

# How type 1 diabetes turned Fit4D's David Weingard into an entrepreneur

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I'll never forget the summer of 2002. I had just completed the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and I was ready to assert my young adulthood at camp, a place full of adventures rivaled only by those of Tom Sawyer. So when my parents informed me that I would be spending a week at a sports camp exclusively for children with type I diabetes, I was less than thrilled.

"Other diabetics are weird," I argued. After all, I was a middle school girl with zero interest in getting involved in some sort of diabetic cult. But faster than I could say "finger prick," I found myself sitting by the fire at Camp Sweeney, singing along to a loose adaptation of Hughey Luis's "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" The lyrics had appropriately been changed to, "Am I High or Am I Low?"

Having endured this experience, my suspicions about the strange lives of other diabetics were only solidified. Fortunately, my perceptions have evolved over time. I have come to find that there are some pretty amazing type I's out there who refuse to let their disease define them.

One such individual is WeWork member, triathlete, and Founder of [Fit4D](#), David Weingard. Diagnosed with type I or juvenile diabetes at the age of 36, a rare but not impossible scenario, David has made it his personal and professional mission to “share experiences, knowledge, and positive energy with the diabetes community.”



“I didn’t know anything about diabetes until I was diagnosed,” David says, “I was in the middle of training for a survival race, and as a healthy marathoner and triathlete, I was shocked.”

Like most individuals who have just received a serious medical diagnosis, David found himself in a fog, completely overwhelmed by the overload of information handed to him.

David was working in a national e-business role at Microsoft at the time, but he ultimately decided to leave this position to establish Fit4D, a platform that offers personalized health coaching and care plans for both type I and type II (non-insulin dependent) diabetics.

The commitment to bridge the gap between his personal and professional lives was an easy one for David. He quickly discovered that diabetes management “isn’t just about *having* a care plan, it’s about *doing* something with it.”

As a dedicated athlete, David knew he needed to connect with a trusted diabetes coach right away. Inspired by the meaningful relationship he and his coach developed, David set out to make his experience more available to everyone living with diabetes.

David explains that there are 26 million diabetics in the U.S. (10% of those are type I), and his goal is to reach every single one of them. As a result, the Fit4D team spends a lot of time meeting with pharmaceutical companies and hospitals to develop plans for distributing their coaching to patients worldwide.

The Fit4D team includes a network of 80 diabetes educators, a core operations team, and a very strong advisory and board of directors. Initially, the group worked primarily on diabetes education, but David discovered that in order to scale his business, the team had to come up with a business problem.

“The problem that we want to solve for pharmaceutical companies, taxpayers, and patients is how to keep people on their medications,” David says. “What makes people [stop] taking their meds? Is it laziness? Negative side effects? A lack of education? A fear of needles? It’s our goal to figure this out.”

Coming from a background in the fast-paced world of tech, David finds the most challenging part of working in healthcare to be a relatively slow speed of innovation and a disinterest in new patient care models.

“Because I live with diabetes, I’m impatient, and the pace of healthcare support has been frustrating,” he explains. However, it’s this impatience and incredible sense of urgency that lends David the passion and determination necessary to make a difference.

“There’s no road map for Fit4D,” he says. “Building this company is the hardest thing I’ve ever done,” a rather bold statement coming from a man who spent his 50th birthday running 23 miles across the Grand Canyon from South to North Rim with his wife.

“Getting to the office at 7 a.m. on a Sunday seems insane, but I do it because I want to solve this problem,” he says. “I want to help people. And having diabetes, I’ve learned the importance of persevering through any challenge.”

David’s family also helps to keep him going by inspiring him every day to be the very best version of himself. “My sons look at life with such enthusiasm and wonder. And I am constantly motivated by my wife, Andrea’s, goodness,” as well as her ability to beat his time in triathlon races.

David ran his first marathon as a diabetic only three months after being diagnosed. To this date, he has completed 10 marathons, 20 Ironman 70.3, four full Ironman events, and an incredibly meaningful eight-stage survival race.

Dedication and determination has earned David the respect of publications such as *Triathlete Magazine* and *Runners World*, and television shows such as “Good Morning America,” the “Today Show” and “NBC Nightly News.” This incredible resolve has made Fit4D a success, allowing David to cope with the unexpected and helps keep him focused on a higher cause.

“If I didn’t have type I, I don’t see how I could be this passionate about making Fit4D successful,” he says. “I would see what we’re doing as a business challenge, but now everything we are doing comes straight from my heart.”

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Photographs by [Lauren Kallen](#)