



**Teresa Choyguha (Tohono O’odham) asked herself “What do I have going for me?” One of the answers was the love of her son, Roberto Narcho.**

## **How to Take the Doom and Gloom Out of Diabetes**

**by Teresa M. Choyguha (Tohono O’odham), Wellness Presenter**

Finding out you have diabetes can be a shock. At first, you may see only the bad things. You may think about your parents or grandparents having diabetes. The images can be gloomy -- blindness, amputations and dialysis. But as you learn more, you learn you can live well with diabetes. Our knowledge about diabetes and how to prevent or delay complications has increased. There is hope! Many people live long, healthy lives with diabetes. You can be one of those people.

Changing how you look at diabetes helps. First, you may see a lot of “doom and gloom.” Let’s change that! Let’s try to look at some positives. Being positive and taking action will help you. You can reduce stress. You can have more energy to change eating and activity habits.

If you have diabetes, try thinking less about what you do not have. Think more about what you do have. If you have a few good eating habits, look at those. If you do some physical activity, consider that a plus. If you don’t drink alcohol or smoke, that is a plus.

Make a list of the things you have going for you. Consider these good things:

- Indian people have a history of eating good foods -- fruits, vegetables, game meat. We can eat more of those kinds of food. Eating right is natural for us.
- Being active is natural for many tribal members. In the Tohono O'odham Tribe, youth to elders are encouraged to be active. When my tribe plays a women's soccer game, everyone runs the field, including the Elder women.
- We have strong communities. We are used to giving to other people. We care about others. Our connections to other people will help us with diabetes.
- We are spiritual people. We are used to praying to the creator. We can ask for courage to help our diabetes.

As you go on your journey with diabetes, you will find more positives:

- Diabetes can give structure to your life. It gives you a solid reason for waking up early to walk. It makes you commit to daily activities. It encourages self-discipline -- something to be proud of!
- You will make new friends. You might find a new walking partner at work. You might meet someone new at the fitness center. You will notice others who are taking care of their health, and these people can help support you.

- Taking care of yourself will make you feel good. Being active and eating right can help you lose extra weight and help you feel good. Your self-confidence can grow as you make good changes in your life.

Having diabetes can lead to great changes in your life. You can develop a positive way of thinking. You can slowly form new habits. Diabetes does not have to be a bad thing. It can be a part of your life, a part of your wellness journey.



**Teresa has passed on her positive outlook and good habits to Roberto. "Water and milk are my favorite drinks!" says Roberto.**



**"We thank the Creator for our children."**

**Jeff and Tanya Keezer (Leech Lake Ojibwe) have diabetes and a happy family life. They are raising daughters Seneca and Anevay to be active every day and avoid sugar foods.**