

# The Healing Power of Beading

How I Went from Depression to Joy with the Help of Beading, My Husband's Support and the Creator's Love



By  
Barbara Mora  
(Paiute/Diné)



**T**here is magic in beading. I have no doubt. When I pick up the needle, then touch the tiny, colored bead, the magic begins. It starts at the beginning. It starts at the round, perfect bead. From there, the magic seems to travel through the needle, then through the thread and into the point of my thumb and forefinger.

If you have ever beaded, you know this. Beading is like a magic dance of bead, fingers, arm and shoulder.

I use the magic of beading to help myself relax and meditate. Through beading, I become closer to my husband, friends and ancestors. I teach others to bead. Some people say beading helps them escape. One friend of mine has a lot of pain in her body. She says beading gives her a break from the pain. For me, beading slows down my mind, so I can listen to my heart.

“ I think all we need to know is within ourselves. ”

When I bead, I can hear wise voices. Our ancestors were so wise. We survived so much! We are experts at survival. If there is a way to survive a crisis, we know it!

Sometimes, I forget the wisdom of the ancestors. I think back to the day I found out I had diabetes. I felt sheer panic. Flashing before my eyes were images of my mother, who had diabetes and was on dialysis. My mother had no hope at all. I, too, felt overwhelmed with hopelessness.

I remember my doctor's reaction. His name was Steven Levesque. He saw my hopelessness. He closed the exam room door. He let me cry. When I finished crying he gently said, “This diabetes does not have to be like your mother's diabetes or anyone else's. It is within your hands to do something. You have the power to make it better.”

I heard the words, and they gave me a tiny spark of hope. I was still so depressed and scared. But Dr. Levesque put those words in my head and in my heart. I had the power to shape my life with diabetes.

Dr. Levesque's words were the first important thing



**Bob Mora (Tarahumara/Mexican) says beading is like meditating. He says it is healing. “The healing has a ripple affect across the community.”**

that helped me with diabetes.

The second thing was my husband Bob's reaction. I went home after the health clinic and told Bob that I had diabetes.

Bob and I have been married for 29 years. He is like other Native men, doesn't say a lot. So when I told him I had diabetes, he didn't speak at first. He nodded his head slightly.

Then he turned and walked straight into the kitchen, opened the cupboards, and threw every sugary item into the trash.

Bob's explanation was simple --“If you're going to change your eating to be healthier, I'm going to change my eating, too.”

My husband's support was a great help to me during the first few months. Other people helped me too, like the CHR, Arlene. She came to my house every day and helped me test my blood sugar. Over time, I lost my fear of pricking my finger. After a few months, it became an easy habit.

Even with so much support, I was depressed for about six months. My blood-sugar levels were going up and down because I was trying to get on the right medication. I had many emotional ups and downs.

During these difficult months, I did something that really helped me -- I made myself go to a diabetes support



**Christine Watterson (Paiute) has been beading for 20 years. “When I bead, I am able to solve problems. I relax and get rid of stress. Beading brings answers.”**

group every single week. At first, I don't know if I was really hearing the words of the health staff or other people with diabetes. They were saying that I could live well and feel great even though I had diabetes.

I sat there in that class, still depressed, still scared. But every week my depression was a little less and hope was coming back. Every week, I could hear more of the words of the health staff and other people with diabetes. My spirit lifted. I was beginning to see that I could have a happy, fulfilling life with diabetes.

At home, I continued to bead. Beading has been a constant in my life. While I was depressed, I found that the

beading helped me escape. I calmed down and felt peaceful. My mind wandered. My mind and heart opened up. A thought came to me -- having diabetes is like making a piece of beadwork! I don't just start beading. I first make a plan of what I want the piece to look like. I can do that with my diabetes! I can make a plan to eat healthy and exercise and make something beautiful.

The idea of making a plan kept coming back to me. I can do this! I can make a plan every day to make something beautiful out of diabetes. My having diabetes is like a piece of beadwork having a flaw. I just make a plan and work around it. I make that flaw into a thing of beauty. The flaw is what makes that piece unique.

It has been six years since I found out I had diabetes. Back then, I would have never thought that I could feel so wonderful!

I have lost weight. I am active every day. I teach an exercise class. I am healthier than before I got diabetes.

Many things brought me to this healthy place. My doctor's kind, wise words; the support of my husband; the diabetes support group; my beadwork.



**“I felt complete hopelessness. It is now gone,” says Barbara.**

This story is for anyone who has diabetes, and especially for those who are feeling hopeless. I, too, felt complete hopelessness. It is now gone.

When I pick up a traditional dancer’s crown that I recently finished, I am reminded of my journey, your journey and all Native people’s journeys. The crown shows the eternal fire burning bright, even in the midst of darkness. It shows birds carrying our prayers to the Creator. It shows the light blue dawn of a new day.



**“ Your diabetes does not have to be like anyone else’s. It is within your hands to do something. You have the power to make it better. ”**



**Dr. Steven Levesque**

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**“Let the healing start with me, and be heard through the land.”**

**Robert Mora (Tarahumara/Mexican) plays the flute to relax and meditate. He says it gets him in touch with his ancestors, including his grandmother.**

**“She used to take me on walks near Mount Tom. I remember the feel of the wind from the mountain and the smell of mesquite.”**



# What Helped Me Move From Depression... to Hope... to Happiness

Ideas From Barbara Mora

## ■ What helped me

*“My husband cleaned out all the unhealthy foods from our house right when he found out I had diabetes. He goes to the diabetes support groups with me. He exercises with me. He says that my having diabetes has helped him become healthier.”*

## ► What you can do

Show your partner or family members this article. Talk to them honestly about diabetes. Let them know what you need. Keep asking family members and friends for support. Don't stop until you find a person or people who will be happy for you. Find people who will join you as you change your eating habits and exercise.

## ■ What helped me

*“When I was depressed, I made myself go to a weekly diabetes support group. Even though I didn't feel like going, I went. The more I learned about diabetes, the more I knew I could do things to avoid diabetes complications. The more I learned, the more hopeful I became.”*

## ► What you can do

Join a diabetes support group or education class. Go every week, even when your blood sugar levels are “not good.” Go even when you are feeling depressed. It is times like these when support groups really help.

## ■ What helped me

*“Beading helped me calm down, get rid of stress, and listen to my inner thoughts. I think the act of beading is like a meditation. It allows me to connect to my ancestors. When I bead, I can feel the love and concern of all those who went before me. I know that they want me to have a happy life. Their voices come to me when I'm beading.”*

## ► What you can do

Take time every day and stop being busy. Bead, weave or paint. Take a walk in nature. Pray. Ask the Creator to show you the way.

## ■ What helped me

*“My doctor told me that I had the power to have a good life with diabetes. He stopped everything and gave me time to cry. He was kind and wise and caring.”*

## ► What you can do

Find a caring health care staff. If you do not “connect” with your health care staff, talk to another. There are nutritionists, CHRs, and mental health care staff who can connect to your heart.



**Barbara and Bob Mora take a walk near Mount Tom.**