



**Steno Diabetes Center  
Copenhagen**

# End Diabetes Stigma

Bryan Cleal & Dan Grabowski

Department of Prevention, Health Promotion and Community Care  
Steno Diabetes Center Copenhagen



Addressing diabetes stigma,  
is an essential missing  
element of effective  
diabetes care...



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# Perceived controllability and responsibility



Misinformation

Well, it's their own fault, you know!

I'm self-disciplined, it wouldn't happen to me



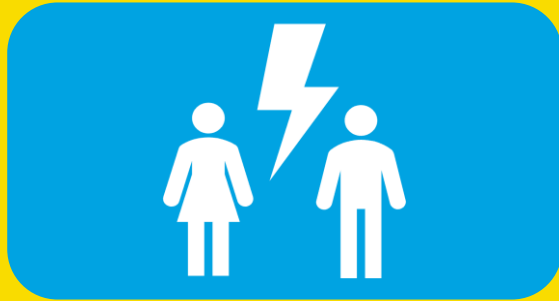
Moral judgement

Should you really be eating that?

[EndDiabetesStigma.org](http://EndDiabetesStigma.org)  
[#EndDiabetesStigma](https://twitter.com/EndDiabetesStigma)



# Perceived burden and sickness



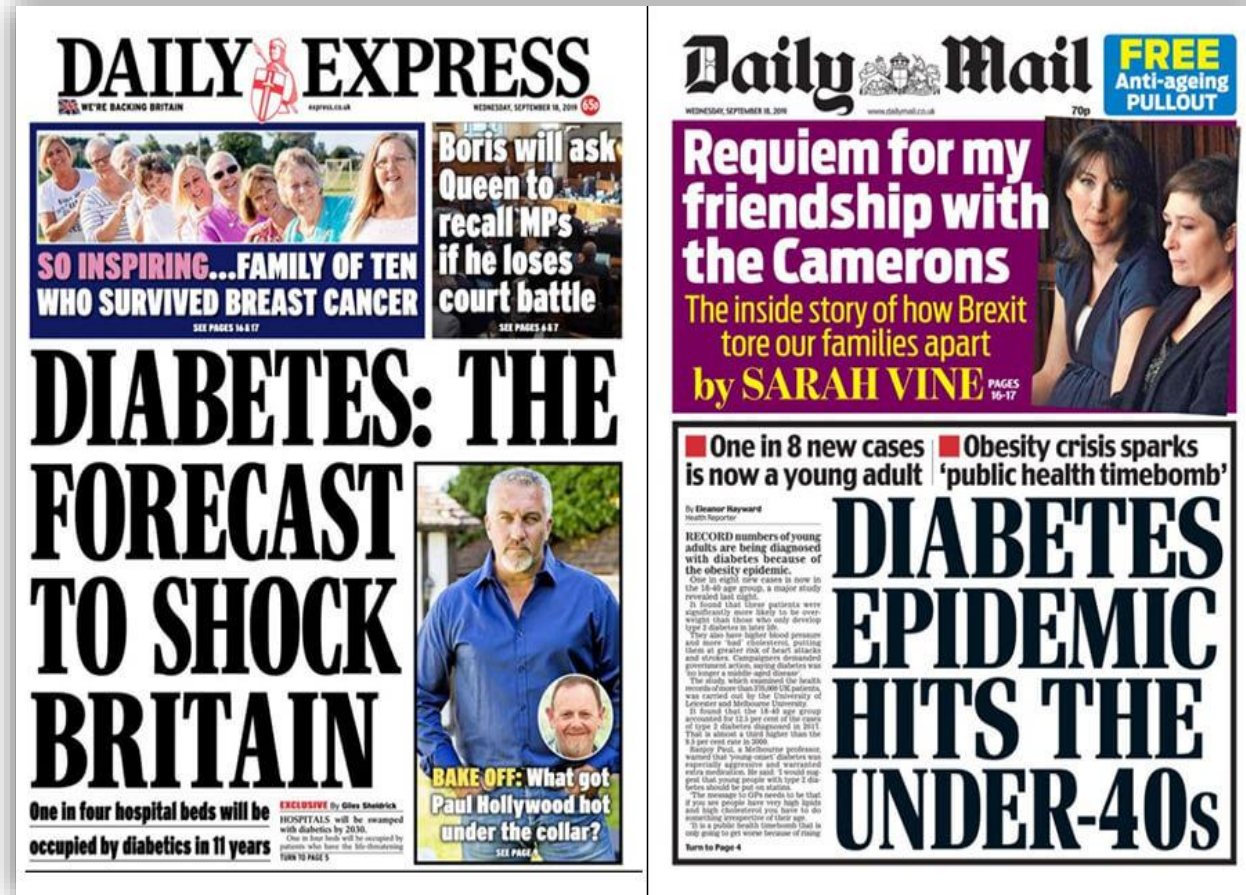
Strain of relationships



Reduced ability to work



Economic burden on healthcare & society



## Visible signs of diabetes



Treatments



Complications



Wearable tech



Hypoglycemia

 **SWEET KILLS**  
UNCONTROLLED DIABETES  
CAUSE WOUND TO HEAL SLOWER.  
FOR MORE INFORMATION: ENDDIABETESSTIGMA.ORG



# Self-stigma

- People with different types of diabetes can endorse and internalise diabetes stereotypes
  - T2D
    - Embarrassment, guilt, shame, self-blame
  - GDM
    - Guilt, personal responsibility
  - T1D (adolescents and young adults)
    - Feeling ashamed to manage diabetes in public
    - Endorsing negative self-images

e.g., Browne et al. *BMJ Open* 2013, Celik et al. *Diabet Med* 2023, Kato et al. *Patient Educ Couns* 2016, Davidsen et al. *EClinicalMedicine* 2022, Browne et al. *BMJ Open* 2014



# Diabetes stigma is associated with



- **General**

- Self-efficacy
- Quality of life
- Life satisfaction\*
- Self-esteem
- Resilience

- **Diabetes-specific**

- Diabetes self-efficacy\*
- Diabetes-specific quality of life



- **General**

- Depressive symptoms
- Anxiety symptoms

- **Diabetes-specific**

- Diabetes distress
- Diabetes self-stigma



# Diabetes stigma is associated with sub-optimal

- Clinical outcomes
  - Higher HbA1c
  - More frequent **hypoglycaemia** and **hyperglycaemia**
  - Increased diabetes **complications** and **more frequent hospitalisations**
  - Higher **body mass index**
- Diabetes self-care
  - **Negative appraisals of insulin** among adults with insulin-treated T2D, and adolescents with T1D, which are associated with..
    - **Greater omission of oral medication and insulin**
  - **Unhealthy eating patterns**

Ingram, J. A. et al. Stigma Heal 7, 454–460 (2022). Wang R H et al Biol Res Nurs 2021:23(4);619-28





But how do we actually  
go about reducing stigma  
and its impacts?



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# Acknowledge diabetes stigma exists and has consequences

- Diabetes stigma is a pervasive global issue.
- It can negatively impact emotional, mental, and physical health, self-care, access to optimal healthcare, and social and professional opportunities.
- Little research has focused on interventions.
  - We may be able to look to other health-related stigma interventions as a model.

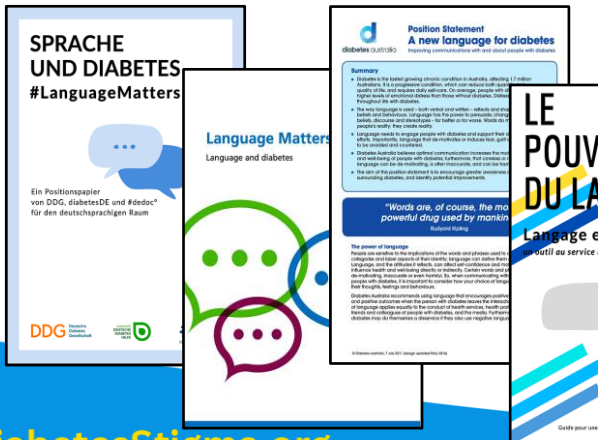


# Changing the narrative

- We must shift the perspective

From a focus on blame and responsibility, control and compliance...

- We must change the narrative for people living with diabetes.



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# Språk är viktigt!

En guide för bra kommunikation kring typ 1 diabetes



Skapad med utgång i material från [www.language mattersdiabetes.com](http://www.language mattersdiabetes.com)

Översättning och bearbetning till svenska av Together Against Diabetes 1 & T1D-appen. I samarbete med svenska patienter och vårdpersonal.



ers

g diabetes:

on the genetic, biological, and behavioral factors, as well as social factors influencing health.

etes and to people



#LanguageMatters  
Simple principles for appropriate and effective communication

The words we use to talk about diabetes often reflect a lack of awareness or consideration, or may express conscious or unconscious bias.



# Changing the narrative: Positive and accurate representation

- Positive and accurate portrayals of people with diabetes, and its potential complications, counters stereotypes and promotes inclusivity.
- This includes:
  - Accurately representing diabetes in pop culture and news.
  - Avoiding stigmatizing imagery.
  - Avoiding fear-based tactics or imagery.

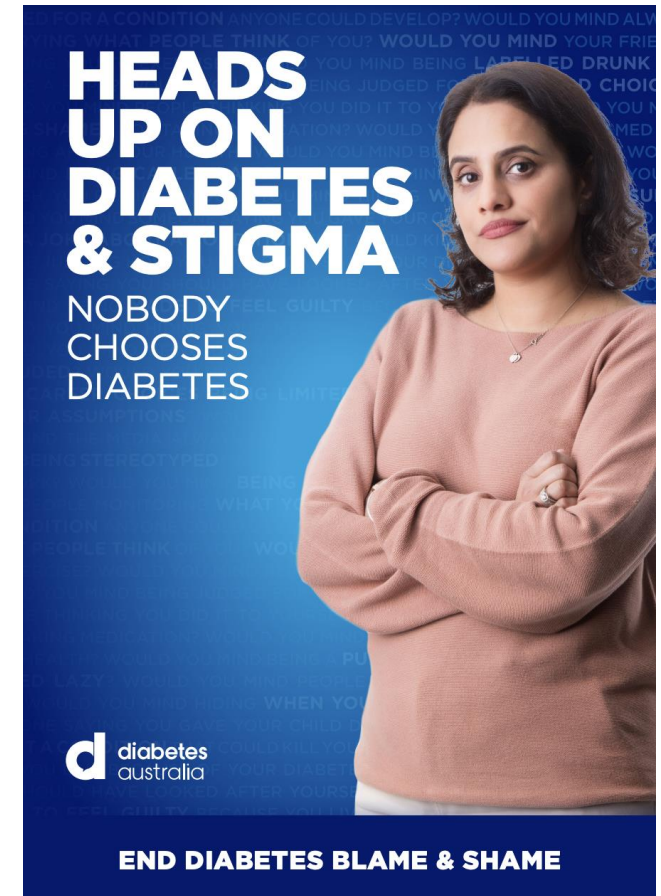


Image of Stacey Gill, a character with type 1 diabetes from Netflix's adaptation of 'The Baby-Sitters Club.'



# The role of diabetes organisations

- Health and diabetes organizations play a key role in communicating and protecting the rights of people with diabetes.
  - Embed addressing stigma into strategic plans.
  - Advocate for, and support, people experiencing diabetes stigma and discrimination.
  - Advocate for policies and funding.
  - Create better campaigns!



# Addressing diabetes stigma in healthcare settings

- Addressing stigma from health professionals & in healthcare settings is vital.
- Strategies might include:
  - Contact-based approaches.
  - Trainings on stigma-free communication, consults, and environments.
  - Education on empathic, person-centred care.



# Addressing diabetes stigma in healthcare settings

- However, barriers exist:
  - Few interventions have been studied.
  - Minimization of psychosocial & environmental determinants of health & well-being.
  - Power imbalance between health professional and “patient.”
  - Focus on “treating” diabetes.



## *“It’s a part of what I am, but not all of who I am”*: A qualitative study of identity formation in adolescents and emerging adults with type 1 diabetes

*“I consider myself to be a person who is greatly affected by my diabetes in the sense that it has affected my life a lot. But I don’t think it affects who you are on the outside. But it has played a role in shaping who I am, to put it that way. It’s been involved in everything. But it’s not what you show on the outside. That you are an ill person”*. Female, 17 years old



*“It’s a part of what I am, but not all of who I am”*: A qualitative study of identity formation in adolescents and emerging adults with type 1 diabetes

*“It’s not that I fear that people know that I have diabetes. It’s more about the possibility of them misunderstanding. I worried that people would judge me like: ‘Oh, can’t she do things? Oh, she can’t do this or that.’”*  
Female, 20 years old

## *“It’s a part of what I am, but not all of who I am”*: A qualitative study of identity formation in adolescents and emerging adults with type 1 diabetes

*“I don’t like having all these things [pump and sensor] because then I feel extra sick. Having all these things attached to my body. I feel that it’s an extra burden on my shoulders and I’m like: “You’re sick, Emily. You’re not like all the others. You have all these things attached to your body and it’s not normal.” Female, 20 years old*

## *“It’s a part of what I am, but not all of who I am”*: A qualitative study of identity formation in adolescents and emerging adults with type 1 diabetes

*“Sometimes I have these depressive thoughts about myself because of my diabetes where I feel that I’m not worth as much because of my diabetes. (...) [Because of] all these things that I can’t do. Apparently, I don’t have a good image of myself because I feel that taking insulin is really pathetic. Why can’t my body just work like it’s supposed to?”* Male, 22 years old

*“It’s very hard mentally [to have diabetes]. Especially when you’re a child and young, because then you’re different and oh, can I do the same things as the others? It’s not exactly depression, but it can really bring your spirits down.”* Female, 24 years old

## Group work

Have you observed diabetes stigma in your worklife?

Have you talked with people with diabetes about stigma related issues?

Have you talked to colleagues about diabetes stigma?

How can you contribute to end diabetes stigma?



## Consensus achieved

39 Statements = Unanimous  
10 Statements = Grade A

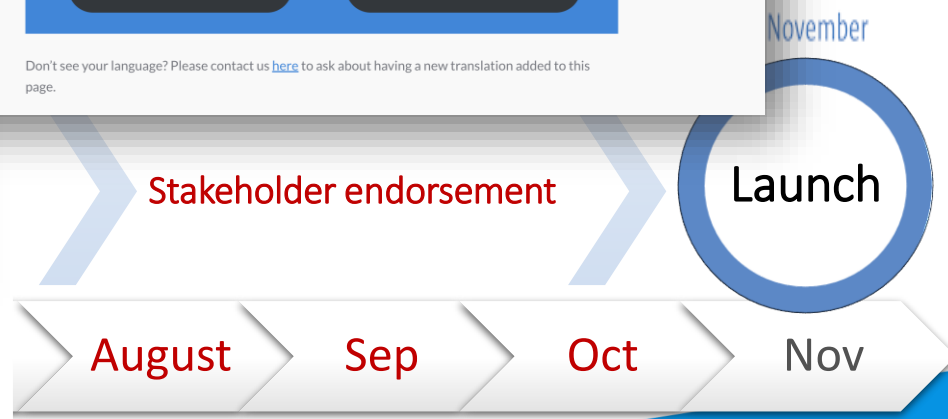
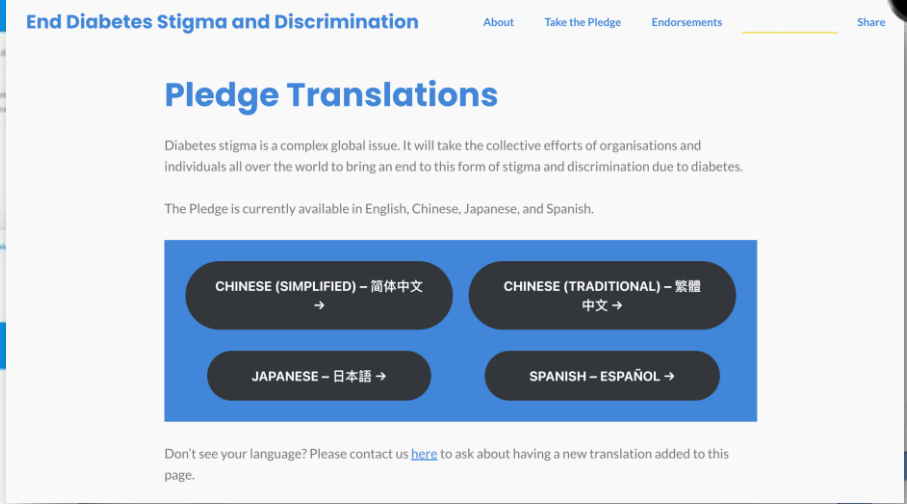
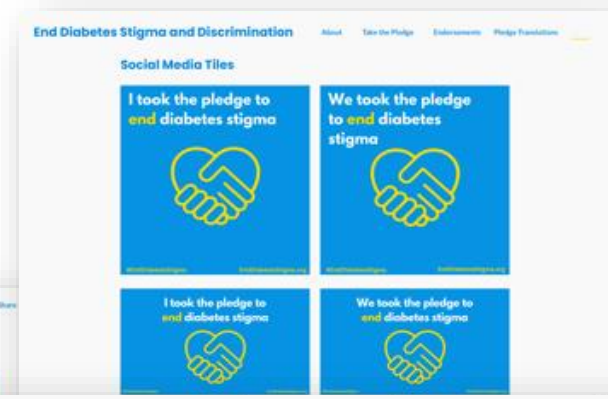
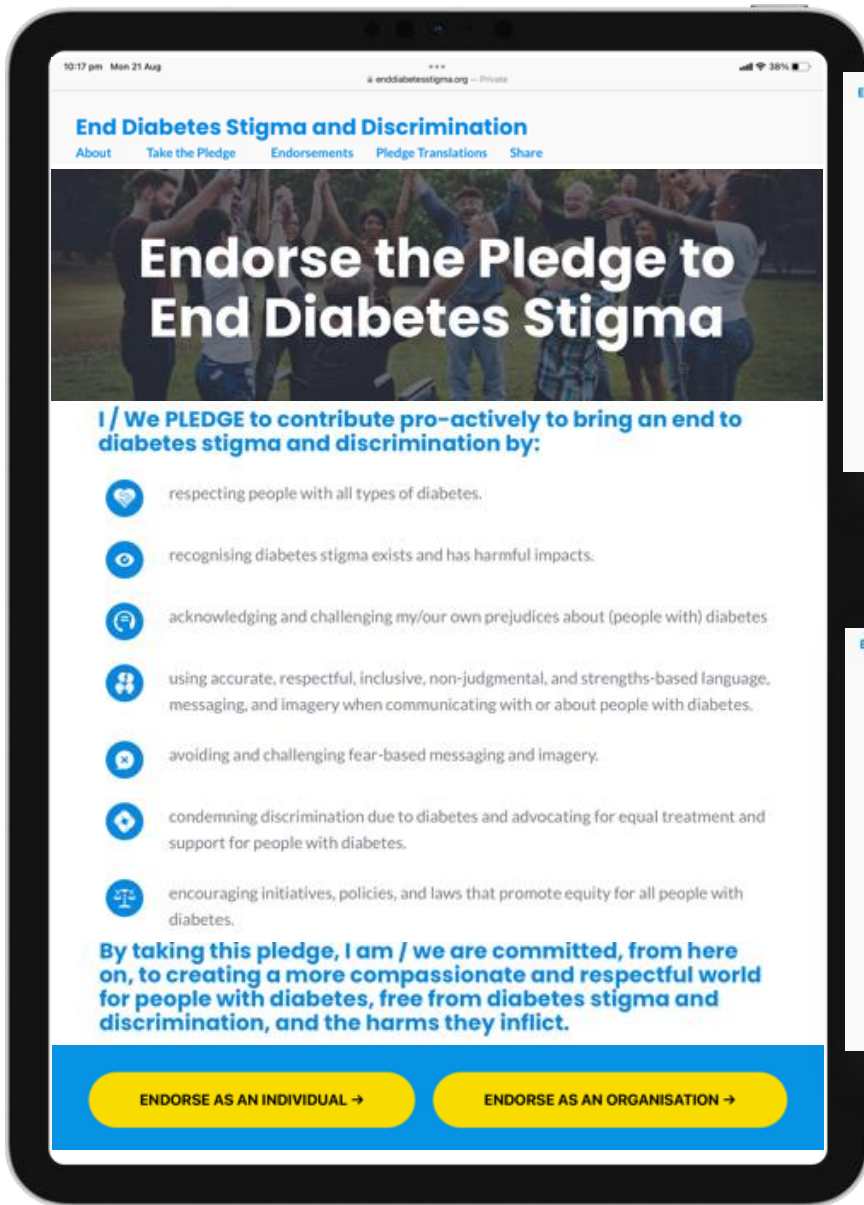
1 Pledge = Unanimous

I / We PLEDGE to contribute pro-actively to bring an end to diabetes stigma and discrimination by:

- respecting people with all types of diabetes.
- recognising diabetes stigma exists and has harmful impacts.
- acknowledging and challenging my/our own prejudices about (people with) diabetes.
- using accurate, respectful, inclusive, non-judgmental, and strengths-based language, messaging, and imagery when communicating with or about people with diabetes.
- avoiding and challenging fear-based messaging and imagery.
- condemning discrimination due to diabetes and advocating for equal treatment and support for people with diabetes.
- encouraging initiatives, policies, and laws that promote equity for all people with diabetes.

By taking this pledge, I am / we are committed, from here on, to creating a more compassionate and respectful world for people with diabetes, free from diabetes stigma and discrimination, and the harms they inflict.





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Take the Pledge  
Share the Pledge



# Next Steps

We took the pledge to end diabetes stigma



1,880+



210+



90+

## • Vision for the Pledge

- Go global and beyond diabetes community
- Kickstart implementation: activities, training, policies and greater advocacy
- Accountability for organisations and individuals
- Empower people (with diabetes) to recognise and call out diabetes stigma
- Empower *everyone* to be part of the solution

## • #WDD23

- launch events around the world, starting in Melbourne, connecting via videolink & social media

## • Ideas & contributions welcome

- no budget to generate interest: beyond diabetes community; by media; for live launch event(s)





# Take the Pledge: Panel Discussion

[EndDiabetesStigma.org](https://EndDiabetesStigma.org)

We took the pledge  
to **end** diabetes  
stigma



[#EndDiabetesStigma](https://twitter.com/EndDiabetesStigma)





# Är det någon här som pratar svenska?

## Pledge Translations

Diabetes stigma is a complex global issue. It will take the collective efforts of organisations and individuals all over the world to bring an end to this form of stigma and discrimination due to diabetes.

The Pledge is currently available in English, Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, French, Italian, Japanese, Sinhalese, Spanish, and Thai.

ARABIC – العربية →

CHINESE (SIMPLIFIED) – 简体中文 →

CHINESE (TRADITIONAL) – 繁體中文 →

DANISH – DANSK →

DUTCH – NEDERLANDS →

FRENCH – FRANÇAIS →

ITALIAN – ITALIANO →

JAPANESE – 日本語 →

SINHALESE – සිංහල →

SPANISH – ESPAÑOL →

THAI – ภาษาไทย →

Don't see your language? Please contact us [here](#) to ask about having a new translation added to this page.