



Dear T1D Friend,

I know how tough living with Type 1 Diabetes (T1D) can be, but I promise that if you keep working hard things will get easier. I want to share my story with you.

My Story:

I was diagnosed when I was nine years old. My mom was a nurse and she recognized the symptoms I was having. I was losing weight, overly hungry and thirsty, I was peeing all the time, and had moments where I felt shaky or really sick when my blood sugar was too high or too low. My mom feared for a few weeks that I might have diabetes.

On December 26 I woke up like any other day, getting ready to head to a soccer tournament, when my mom told me that we needed to stop at the doctor's office really quick. When we got there, they quickly did their tests and told us the news. All I really remember is going back into the waiting room and crying in my dad's arms. I was scared, naïve and confused. I didn't know anything about diabetes and, being a young kid, I read too much into the first two letters of the word. All I heard was DI-abetes, and I thought that my life was in danger. My parents and the doctor quickly calmed me down, but I still remember that initial fear. It was a day that changed my life forever.

As I'm sure you know and have experienced yourself, it was a tough transition learning to manage my diabetes. It's a 24/7 job that can be *so* frustrating. Even now, it's still tough for me to deal with at times because it's so unpredictable. You can eat the same food, do the same workout on two different days and your blood sugar will turn out differently.

But even at a young age, I made the decision in my mind that I wasn't going to let this disease hold me back. As a kid I loved sports. I knew my dream was to one day play professional soccer. The doctor, fortunately, told me that the more sports I played, the better. Being active will only help to regulate your blood sugar, he told me. I took those words and ran with them. I looked to athletes in the NFL and NBA who were living their dreams even with this disease, wanting to be like them someday.

Over the course of the next few years, I adjusted to my new normal. Trying to figure out how, when and what to eat before, during and after training and games was tough. When I was 14 years old, I got on an insulin pump and that changed my life. My blood sugar control got so much better and even just the simplest thing like eating a snack was so much easier. But even with this new technology, there was always some question about whether or not I would be able to make it as a professional athlete, to accomplish what I wanted to accomplish with this huge hurdle that I had to overcome. Now I am on a Dexcom CGM(continuous glucose monitor) and an Omnipod pump. These tools have allowed me even better control of my blood sugar. I actually can wear both devices during games.

My dad just recently told me that when I was in high school, he didn't think I was even going to be able to play soccer in college, let alone play professionally. I would be lying if I said that the thought never crossed my mind that this would hold me back, but, whenever it did, I reverted back to telling myself that diabetes *wasn't* going to define me. It *wasn't* going to hold me back. It *wasn't* going to run my life. So I kept my head down, kept working hard at managing my blood sugar and really staying on top of my diabetes.

At 17, I committed to play soccer at Stanford, my dream school. Living away from home for the first time provided its own challenges, but I adjusted quickly and had the best three years of my life. My team won a NCAA National Championship and during my time at school I was called up to play for the US Men's National Team, something I never thought would happen.

After my junior season, I decided to leave Stanford and play professional soccer for Seattle Sounders FC, my hometown team. I remember signing the contract and getting this surreal feeling thinking about my promise to myself to not let T1D stop me from my goals. If you had told me at nine years old that one day I would be the first diabetic to ever play for the National Team or in MLS, I would have thought you were crazy! But it really just goes to show that dreams are attainable, even with diabetes.

That mentality is so important and if you can take that idea away from this letter, you can accomplish anything you set your mind to. It's a lot of hard work - a lot of blood, sweat and tears. I've wanted to quit so many times because sometimes it seems so unfair and almost impossible, but you have to keep pushing. Whatever your goal is, I promise you it is within reach.

The biggest thing I want you to take away from my story is that you should not let diabetes hold you back from anything. Keeping a positive outlook can definitely be a challenge - I won't ever say that I didn't and don't still have moments of difficulty - but the more positively you approach your diabetes, the more in control you'll be, and you'll have better outcomes in achieving the goals you set for yourself. With that, here are a few final tips that I use to keep a positive outlook.

1. Pura Vida. This is a saying that I picked up when I went to Costa Rica with my family. It is Spanish for "pure life" and it basically means that you should appreciate your life how it is, because there is always someone that has it worse off than you. It's about appreciating life's treasures. I know how tough diabetes can be, but I've looked at it as a challenge that I'm going to overcome and it is only going to push me to be a better person. I have really tried to embrace the Pura Vida mentality of appreciating my life, diabetes and all. That has helped me embrace my disease instead of feeling trapped by it. You can live a very normal life with T1D.
2. You should *never* feel ashamed of your diabetes. It is part of who you are. I have grown to love talking about living with diabetes. It is a great feeling to be able to connect with other people who share the same struggles and to possibly help them, and you can't do that if you're ashamed or hide that big part of you. I am very open about living with this disease and you should be too.
3. Be proud of yourself for dealing with this disease. With everything else going on in your life, you have to deal with this 24/7 on top of it all. That takes a lot of strength and courage! Try not to get down, even when things are tough. I always say that I was given diabetes because I could handle it. Be proud of yourself every day and always count the blessings that you have.

4. One major tip I could give you is give yourself insulin 10-15 minutes before you eat. This has made a huge difference in keeping my blood sugar level.

More than anything, I want you to know that you're an inspiration to me! I know exactly how frustrating diabetes can be and I know that sometimes it seems impossible to deal with, but it *doesn't* define you and it *can't* hold you back. I admire you for living with diabetes. We're in this together!

The decision to really be on top of your diabetes and the decision to not let it hold you back lies in *you*. Keep working hard and don't ever let diabetes stop you from dreaming big. Thank you for all your support.

For more information, check out my website: www.jordanmorrisfoundation.com

All the best! Your friend,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JM' followed by the number '13'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Jordan Morris