

A person is shown from the chest up, holding a lit sparkler. The sparkler is bright and glowing, with many sparks flying out. The person is wearing a grey sweater. The background is a solid blue color. The overall mood is one of hope and resilience.

Coping With Diabetes Distress

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Presenter Disclosure



I have worked with: Animas, Dexcom, Insulet, Medtronic, Abbott, Sanofi, Novo Nordisk, Lilly, Merck, Diabetes Canada and JDRF

Objectives

1. Define diabetes distress
2. Identify the impact of grief/ trauma
 - overlap between these concepts
3. Contributing factors
4. Teach coping strategies
 - increase self-compassion
 - incorporate “downshifting”
 - use affirmations

Definition

“Diabetes distress refers to an emotional state where people experience feelings such as **stress, guilt or denial** that arise from living with diabetes and the burden of self-management” *



* Kreider, KE. Diabetes Distress or Major Depression Disorder? A Practical Approach to Diagnosing and Treating Psychological Comorbidities of Diabetes. [Diabetes Ther.](#) 2017 Feb; 8(1): 1–7.

Facts

- Half of T1's experience it
- 65% report positive quality of life and only 13% identified likely depression
- Diabetes distress is very specific to diabetes, not the same as depression



Vallis, M., et al. Diabetes Attitudes, Wishes and Needs Second Study (Dawn2): Understanding Diabetes-Related Psychosocial Outcomes for Canadians with Diabetes. Can J of Diabetes 2016; 40 (3): 234-241.

Support

- How often are T1's asked about their emotions and diabetes?
- Psychological and physical pillars of health are one and the same...** but psychological support is often the missing piece in diabetes care.



CALM approach

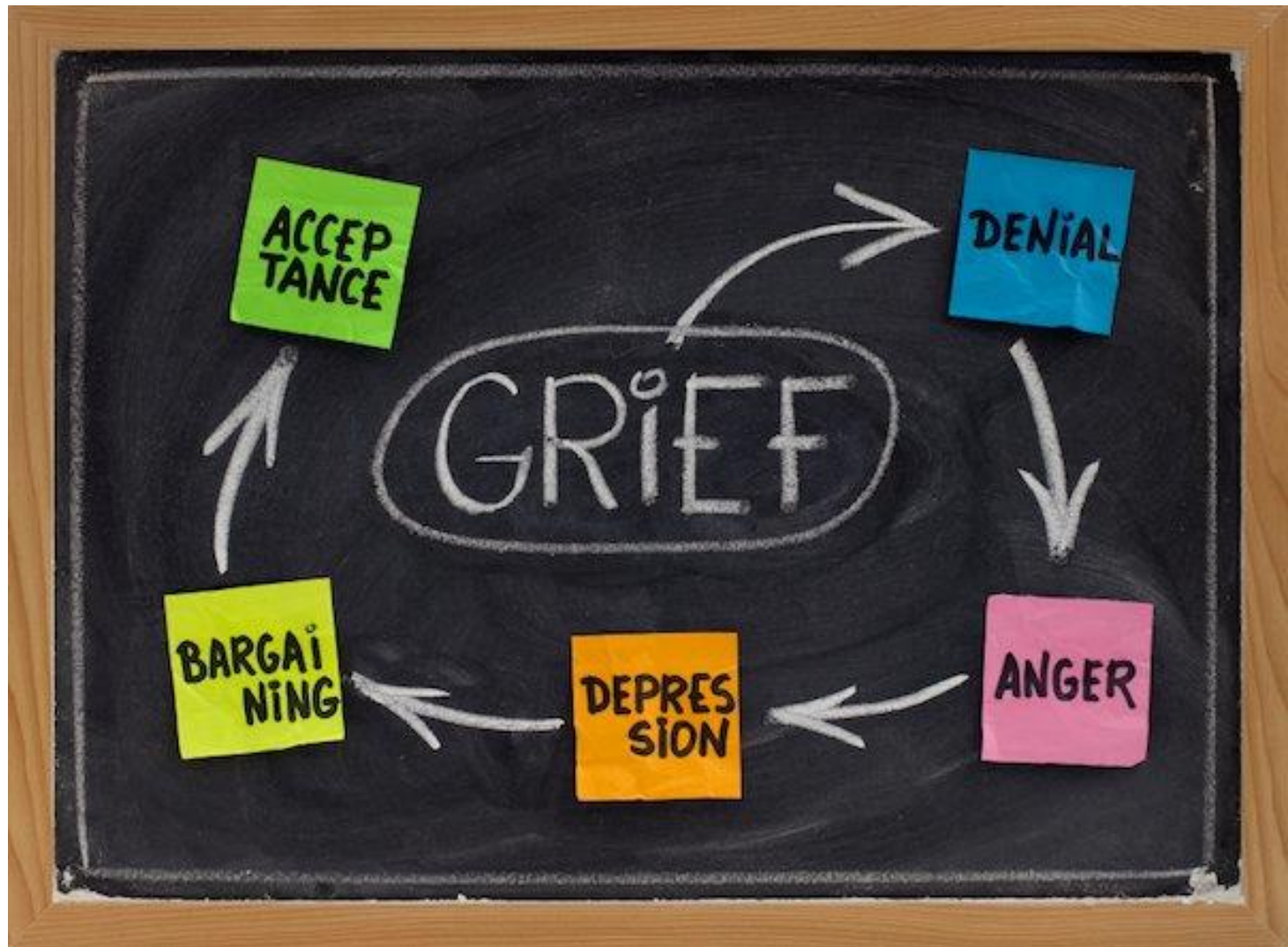
- **C**onnect
- Match **A**ffect
- **L**isten, really listen! (Parrot, don't paraphrase)
- If you do all this, you provide a **M**irror and reflect their experience



Kolari, Jennifer. "Connected Parenting: How to raise a great kid" and "You're ruining my life!"
"Surviving the teenage years with Connected Parenting."

Stress
Guilt
Denial





Thoughts

“Maybe I
can live well
with this...”

“Maybe
this is a
mistake!”

“Why me?
This is so
unfair”

“I have to have
the perfect
A1C to avoid
complications”

“No-one
understands
what this is
like”

“I am lazy/
not trying
hard enough”

“I can't
keep
doing this”

Key Factors

- “Insulin mistrust”: not understanding or feeling in control of how insulin works/ not trusting prescribed doses and therefore “feeding insulin”
- Fear and acute anxiety about hypoglycemia... derails management, T1D’s keep a buffer, DKA risk goes up

Trauma

- Living with T1D involves trauma along with loss
- Severe lows and DKA
- High levels of anxiety, sometimes true fear
- Anxiety is about the balance of perceived danger with coping skills

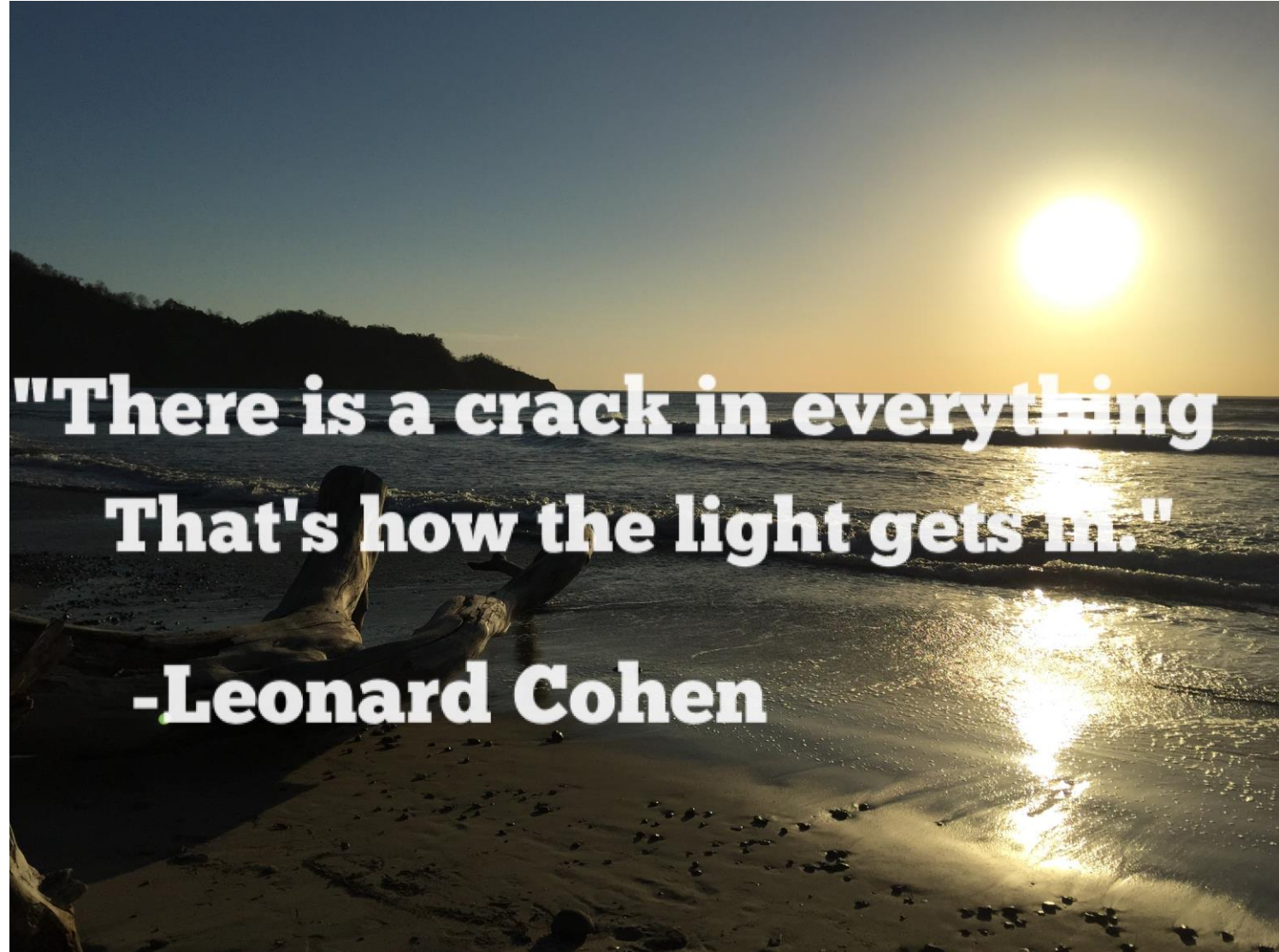


**When we are no longer able to
change a situation we are
challenged to change
ourselves**



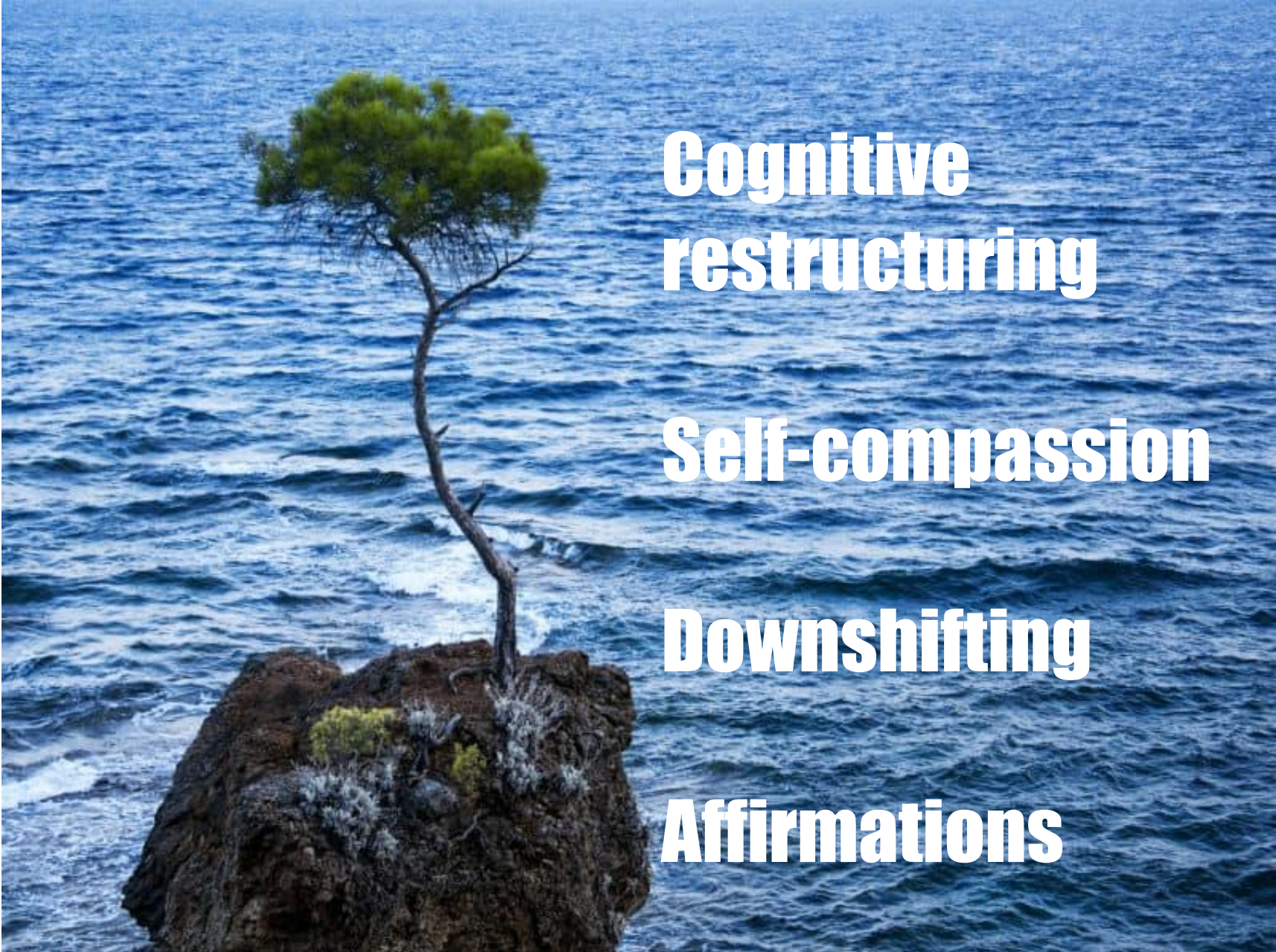
Viktor Frankl, psychiatrist and
holocaust survivor

How do we build resilience?



**"There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in."**

-Leonard Cohen

A photograph of a single, slender tree with a dense, rounded canopy of green foliage. The tree is growing out of a dark, jagged rock formation that protrudes from the sea. The ocean is a deep blue with white-capped waves crashing against the base of the rock. The sky is not visible, as the top of the image is cut off.

**Cognitive
restructuring**

Self-compassion

Downshifting

Affirmations

Cognitive Restructuring

- Fancy term for changing thoughts
- Collaborate with diabetes team to address medical issues (Pump settings need adjusting? Need new tech? Find experts you trust!)
- Set reasonable goals for adjusting glucose levels gradually when conquering fears, make a list of situations and start with easiest

Process grief & trauma

- To recover from scares like lows and DKA... must tell your story to trusted supports
- Expect you need some time to get back on track and gradually nudge yourself into range
- Affirm your courage and strength with every step you make when afraid

Self-compassion

- Practice self-compassion and teach others to “show yourself the same kindness you would show a friend”
- The Edelman Report: “Be Sweet to Yourself” ... SC also lowers A1C!
- Reduce judgement and over-identification

Friis AM, Johnson MH, et al. Kindness matters: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Mindful Self-Compassion Intervention Improves Depression, Distress and HbA1C Among Patients With Diabetes. Diabetes Care 2016

Down-shifting

- Longevity research –Blue Zones
- Social connection
- Find ways to relieve stress every day
- Do simple things well: eat, de-stress, engage with people and rest

Affirmations

- Like gratitude but give yourself credit
- Notice what you have done well
- Amplify positive moments by focusing on them a moment longer
- When anxious, list unexpected challenges you have faced and describe how you handled them

Summary

- We cannot solve all the problems facing us, we must build resiliency to face them
- This will help ease the grieving process and reduce diabetes distress
- Use positive coping skills like mindful self-compassion, downshifting and affirmations

Resources

- ***Mind over Mood*** by Christine Padesky and Dennis Greenberger
- ***The Gifts of Imperfection*** by Brene Brown
- ***Option B*** by Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant
- ***Connected Parenting*** by Jennifer Kolari
- Online: ASweetLife.org, Beyond Type 1, Connected in Motion, self-compassion.org



THANK YOU

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