



# Language Matters

*A guide to using inclusive and empathetic  
language for Women with Diabetes*

#LanguageMatters in diabetes. And as women with diabetes, we know that the language used when talking about us and our diabetes plays a crucial role in shaping our experiences. By using language that supports and respects us, we can create a more inclusive and welcoming space for all women living with diabetes. Together, we can shape the conversation to make sure our voices are heard and our choices are respected in every part of care and daily life. Women have long been at the forefront of diabetes advocacy and community efforts, driving initiatives that push for better care, representation, and support for everyone in the diabetes community.

This resource has been developed by women with diabetes, for women with diabetes and encourages thoughtful communication and amplifies our rallying cry **#NothingAboutHerWithoutHer**

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Diabetes Advocate

It is said that

**being a woman  
is challenging.**

These challenges increase significantly  
when she is a

**woman living  
with Diabetes.**

LANGUAGE MATTERS - WOMEN WITH DIABETES





Why is she having sweets if she's diabetic? Maybe she forgets about her health when it's that time of the month!

Can she be a good mom? How will she look after her child if she needs to constantly monitor her sugar levels?"

Why isn't she married yet? Is it because she is diabetic?

I don't know if we should promote her. We can't afford menstrual days as it is. She will have frequent sick days too!

What's with the constant mood swings?

Won't she give her children diabetes?





... and it can go on. It's a never-ending cycle of

**judgements, questions and answers  
which are, well mostly, assumptions.**

In a world where countless women grapple with inequalities in healthcare, education, legal protection, workplace, and within the family, these type of conversations about women with diabetes only serve to add to these challenges.



However,

**Change is possible. And it starts with Us.**

We all hold the power to rewrite harmful narratives for women living with diabetes. It's all about choosing our words and how we approach conversations with women living with diabetes.

This guide is to help support peers, friends and caregivers of women with diabetes who want to make these women feel seen, heard and understood.

## **Consent matters.**

Do not assume she will always be comfortable to talk about her condition at all times. Ask Her if she wants to share Her story.

## **Respect Her choice**

Be sensitive about the environment and Her relation with the group or individual present.



# **Support matters.**

In social gatherings,

**defend her decisions.**

Call out

**all the stigma.**

Give Her the

**space to speak for herself.**

Don't speak for Her.





# Boundaries matter.

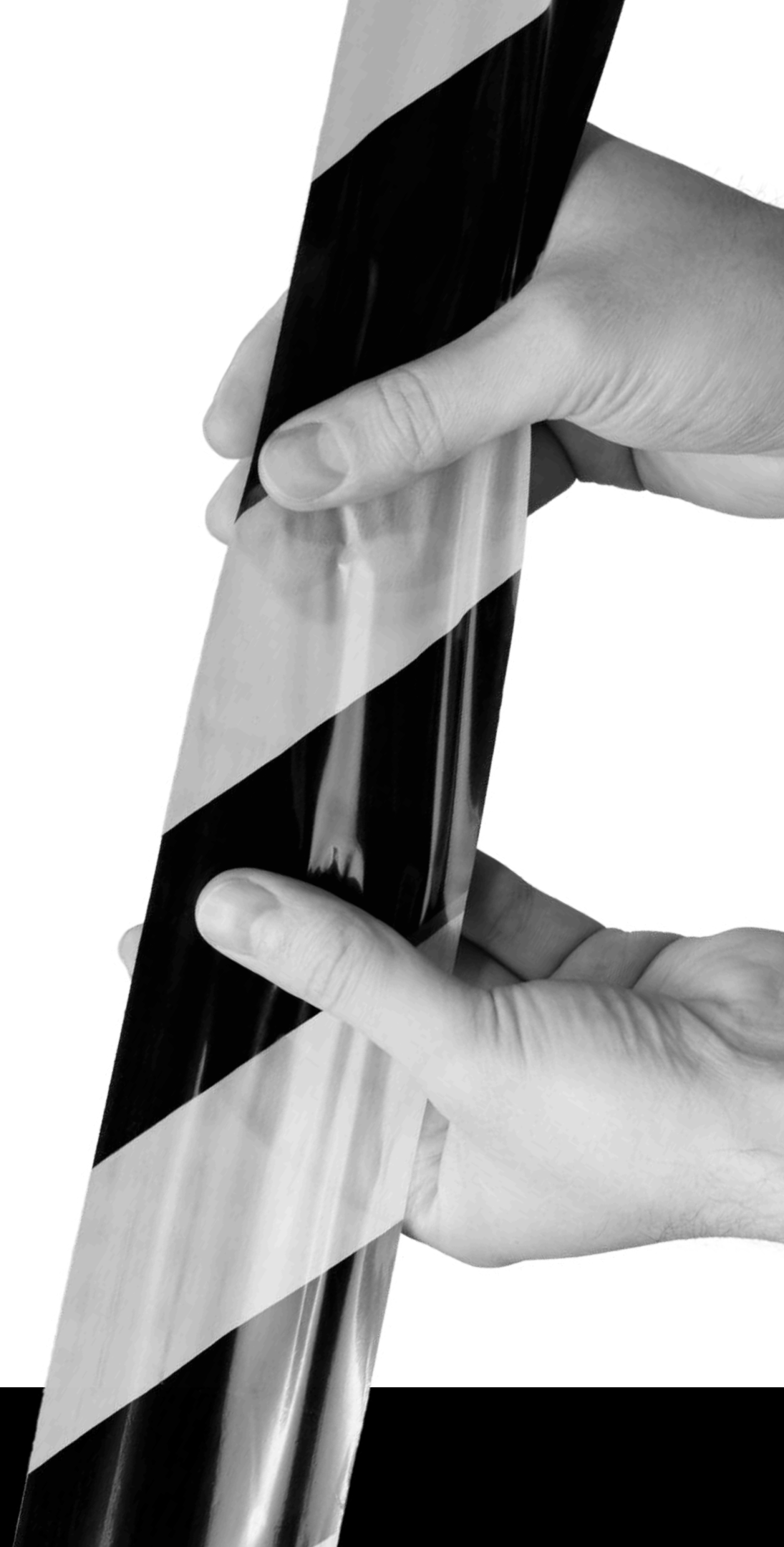
If she chooses to initiate a conversation about diabetes and her health, provide support and encouragement.

## Avoid

going into personal topics such as marriage and pregnancy. If she chooses to initiate a conversation on these matters, provide support and encouragement.

## Instead

create an environment where she feels empowered and confident about sharing her experiences and concerns, and / or suggest a counsellor that might help identify Her concerns and find relevant solutions.



## **All Health Concerns Matter.**

Health is linked to Diabetes but not every health condition is. Having a particular medical condition can be independent of diabetes and needs to follow the Sick Day Rules in Diabetes.

## **Respect Her health experiences and avoid presumptions.**

Refrain from automatically attributing Her sick day or discomfort solely to Her glucose levels. She may be experiencing issues such as headaches, toothaches, or other issues unrelated to Her diabetes.



# For the **Media.**

From newsrooms to social media feeds, the language we use can either uplift or undermine the experiences of women with diabetes.

So, let's take a moment to shine the spotlight on how you can make a positive impact through your words and storytelling.

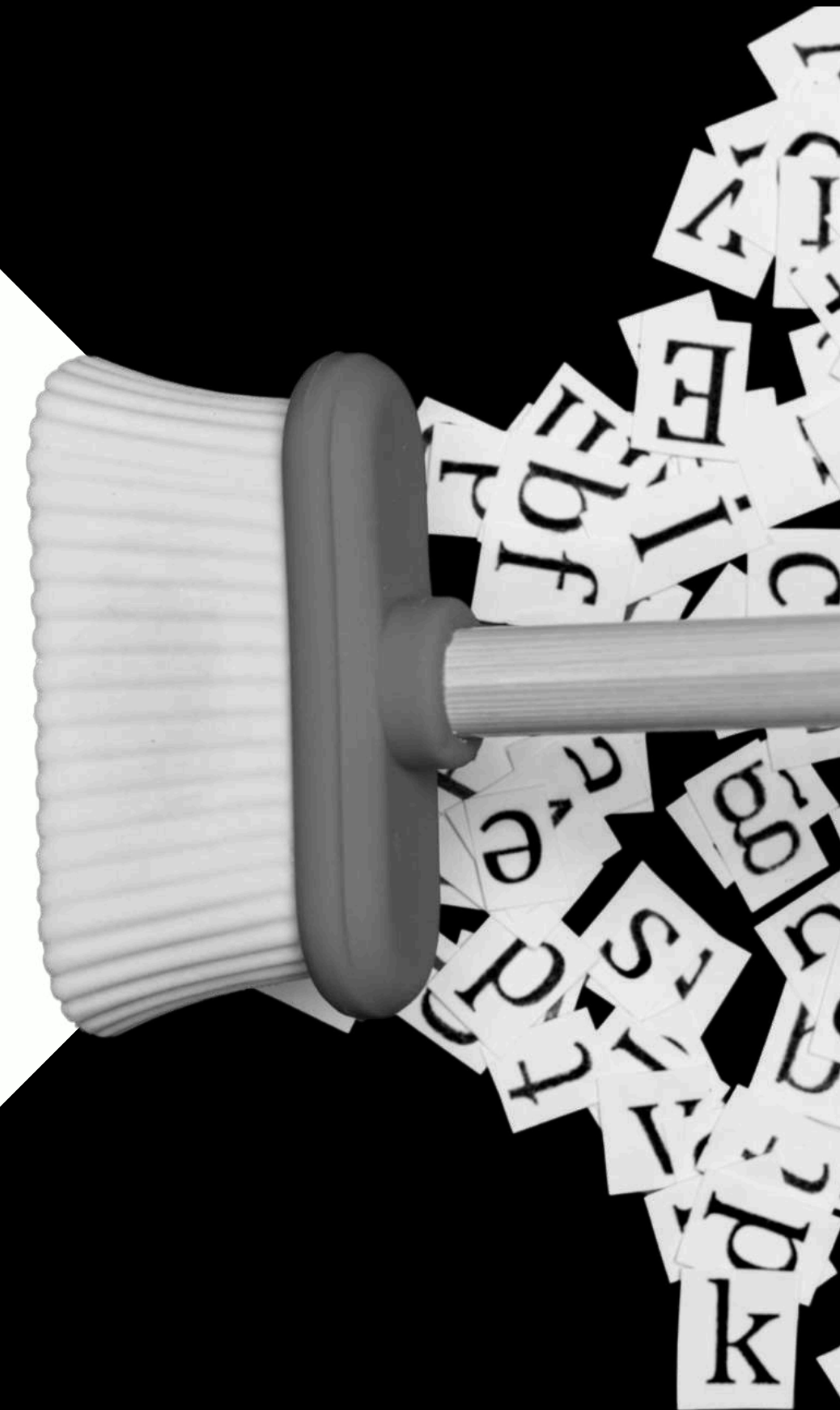


## **Monitor** Language & Imagery.

Be vigilant about the language used in story coverage or reporting of diabetes. Ensure it is accurate, sensitive, and free of stigma. Pay attention to visual representations as well, avoiding stereotypes and clichés that perpetuate harmful misconceptions.

## **Respect Her** Privacy.

Always ensure to get Her clear permission before using any personal data in reports or presentations. That includes sharing images and videos. Make sure to keep all sensitive information secure and accessible only to authorised individuals.



A hand holding a black umbrella against a pink background. The umbrella is open and covers the top half of the frame. The hand is visible at the bottom left, gripping the handle. The background is a solid, vibrant pink color.

**Show Support,**

**Challenge Bias.**

Be observant in identifying and challenging media bias, and misinformation surrounding diabetes.

If you see misinformation towards a woman with diabetes in media representations, be Her advocate. Challenge stereotypes and misconceptions, ensuring that Her experiences are accurately and respectfully represented.

## **Call Out** **Stigma.**

Whether it's in news reports, TV shows, or social media, be vocal about challenging harmful stereotypes. Strive to foster a more inclusive and empathetic portrayal of women with diabetes.

## **Use** **Empathetic Language.**

Spread messages of understanding and solidarity that amplify the voices of these incredible women with empathy and respect.

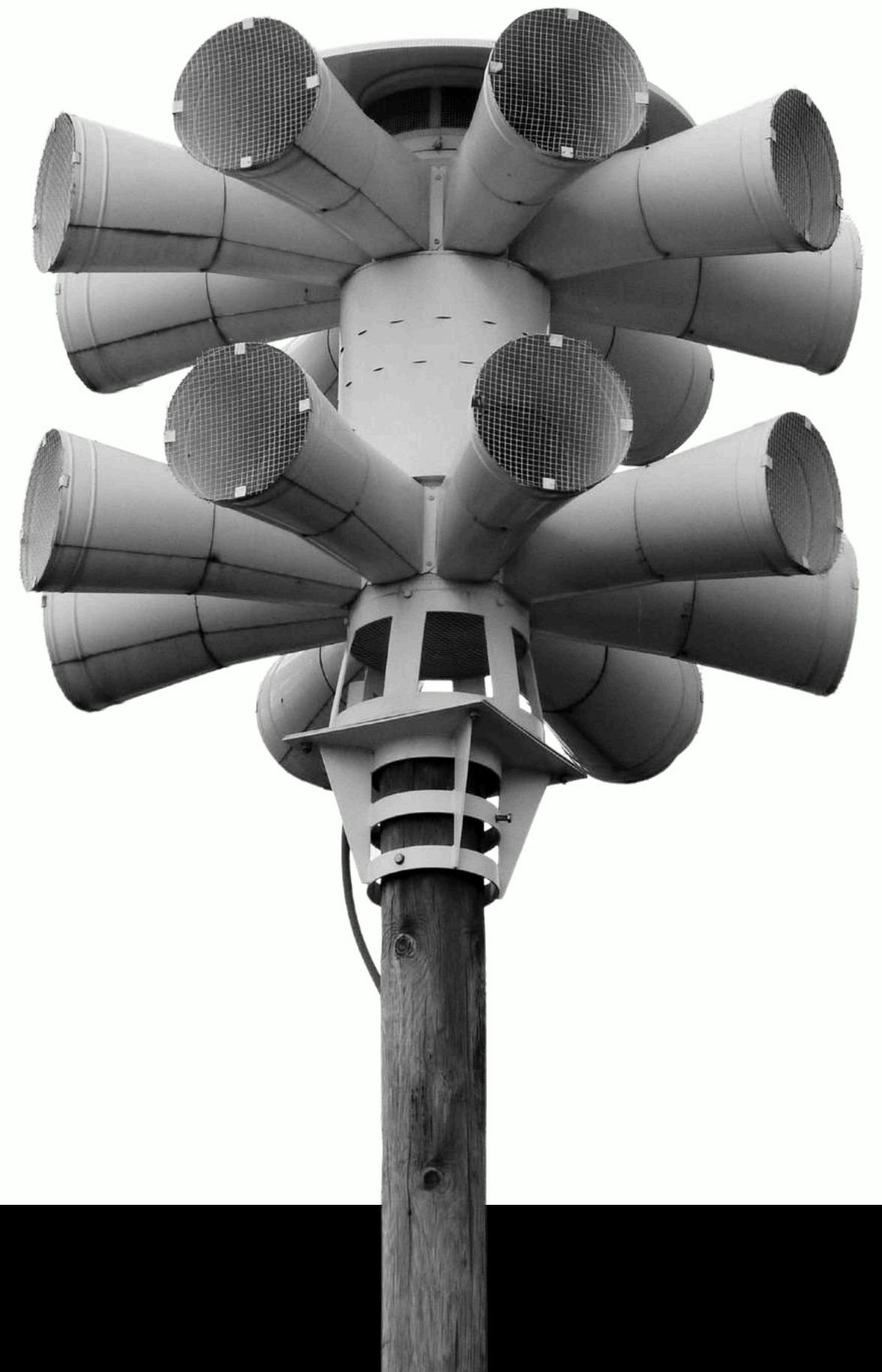


## **Avoid Sensationalization.**

When reporting a story involving a woman living with diabetes - avoid presenting Her condition as catastrophic. Be mindful of the language used when discussing diabetes. Avoid language that reinforces negative stereotypes about individuals living with the condition. Instead, use language that is respectful, accurate, and person-centered.

❌ **She suffers from diabetes.**

✅ **She lives with diabetes.**





## **Promote** **Diverse Storytelling**

Embrace stories that reflect the intersectionality of gender, race, sexuality, age and socio-economic backgrounds within the diabetes community. Show diverse perspectives and stories of women with diabetes to ensure representation across various media platforms.

**Remember, *nothing about her* without her.**



# For **Healthcare** Professionals.

Women with T1D may face unique health challenges, such as menstrual cycle fluctuations, pregnancy risks, or mental health struggles.

Empathetic language shows that the healthcare professional is considering the full picture, not just the medical condition, making women feel seen as individuals.



# Confidentiality & Autonomy.

Respecting privacy is paramount in building trust and maintaining ethical standards.

Respect her preference about who's in the room during consultations. If she prefers to keep things between you and Her, it's vital to honour that choice. After all, Her voice matters most when it comes to decisions about her body and health.

By prioritizing consent and confidentiality, you're not just following the rules – you're showing her that you respect and trust her to guide her own healthcare journey.



## Acknowledgement of **Her Concerns Matters.**

Diabetes isn't just about blood sugar levels and medication. It's about the emotional rollercoaster of living with a chronic condition, the constant worry about the future, and the impact it has on everyday life.



That's why empathy is so crucial in interactions with women living with diabetes.

By truly listening to their concerns, showing understanding for their struggles, and offering support without judgment, you can build trust and rapport that go a long way in their journey towards managing diabetes.

- ❌ **It's all just in your head.**
- ✅ **I hear you. How can I help?**

## **Filter Out the Bias.**

Making assumptions about a woman based solely on her situation is a common pitfall that even the most well-intentioned healthcare professionals can stumble into. So, how about challenging those stereotypes and creating a culture of respect and inclusivity instead?

### **Avoid**

making assumptions about Her health based on superficial factors - like age, weight, dietary preference, lifestyle choices, marital or relationship status.

### **Instead**

hear her out first, without sharing your assumptions. Offer guidance as opposed to judgment.



## To ... get ... her, **Together!**

Women living with diabetes are experts in their own experiences, with valuable insights and preferences that can guide their care.

Embracing a collaborative approach will not only strengthen your relationship with her but also enable her to take an active role in managing her health.

Offer Her options, explain the pros and cons of different treatment approaches, and work together to develop a personalised care plan that aligns with her preferences, family dynamics and values.



# For Caregivers of **Pregnant** **Women With Diabetes**

Ensure that Her safety is never compromised by stigma, bias, or taboo. Use kind and supportive language, free from judgment.

Address mental health openly and empathetically, recognising Her unique challenges in this journey.

Remember, ongoing support is crucial, during pregnancy and postpartum. Continue to provide care and understanding after the baby is born, making sure she feels valued and supported throughout.



# She Matters.

Diabetes may be a part of Her life, but it does not define Her. Remember, it's not just about helping Her manage her blood sugar levels—it's about acknowledging the full spectrum of her experiences, from personal to professional, and everything in between.

From balancing work and family life to pursuing personal passions and professional goals, her daily perseverance and resilience deserve recognition. Celebrating these achievements, big or small, highlights the incredible strength and determination that define her journey.



# Acknowledgements

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# Thank you





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BE TYPE 1 OF A KIND

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