

Hurricane Katrina Victim Recovers Home and Health

LiPAK Classes Relieve Stress and Support Healing

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At the age of 54, Chris Raymond* was diagnosed with “sugar diabetes.”

“It was a total life-changer for me,” Raymond said. “Eating is one of my favorite things to do, but suddenly I couldn’t eat all the foods I was used to. It definitely took some adjusting.”

Immediately after his diagnosis, Raymond went on the attack to fight his diabetes. Along with taking his prescribed pills and insulin shots, he attended classes at local hospitals to educate himself about the disease. Just a few years after his diagnosis, with proper nutrition and regular exercise, Raymond no longer required insulin shots. Then, Hurricane Katrina turned his life upside down.

After an evacuation to Houston, Raymond returned to his home to find extensive damage. With his wife staying behind in Houston with their son, stress started to build in Raymond’s life. He had a house to repair and he regularly commuted to Houston to be with his wife.

“Everything happened at once, like it was one thing after the other. My wife stayed back in Houston with my son because she was sick, and I had to get back to New Orleans to fix up the house. It was terrible,” he said.

Upon returning to New Orleans, life was anything but normal for Raymond. On top of the stress from being separated from his wife, food was in short supply and valuable materials to fix up his home were stolen multiple times. Suddenly, his diabetes was worse than ever.

“I had my diabetes in control before the storm; I was eating the right foods, I was exercising daily. When I got back to New Orleans I didn’t have much of a choice on what to eat, I had to eat whatever I could find. If that wasn’t bad enough, I couldn’t exercise and I was worrying all the time about my wife and stressed; I know that put my sugar diabetes out of control,” Raymond said.

Raymond was again requiring insulin shots. Once he finished rebuilding his house, he was determined to rebuild his health. In November of 2009 Raymond attended the Limb Preservation After Katrina (LiPAK) class in Orleans Parish taught by eQHealth Solutions Quality Improvement Specialist Dr. Gwen Dean.

“This class was different. I really enjoyed lunch time because it was hands on and practical. The instructor not only had lunch prepared for us, but she taught us how it was prepared and why it was good for us. I even brought in food from home I was unsure of and asked how it would affect my diabetes,” he said.

A unique aspect of the LiPAK training is the utilization of a Reflective Journal to combat stress. Raymond said writing down his thoughts about diabetes has helped lower his stress tremendously.

Since attending the class, Raymond has become proactive in his battle against diabetes. Using techniques he has learned in the LiPAK class, he regularly checks his feet using a monofilament and requests a foot exam each time he visits his primary care doctor.

“Unfortunately I know what diabetes can do,” Raymond said. “If you’re not careful it’ll take your eyesight and destroy your feet and body. The more I learn about it, the healthier I can become. I’m 66; I’m proof you’re never too old to learn.”

*Not real name

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