next he's rummaging in the garbage can for crushed ants. Just try closing your eyes for two minutes while he's around, and you'll open them for a surprise.

Avrumi receives plenty of no's and stern looks, yet as soon as a safe amount of time passes after such

disciplinary measures, he usually receives a double-dose of hugs and kisses, as he cheers me on, "Maw! Maw!" (more, more!)

Well, so here I was sitting next to Henny, trying to shield her Lego tower from Avrumi's quick legs.


"Avrumi, where's your teddy bear?" I tried to distract him.

"Sleep."

"And where's your truck?"

Oops! Avrumi had inched his way closer to Henny and his little shoes were dismantling a section of the tower!

"Avrumi!" Henny shouted. I stood up and picked him up, kicking



and laughing, and put him into his crib.

“If you make trouble, you can’t play!” I declared.

I returned to the half-destroyed Lego tower to find a seething Henny, busily rebuilding the damaged part.

“Mommy, you must take him back to the hospital!” she said angrily. “He’s nothing but trouble!”

Back to the hospital? What was she talking about? Then I understood and began to laugh.

“Why are you laughing, Mommy?” Henny was annoyed. “Why don’t you just take him back to the hospital? Maybe you could buy a different baby – a baby that doesn’t do so much trouble.”

I laughed even harder. “Henny, when you were his age you also did lots of trouble, although you didn’t have any older brothers or sisters to bother. But you always got into my pots and pans, colored the walls and smashed eggs on the kitchen floor....

“All kinderlach at Avrumi’s age do such things, but they outgrow it when they get older. A Brother is the biggest blessing you could wish for, even if he causes trouble from time to time. Avrumi will one day be the best brother in the world – just wait and see.”

Whether she understood or not, I can only wonder. I mused how a

child sees such a small, limited picture of what life is really all about.

Are we any different? I suddenly thought. We go about our lives, busily building our own Lego towers, when from time to time a Foot kicks part of it and destroys our hopes and dreams. “Hashem, please take this tzara back from where it came from!” we moan. “It’s nothing but trouble!” Sometimes when we envy the lives of our friends, we secretly wish to exchange our “baby” for their’s.

And Hashem, in His infinite kindness, Smiles. “Dear kinderlach,” He says, “What do you understand? One day, this tzara will be your best brother! Do you know how much you gain from it? Do you know how much goodness and blessing lies behind it? Do you see the big picture?”

When life presents its hardships, all we see is the havoc it wreaks on our routine, on our comfort, and on our security. The initial reaction may be resentment and bitterness, because we are looking at it from the childish viewpoint of mere mortals.

In reality, destroyed Lego towers, however precious they may be, are a small price to pay

Aren't they a small price to pay for the eternal benefits it brings us

for the joy of siblings, and are utterly worthless when compared to the treasure that lies in a precious soul. Could the same be true about the hardships we encounter due to the nisyonos that come our way? Aren't they a small price to pay for the eternal benefits it brings us on both worlds? Aren't they utterly insignificant when compared to

the eternal treasures they represent – treasures that can often only be seen and valued after our lifetime?

“Mommy, Avrumi climbed out of bed!” Henny’s words broke through my thoughts, “Please take him away before he ruins my tower again!”

I picked up Avrumi and placed him in his high-chair with some cheerios. “Avrumi, you are not for sale!” I said as I gave him a loving kiss, “And neither are the trials in my life.”

SWEET MOMENTS
Mazel Tov Corner

MAZEL TOV TO...

MEMBERS AND THEIR WIVES UPON THE BIRTH OF THEIR BABY

BOY	2026	1188
GIRL	3	

MEMBERS AND THEIR HUSBANDS UPON THE BIRTH OF THEIR BABY

BOY	417	2433	2378
GIRL	6	6	

MEMBERS UPON THEIR BAR MITZVAHS

216	712	807	1159
1174	2442	2134	2271
2325	2371	2393	2423

MEMBERS AND THEIR KALLAHS UPON THEIR ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE

837	210	237	9
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MEMBERS AND THEIR CHASANIM UPON THEIR ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE

2120	455
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“I wish there was someone who would be able to figure out which foods work best for me.”

“I wish there was someone who would be able to answer all my questions on dieting with diabetes.”

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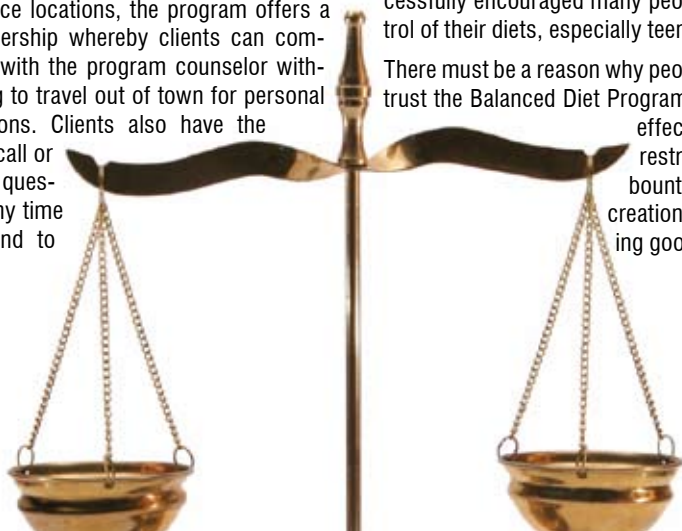
The Balanced Diet Program began in Brooklyn, and after many years of success, it has expanded to Monsey and other localities. In addition to the office locations, the program offers a fax-membership whereby clients can communicate with the program counselor without having to travel out of town for personal consultations. Clients also have the option to call or fax their questions at any time of day, and to

consult with their counselor whenever the need arises.

The secret of the program's success is that it never forces clients into standard diet plans; instead, it focuses on working around each individual's needs and lifestyle. That's why the Balanced Diet Program is the ideal solution for people with health issues, such as diabetes.

Measuring food and designing menus isn't all there is to the Balanced Diet Program. The program concentrates equally on the psychological aspect of weight loss. The strong connection between counselor and client helps dieters achieve success faster and easier than they ever thought possible, because a positive outlook and proper perspective on health maintenance is crucial for successful weight loss. The program has successfully encouraged many people to take control of their diets, especially teenagers.

There must be a reason why people from all over trust the Balanced Diet Program. It is personal, effective and non-restrictive. Enjoy the bounty of Hashem's creation, while achieving good health ה"אזעב.



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