

## **Surviving and Thriving**

*By Anna Albritton, MS, RD, LD, CDE*

As a parent of a child with type 1 diabetes, your ultimate goal is likely for your child to gain the skills necessary to successfully manage diabetes on their own. Yes, it's possible (although at times it may not seem that way) and no, you don't have to settle for them living in your basement forever. Your child's endocrinologist, diabetes educators, camp staff, and camp support system can all play a role in figuratively "packing a suitcase" full of management skills to adequately prepare them for their future in managing diabetes successfully.

As the 2018 Summer Camp season approaches, we begin to give shape to our educational theme for the summer: "Survivor." With diabetes technology advancing so rapidly, our intent is to take things back to the basics, ensuring that each camper would know what to do if forced to manage in the absence of technology. What do I do if my pump fails? How would I give myself insulin? How will I survive on my own—making endo appointments, refilling prescriptions, speaking up and asking questions to get the most out of doctor visits?

Think back to the days of math class, when you begged to use a calculator to complete your work. If I had to take a guess, you likely weren't allowed to do so most of the time. Why? Teachers wanted to instill a foundation of basic math skills instead of relying on technology to do it for you. We can begin to think of diabetes technology in a similar manner—life-changing convenience and ease of use. However, if it were to fail and we don't know how to function in its absence, we have a problem on our hands.

Conversely, if your child doesn't currently manage using diabetes technology—that's all right too. We know that different individuals take different approaches to management and there are a variety of avenues one can take. For these campers, ensuring that they are using correct technique is key. Campers who use insulin pens for injections—do they prime the pen? Do they inject in a way that ensures all intended units were delivered? All these skills are important aspects of management that we can begin to instill in our campers from a young age.

Our hope is that camp not only gives your children "booster shots" of diabetes education each summer, but also instills confidence in becoming independent teenagers and adults surviving—and thriving—with type 1 diabetes.