

## Eurika Briol, from Cebu in the Philippines. Eurika's diabetes story

My name is Eurika, but everybody calls me Bam Bam. I've had diabetes for 18 years now, since I was 3 years old. My life with diabetes has never been easy, along the way I've encountered hardships, but I've always pulled through them, because of the people around me. During my childhood days, I often get teased for being "different." Some would call me names and other kids who don't have the slightest idea what diabetes is would stay away from me, because they were afraid, they might contract it.

Growing up was difficult. At an early age I learned how to inject myself and check my blood-sugar. My everyday life consists of getting pricked by needles and syringes. My parents would repeatedly tell me the story of the first time they saw me being injected, they cried for days.

I also had countless instances of hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia. The highest I had was when I was first diagnosed, which was **675 mg/dl**, (36.8 mmol/L), the lowest one was **10 mg/dl** (0.55 mmol/L), this left my loved ones terrified.

For years, I felt embarrassed being diabetic. Every time we had a party at school, our teacher would always remind me in front of the other students to "not eat too much", I would then feel ashamed for having this disease. I remember I used to secretly take chocolates and hide to eat them because I felt jealous watching other kids do it. Being diabetic has not only affected my childhood but also my family's financial status and needs. Rather than buying me the latest toys, we had to spend the money for my maintenance. For years we struggled a lot. We were never able to go on vacations, our fridge was never full, we never experienced eating in lavish restaurants, we rarely got anything new. Both my parents sacrificed their dream jobs to take care of me because we couldn't afford a nanny.

I had my first serious attack when I was 13 years old. During that time my dad just lost his job, and we were having financial difficulties. I didn't want to be a burden, so I decided to save up my insulin and lessen my intake without telling them. After a few days, I wasn't feeling well. I passed out and got rushed to the ER. There we found out I had DKA (diabetes ketoacidosis) my blood-sugar was sky high. The doctor informed us that I almost died that day.

When I was 14, I met **Insulin for Life Australia**, through the **Sweet Alert Society**, an organization from Cebu, consisting of strong and inspiring women whose aims are to spread Diabetes awareness, as well as help those diabetics in need, by organizing educational Children's Diabetes Camps for poor diabetic children. Ever since that summer day, my life has changed completely.

Because of IFL's help, I was able to go to a good school and graduate, my parents are now able to buy our needs, we can eat 3 meals a day, now there is food on our table. Not only did they give insulin assistance to me, but also my friends who struggled with Diabetes as well. I'm grateful to say that IFL saved me in countless ways I could ever think of, due to their programs. I met amazing people from around the world who have inspired me to move forward and strive better for my future. With their help, I realize that just because I have diabetes, it doesn't mean I can't do anything. I started to think about diabetes as a challenge rather than a problem, and with that perspective, I felt a weight fall off from my shoulders. With determination, discipline and perseverance, I believe we can reach our goals and dreams in life. There are no words to express how thankful I am for **IFL** and **Sweet Alert Society**. They have driven me to change my lifestyle for the better and to always keep a positive outlook in living with diabetes.

I am now currently in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year of college, taking up Bachelor of Arts in Communication and also a part-time ESL teacher. I developed an interest in teaching language because I believe it's a bridge that connects us to the world. Lately, I'm doing the best that I can to reach my dreams and to be able to help my family, as well as those people in need. It has always been my goal to inspire young diabetics to not lose hope in life. I want to make them feel that they are not alone in this battle and that they can overcome the hardships and bad days as I have.

With the never-ending help, support of **IFL**, **Sweet Alert Society**, my good friend Neil, my family, friends, and God, I am certain that I can live a happy and productive life. Despite the challenges that I have been through I have no regrets to have experienced all of it because it has molded me to become someone who values her bonds, life and health. Life with diabetes is never easy, along the way we will encounter problems but we must keep in mind that "**diabetes**" is just a disease, and you are, and will always be stronger than Diabetes.