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Reaching the Unreachable: A Personal Approach to Diabetes

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Shock -- is how I felt when I was first diagnosed with diabetes.

I had been training for an eight stage survival race and was in great physical shape. Suddenly I felt weak and lethargic and knew a visit to my physician was necessary. Even getting to the doctor's office was a physical challenge. It was here where I learned that my drastic weight loss was not a result of athletic training, but instead my body failing to produce insulin. My body was starving itself and I was unaware!

I was in disbelief and looked for resources to help me understand. While there is plenty of information online, I found that it was very basic and didn't explain to me how to live my own life with the disease. I also couldn't find the personalized support I needed to manage my health, engage with my family and meet professional demands while living with diabetes.

As I rebuilt my life collecting information and support from wherever I could find it. I made a commitment to find a way to help the diabetes community, so I began racing Ironman triathlons to raise money for diabetes charities. What happened after that was incredible. People started emailing and calling me for advice. I only know about my diabetes and really don't have the knowledge to help someone else with theirs! This is when I realized that I can assist others by making this a personal journey. By leveraging many positive professional relationships along the way, I began to personalize diabetes management by engaging diabetes educators countrywide with diabetes patients via technology. The ultimate goal is to help people lead rich and fulfilling lives with diabetes.

We are in a state of crisis, people need help, there are [almost 26 million people](#) with diabetes in the U.S. and another 79 million adults in the U.S. with pre-diabetes. The financial impact was [\\$245 billion](#) to employers, government and the individual with diabetes in 2012

We're in this predicament for many reasons and it continues to escalate because diabetes is so complex and difficult to manage. [Over 40 percent of patients](#) prescribed a new diabetes medication stop taking it within the first few months. While there are helpful resources online and within communities, it is often challenging to find the relevant information. Also, the people who look for this information and support are the ones motivated to take care of their diabetes. Solving to effectively engage the unmotivated patients is where the big problem lies.

People with diabetes have different experiences, contributing to the complexity of managing an already multidimensional disease. I saw these differences in real-time as I had the rare opportunity to participate in focus groups comprised of people with diabetes of varying socio-economic and cultural groups. Interestingly enough I found myself relating to them. We had the same emotion when diagnosed: shock! There were so many

beautiful and human moments as people shared their individual challenges and successes living with diabetes. There was also pain and a sense of resignation that diabetes was not going away and that they would need to find ways of coping with it... forever.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to learn from thought leaders who added to this pool of valuable guidance. Each mentor had incomparable perspectives on how to improve our business model and presentation. I look forward to their continued mentorship and the relationships I've gained from this experience.

David is founder and CEO of [Fit4D](#), a company whose mission is to improve the lives of people with diabetes and other chronic conditions, worldwide. In his journey as someone with diabetes, David has been fortunate to meet many incredible people with diabetes and their families. It is David's personal passion to share his experiences, knowledge and positive energy with the diabetes community. With over 20 years of experience in the technology sector at startup and public companies, David decided to devote his energies to helping people with diabetes. David can be reached via e-mail at dweingard@fit4d.com.

Fit4D is one of five semi-finalists in [The Merck | Heritage Provider Network Innovation Challenge](#). The sponsors have called on entrepreneurs, data scientists, designers, health care providers, and big thinkers to create the products or services that will support patients with diabetes and/or heart disease in adhering to their care plans and ultimately improving health. Semi-finalists will be presenting their solutions at Demo Day on January 23rd in NYC. Check out their progress, watch their Demo Day presentations, and find additional open innovation challenges by visiting [Health Data Challenges](#).

This blog series is produced in partnership with Health Data Challenges, creators of The Health Data Challenge Series, a formal initiative of the Health Data Consortium, powered by Luminary Labs. The platform seeks to foster the use of data to drive innovation that will ultimately transform health and healthcare through high-stakes innovation challenges. Learn more at www.healthdatachallenges.com.

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