

Balancing Diabetes: Conversations about Finding Happiness and Living Well

Kerri Sparling

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The variety of voices provides a conversational account of issues a diabetic might encounter.

In *Balancing Diabetes: Conversations about Finding Happiness and Living Well*, blogger Kerri Sparling recounts her lifelong experience with type I diabetes. Diagnosed as a young child, she combines her own insights with those of other people with diabetes she's come to know, giving readers an affirmation that others are facing the same challenges.

Sparling begins by talking about her own diagnosis when she was quite young. She pieces the story together through a few vivid memories and interviews with her mother, producing refreshingly frank stories. By describing a device she needed to prevent wetting the bed and including her mother's account of the first doctor visit, she presents the personal difficulties of living with type 1 diabetes, making her an empathetic narrator when relaying the stories of other with with diabetes.

Sparling has blogged about diabetes regularly since 2005 and, for better or worse, *Balancing Diabetes* often reads like a blog in book form. Many readers will like the mix of voices, with Sparling matching anecdotes from specific parts of her own experience with similar tales from her childhood friends or members of her online community. Readers less enamored of this style might find it unfocused or that the number of voices included means most of the personal stories (except the narrator's) only scratch the surface. Still, those learning about diabetes or newly diagnosed should find this book valuable, as it gives a sense of what to expect and suggests the kind of community to turn to for support.

While the book is largely narrative, Sparling does mix in a number of useful tips about how to lead a healthy life with the disease. For example, in a chapter about the importance of exercise, she talks about joining a gym and making sure the employees know of her condition in case there's a problem. Or, in a chapter about pregnancy, she emphasizes the need to monitor diabetes even more closely in order to avoid complications. *Balancing Diabetes* isn't a medical text, but it does introduce readers to the kinds of issues of which a diabetic should be aware.

For the most part, *Balancing Diabetes* is a conversational story about one woman's life with type I diabetes, with enough other stories included to provide context. It's aimed at readers living with diabetes or those who know them, and they can benefit from learning more about what they face.

JEFF FLEISCHER (February 14, 2014)

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