

Neekie Salehi

Mr. Greco

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### One Donut Too Many?

Imagine waking up on a family vacation and feeling unlike yourself. You are sweaty, thirsty, fatigued, and your vision is blurred. You are eating all the time and using the bathroom constantly. The climate is hot and dry, unlike anything you've experienced before, so you think this is all normal. When you get back from your trip, you end up in the hospital. This is what Aava Salehi went through when she was 16 years old after taking a family trip.

Aava, my older sister was diagnosed with Type One Diabetes immediately upon her return home. Aava explained, "Where we had traveled to was really hot, so we thought it was kinda normal, but no one else was going through this fatigue and dehydration compared to me. But my mom since she works with diabetics she kinda knew I had it even before I was diagnosed and she's the one that urged the doctor to get me tested when we came back from our vacation. Because she knew the symptoms when she saw them." (A. Salehi)

She also had to go through the awkward process of telling other friends and family about her experience. Aava recalls, "Their reactions were definitely ignorant. You're the fittest person I know, you never eat junk, how could you be diagnosed. Or, they'd be like *oh my god* – one too many donuts? Like, haha. I think for most people those comments would definitely come off as rude and that they could get mad that people didn't know what was happening but I wasn't too fazed by those comments just because when I was first diagnosed I had no idea what type one

diabetes is. It's not something they teach you in school. I think rather than get mad I would take it as an opportunity to educate them on my situation and what type one diabetes is" (A. Salehi).

A common misconception about Type 1 Diabetes is that it is the same Type 2 Diabetes or "adult-onset" diabetes, which commonly occurs when you're older than 45. Type 2 Diabetes is often connected to obesity and seen as a self-inflicted disease. However, Type 1 Diabetes, is often called juvenile diabetes because it tends to appear in people of a younger age. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "If you have Type 1 Diabetes, your pancreas isn't making insulin or is making very little. Insulin is a hormone that enables blood sugar to enter the cells in your body where it can be used for energy. Without insulin, blood sugar can't get into cells and builds up in the bloodstream" ("Type 1 Diabetes"). Type 2 Diabetes occurs more commonly worldwide, meanwhile Type 1 affects fewer people, and it's as commonly known. Aava is one of the people who have to live daily with this disease.

Aava remembers when she first learned of her diagnosis: "I was just in a lot of shock, I didn't think it was real. I was like, 'I'm super healthy, I work out all the time, I don't eat junk food.' Honestly, I never ate bad foods, really, at the time. So I was like, 'there's no way this could happen to me.' I didn't really know what it was so I didn't know how to process it or comprehend it. So it was just a lot of shock" (A. Salehi). Not only did she have to cope with it, but so did others around her. Our mom, Fojan Salehi, recalls, "Basically Aava's attitude towards the disease helped me cope with it much better than I thought. She learned everything that she needed to do very quickly and she was very motivated to get everything under control so that helped reassure me that she will be okay and that helped with me coping with the situation." When Aava first got diagnosed, she thought her life was going to change in a tremendous way.

Aava said, “I thought I wasn’t going to be able to eat the same foods. I thought that I would have to go on a really strict diet and not be able to do a lot of the things that I wanted to do. But over time I learned that, that was not the case and that my life didn't actually have to change that much.”

Aava was able to have a continue her life normally as she normally would but incorporate managing her blood sugars. “When I go to the gym I have to take my insulin pump off because working out tends to drop my blood sugar a lot--my day to day life is just including the process of giving myself insulin when I eat.” When Aava first go diagnosed she had to get a 504 plan at her school. This allowed her to stop her time during a test in case she needed to give herself insulin, she also had this so she could check her blood sugars on her phone in class. This really helped her in terms of managing her school and being able to have the resources she needed to get through her school days. Currently, Aava does everything as she regularly does but when she eats throughout the day or does any strenuous activity she has to give herself medication to manage her blood sugars. Aava is currently in college and is just like any other student.

Aava’s personal experience with Type 1 Diabetes led her to pursue her future as a Nurse Practitioner in Pediatric Endocrinology. She wants to work specifically with kids with hormone issues and Type 1 Diabetes. She explained how this would be allowing her to connect with her patients in a unique way. “Going in working with that population, I'm allowed to provide a special perspective that's very special. Because when these kids get diagnosed they're going to be scared, they're going to be confused they're going to be shocked and these are all feeling that I've gone through when I was around their age and with the same diagnosis and I'll be able to empathize with them on another level that other doctors and nurses might not be able to.” Being able to connect with her patients and show them that life doesn’t change much and that

she is fine. Aava expressed that since she feels safe and secure with Type 1 Diabetes it might put patients at ease. She'd be able to show them that she is okay and just like everyone else she knows.

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