



THE ABLE DIABETIC

Able Guide No. 1

5 Things to Say to Someone Living with Type 1 Diabetes

A practical guide for friends, family, colleagues and managers

Why this guide exists

Type 1 diabetes is invisible. You can't see it, and the person living with it has probably never asked you to acknowledge it. But understanding a little of what they carry every single day changes everything - for them, and for you.

You don't need medical knowledge. You just need the right words.

1. "Is there anything that would make today easier for you?"

This comes into its own when you're doing something out of the ordinary - a long offsite, a trip, an unusual day. The things that feel minor from the outside (where you're eating, when there's a break, whether lunch is happening at a normal time) can require small adjustments that make a real difference. Asking the question means those adjustments can happen quietly, without anyone having to flag a problem.

2. "I read a bit about it — I had no idea it was that constant."

You don't need to have become an expert. Just the act of looking it up communicates care. Most people living with Type 1 diabetes feel uncomfortable going into detail about how it all works - it's genuinely complicated, it takes time to explain, and it can feel like making a fuss. Knowing that someone has done a little of that work themselves removes that pressure entirely.

3. "Do you need a minute?" (with no fuss if the answer is yes)

A hypo - low blood sugar - can arrive without warning and needs to be treated immediately. The most helpful thing you can do is normalise the pause, not make it awkward. No audience. No questions. Just space.

4. “I’m not going to make a thing of this, but I wanted you to know I’m aware.”

For colleagues and managers especially. People with T1D often work very hard to be invisible about their condition in professional settings. Knowing that someone around them quietly understands - and won't make it a performance - is genuinely relieving. It also means they'll feel comfortable giving you a subtle signal if they need a moment, without having to announce it or explain themselves.

On that note: building in a proper break every few hours matters more than it might seem. Working through lunch, or a long stretch without a natural pause, removes the chance to check levels and make small adjustments. It's a simple thing that makes a significant difference.

5. “What’s it actually like?”

The most powerful question of all, and the one almost nobody asks. Not "how do you manage?" (which implies endurance) or "isn't it hard?" (which invites a brave face). Just genuine, open curiosity. Be ready to actually listen.

One thing not to say: "You can't eat that, can you?" — Type 1 diabetics can eat anything. They just need to manage it. The assumption of restriction is one of the most common and most wearing misconceptions about the condition.

Want to understand more?

Sarah's memoir *INVISIBLE IMPACTS* covers her first decade living with Type 1 diabetes - the real version, not the brave face.

For weekly insight, visit theablediabetic.com

To enquire about workplace talks, workshops, or bulk book orders, contact Sarah at sarah@theablediabetic.com.

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