

[VIDEO TRANSCRIPT]

ERRON JAY: One of the great things about life is that we generally get smarter the older we get. You know more today, than you did yesterday, right? That's also true for those of us diagnosed with diabetes. In this segment of "If I Knew Then, What I Know Now," we'll meet Reggie, who began his diabetes journey early in life, and hear what he's learned about good routines along the way.

REGGIE: If I had known what I know now back then, I would say that you will have a more than a normal life. You can do all things. You could go swimming, you could play football, you could travel. You can enjoy a birthday party. You will enjoy a birthday party.

Don't ignore your diabetes. Don't ignore the management of your diabetes. I know you want to be normal, but seek out education, seek out a management plan to control your diabetes. I know you want to party. You want to go and work and go to school, but take time out to understand what's going on within.

Our father was a community coach. He coached many children in the community: basketball, football, other sports – track and field. And when Park and Rec came, we were in line with the other kids, not knowing that our father was at the table and said, "Son, you can't play football." You know you always want to be accepted by your father. The acceptance wasn't there.

When I was diagnosed, Mama decided to send me off to diabetes camp. Because Mom and Dad, they did not know how to deal with, or did not know anything of diabetes. Because I didn't know what to expect at first. But just being around a group of people who had diabetes who was dealing with many, many things, I wasn't the abnormal, sickly child. I became someone special. I was amongst a support group and they were able to explain to me and educate me.

When I got back from, uh, diabetes camp, um, I learned so much I couldn't help but share it with others. I wish I knew what I know now when I was 19. I would eat one meal a day thinking that my blood sugars would not spike or go up, but it had the adverse effect. It wasn't helping me; it was hurting me.

Now, I eat four meals a day, so that's a long way from eating one meal a day. You know, you learn more the older you get. I would tell the 19-year-old: Stop ignoring diabetes. I would tell the 30-year-old to accept it more. I would tell the 40-year-old: Keep up the good work. You have discovered how to manage diabetes.

So, as you learn more facts about your diabetes, it will be empowering because you will overcome whatever situations that are put before you. Because you'll be more in tuned to yourself to be able to, uh, to solve whatever comes your way.