

## Creating happiness in the diabetes care clinic

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### Abstract

Happiness is an essential part of human health. The purpose of health care, including diabetes care, is to achieve happiness, or euthymia. Happiness, can also be viewed as a means to achieving good health, as well as a technique to overcome challenges, encourage team work and ensure better adherence to therapy. This opinion piece shares simple ways of achieving happiness in the diabetes care clinic. It lists best practices related to environment communication style, communication content, and inter-consultation contact. If integrated into daily practice, these will help create a happy health care ecosystem, which in turn will enhance patient satisfaction

**Keywords:** Communication, Euthymia, Euthymic euglycemia, Language, Person centred care.

### The Challenge: Suboptimal Care

In spite of great advances in healthcare, especially diabetes care, satisfaction levels with our management are far from optimal. Many persons living with diabetes, and their family members, tend to be unhappy with the services they receive from their diabetes care providers.<sup>1,2</sup> Diabetes care professionals, on the other hand, express frustration at lack of self-care by persons with the syndrome.<sup>3</sup>

### The Reason: Understanding Health

One reason for this may be a discrepancy in the understanding of the concept of health. Diabetes professionals tend to view their work in terms of physical or biomedical targets of health. The average person, however, ascribes to the World Health Organization (WHO) definition. WHO reminds us to consider not only physical, but also mental and emotional aspects of health.<sup>4</sup>

### The Solution: Euthymic Euglycaemia

The concept of euthymic euglycaemia calls for the pursuit of euthymia in persons with diabetes.<sup>5</sup> Optimization of mood, i.e., euthymia is understood to be a target in itself, a tool to achieve the target of glycaemic control, and a technique employed to facilitate optimal health.<sup>6</sup> The

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**Table:** Creating happiness in the diabetes care clinic.

#### ► The Environment

- ◆ The external environment
  - Bright lighting
  - Ambient temperature
  - Pleasant interior décor
  - Room freshener
- ◆ The self-environment
  - Comfortable attire
  - Comfortable sitting posture

#### ► Communication Style

- ◆ Non-Verbal language
  - Forward leaning
  - Physical contact
    - Hi 5
    - Handshake
    - Hug
- ◆ Verbal language: Initiation
  - Greet with warmth
  - Establish relationship
  - Ask what you can do to help?
- ◆ Verbal language: Enhancement
  - Give a compliment
- ◆ Health care related
  - "Your cholesterol and blood pressure are great Thanks for taking care of yourself"
- ◆ Non health related
  - "You look young in this shirt; you have great dress sense"
  - Oriented to
- ◆ Individual
  - "You work sohard to take care of your family; thank you"
- ◆ Accompanying person
  - "You have so waited patiently for your father's turn to come; thank you"

#### ► Communication Content

- ◆ Identify happiness as a target
  - "How many times in the past week have you woken up feeling happy and healthy"
  - "How frequently does your spouse greet you in a happy manner when you return from work in the evening?"
- ◆ Identify happiness as a tool to achieve this target
  - "Taking insulin will make you healthy, which will make you happy."
  - "Adherence to thyroxin therapy will keep you fit and happy."
  - "Identify happiness as a technique to utilize suggested tools.
  - "Accepting our condition, and our therapy, happily, facilitates better health"
- ◆ Identify happiness as a "thank-worthy" activity
  - "Thank you for taking our injections and large-sized tablets happily. This is the secret of your health"
- ◆ Identify happiness as a trick for trouble shooting
  - "Let's begin a hobby, or practice meditation, to be happy. This will help overcome the cerebral resistance to insulin that you seem to be facing."

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- ◆ Identify happiness as a glue for team work  
"Let's work happily with the diabetes educator"  
"Let's go to the religious leader to enquire what guidance the scriptures offer, related to stress management"
- ◆ Identify happiness as a therapeutic intervention  
"Please laugh at least 4 times a day: this will bring your sugars down"  
"Please tickle your Dad atleast 4 times a day: this will make him happy and healthy"

► The Inter-Consultation Interruption

- ◆ End on a happy note  
"Thank you for coming. Hope to see you again, in good health"
- ◆ Wish everyone happiness  
"May you be happy"  
"We wish all of us happiness"

► In A Nut Shell

- ◆ Be happy
- ◆ Spread happiness
- ◆ Create a virtuous cycle of happiness

sister construct of glycaemic happiness suggests focusing on four pillars or stakeholders: the person living with diabetes, the family member, the physician, and the style of patient-physician communication. Happiness should be viewed, by all those involved, not only as an endpoint of health but as a means to achieve good health.

To ensure euthymia, all these stakeholders and process should be euthymic. In simpler words, this suggests that a health care system which promotes happiness will facilitate the achievement of euthymic euglycaemia. This means that the health care system's structure (environment), operating procedure and process (communication) should promote happiness. This brief communication describes a few ways to create a happy environment within the diabetes care clinic (Table). These practices can easily be extrapolated to other health care settings.

## The Environment

A comfortable environment is conducive to a relaxed encounter with the health care system. Physical comfort, or ease, helps facilitate good health as well. This can be ensured by ensuring proper ambient lighting, temperature and air quality. Personal comfort creates a sense of euthymia in the diabetes care provider, which facilitates euthymic communication. Thus, the environment is an important determinant of ensuring happiness.

## Communication Style

Eulexithymia has been proposed as a desirable aspect of language of diabetes care.<sup>7</sup> The diabetes care provider's communication style, both verbal and non-verbal, contributes significantly to happiness.<sup>8,9</sup> Examples of

positive communication styles are listed in Table-1. A happy diabetes care provider should be able to instill a sense of optimism and dynamism, in the patient. This can be done through a proactive and friendly communication style.

## Communication Content

Integrating happiness into routine communication makes it an integral part of practice. Asking the patient about the current level of happiness, and agreeing upon its improvement as a target, creates a framework for further history-taking shared decision making. This discussion creates a feeling of team work between patient and physician, and serves as a tool as well as technique for better clinical care. Happiness can be introduced as a trouble shooting technique (Table). The table describes examples of the ways in which happiness can be used in the diabetes care clinic. In short, a discussion on happiness has a therapeutic (both therapeutic and diagnostic) effect on the person seeking care.

## The Take Home Message

Attention to happiness in communication, through simple measures, helps kickstart a virtuous cycle which reinforces happiness in the person living with diabetes and the health care provider.

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