

## Negotiating Independence

### Growing Up With Diabetes: Negotiating Independence and Letting Go

Parenting a child with diabetes involves a continual balance between stepping in and letting go. Each stage of life brings new milestones, challenges, and opportunities for your child to take more ownership of their care. Some days they may welcome your help with monitoring or planning, and other days they may want more space to manage things themselves. This back-and-forth is a normal part of growing up and learning independence.

#### Your Evolving Role

As a parent or carer, your role shifts over time, from managing most of the care, to sharing responsibility, and eventually moving into a supportive, guiding role. You may find yourself stepping in again at times perhaps to help with a bolus, charge a handset, or check a number. These moments don't mean progress has been lost. Offering help when things are tough shows understanding, not control, and gives your child confidence that you "get it."



#### Think about:

What aspects of care could I share or hand over at this stage?

How can I offer help without taking over?

How do I respond when they want independence one day but not the next?

#### Encouraging Ownership

Encourage your child to tune into their body, notice patterns, and express when something feels "off." Using shared language or cues ("I feel funny" or "I might be low") can make communication easier.

As confidence builds, involve them in decision-making, whether that's checking glucose, logging data, or making food choices. Trust them to take the lead where possible, while staying available for guidance or backup.

What small steps could build confidence and ownership?

#### Think about:

How can I show trust while keeping safety in mind?

## Staying Connected

Open communication is key. Even when they resist help, knowing you're there can be reassuring. Find ways to stay connected that respect their need for privacy and independence. For example, through shared reminders, text check-ins, or negotiated data sharing.

### Think about:

What signs show me they might need extra support right now?

How can I stay connected without being overbearing?

Remember it's also important to connect with others outside diabetes too.

## Trust, Flexibility, and Growth

There will be times when your child seems to have taken a step backward. That's normal. Independence doesn't develop in a straight line.

Be patient. Your willingness to offer support without judgement helps them feel safe enough to keep learning. It can even be a chance for them to teach you about their care, strengthening trust and confidence on both sides.



### Think about:

How can I show that I trust their ability to manage?

What helps me stay calm and supportive when things don't go as planned?

## In Summary

Negotiating independence in diabetes care is an ongoing process. Some days your child will need you to step in; other days, they'll want the freedom to manage things on their own. By staying flexible, open, and compassionate, you help create the right balance, giving them both the safety and the space to grow with confidence.

Reminder: If you are struggling with this balance, please talk to your diabetes team. They can guide you and your child through these transitions.