

D.R.E.A.M. FOR A CURE

MY TATTOO

Tyler Kramer

After seven long years of living with Type 1 diabetes, I think I finally have it figured out. I'm not afraid to tell people. I don't let my diabetes "own" me and who I am. That's what my mother would always tell me, "You have to own it, Tyler." This gave me the idea of getting a tattoo. When I first thought about getting a permanent tattoo, I was scared it would stay on my skin forever. Then I thought, so will my diabetes.

When I was first diagnosed with diabetes at 10, I wore a medical bracelet. It was engraved with "Type 1 Diabetic" and under that it had "Takes Insulin." I never liked wearing it because it was uncomfortable and I would always lose it or forget it somewhere. I remember that at one time I had three

of them because my mom would always buy new ones that were different styles, just so I would wear it.

I went to an overnight camp for kids with diabetes for 5 years. One of the counselors there had a tattoo with the medical symbol for diabetes on the inside of his left wrist. I was very interested in that. So the day I came home, I told my parents about it and they said "No way!". But, that did not stop me. I was 15 at the time, and even I thought I was too young to be getting

a permanent tattoo.

Over the next several months, I would often bring up the topic to my parents but they would just say "No" and change the subject. But one day, we had a really thorough conversation about it and they told me to write an essay to them saying why I wanted one and research what the design would be. So that's what I did.

I'd written a few poems in the past, so I'd thought I'd write a poem instead of a boring essay. The poem turned out great, and my parents finally agreed to let me get a tattoo. They thought of it as a gift for my sixteenth birthday, because I would also be getting my driver's license. They thought

that it would be a good idea, since people needed to know that I was diabetic if I were to have an accident while driving. My parents were worried that if I were to get into an accident, and was unable to respond, the EMS would not know I have Type 1 diabetes. Typically, the EMS looks for ID's, bracelets, or necklaces for medical attention, generally on the left wrist. This was the main reason why my parents agreed to let me get this tattoo.

Re: My parents and I went around town





looking for tattoo shops and we found one that said they would do it under one condition; because of my diabetes I would need to bring a note from my doctor to make sure getting a tattoo would be safe for me. This made my parents a lot more comfortable with the shop, because of their concern.

A couple weeks after that, I had my quarterly doctor's appointment at the University of Michigan Hospital and brought up the idea of getting a tattoo to my doctor, Dr. Menon. He was stunned by the fact I wanted to get a tattoo, but he had no problem with it. He actually said "Yes" quicker than my parents.

The week after my birthday, my mom, dad and I went back to the tattoo parlor and gave the tattoo artist the doctor's note. He gave me about 10 binders of hundreds and hundreds of different fonts that I could choose from. At first, I wanted the diabetic symbol, but then I thought to myself that would be too big. So I decided that I only wanted "Type 1 Diabetic." I picked out the font, and I was ready to go. About 45 minutes later, I had a tattoo that would be on the inside of my left wrist for the rest of my life.

Since then I have multiple encounters with people about why I would get a tattoo that says "Type 1 Diabetic." Some people who have no knowledge about diabetes are confused. But others who know what diabetes is and understand why I would get a tattoo like this, think it's the greatest idea ever, and I'm very proud of it.

My First Tattoo

By Tyler Kramer

May, 2011

To My Parents

5 years ago times were different
5 years ago things were not
the same.

The time has come to make a mark,
Hopefully it's not as hard
to parallel park.

My left wrist is where it will sit
When it goes down I hope I don't
have a fit.

People might think the design is
unique

This will come in handy
when I cannot speak.

Kids will stare, adults will wonder.
I think I am ready to face
the thunder.

I know this will stay on forever
The same with diabetes,
it will always be with me wherever.
I do hope for a cure later in life,
But when there is, hopefully I will
have a wife.

So please let me get this tattoo,
As long as I live,
It will always remind me of you.