Sugar-Free Fun

Comedian **J. Anthony Brown** helps wake millions of listeners on *The Tom Joyner Morning Show*. Now he's hipping viewers to diabetes on CNBC's new show *dLifeTV*.

July 1, 2005 As told to Elayne Fluker

Every black person has a hardheaded diabetic in the family. My dad had both legs amputated because of diabetes. Yet when he was in the hospital, he had a drawer full of Honey Buns! Sometimes, all you can do is shake your head when someone knows that if they keep eating certain things they might lose their sight or a limb, but they still do it! I found out I had diabetes in 1990. I had symptoms, like tingling in my feet and fingers, but I thought I had carpal-tunnel syndrome, even though I can't type! Once I got tested, I knew I had to change my lifestyle.

Diabetes can be brought on by stress, and it's a stressful condition. Checking your blood sugar daily is like playing bingo. You never know what numbers will come up and when they're off, you stress out saying, "Oh my God, what did I eat?"

Having the disease doesn't mean you have to give up everything. I'm still a sucker for a small bag of fries—you just have to monitor your-self. I allow myself one day a week when I eat something sweet. I exercise, take my medicine and get my rest. I also learned how to cook differently with books like Patti LaBelle's Lite Cuisine.

The diabetic lifestyle isn't much different from the healthy lifestyle we should be living anyway. Just surround yourself with people who support you. With dLifeTV and The Tom Joyner Morning Show, I have what I call the Diabetic Police following me—people who, whenever I'm out at a restaurant, are looking at my plate to make sure I'm eating healthy.

J.A.B. ON DIABETES:

1. The main reason African Americans, especially men, don't get tested for diabetes is fear. We need to get tested, because knowledge is power.
2. Whether or not you have diabetes, get regular checkups, period. dLifeTV features a "Take a Loved One to the Doctor" day. It's amazing how many people find out they're walking around with something and didn't even know.
3. The biggest misconception blacks have about diabetes is that they can keep eating and doing whatever they want. Once you're diagnosed, get rid of the sweets. They weren't good for you anyway.
4. When it comes to living with diabetes, sometimes laughter really is the best medicine.

dLifeTV airs Sundays on CNBC at 7 p.m. E.T., 4 p.m. P.T.

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