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Last year, I became a certified lifestyle coach for the National Diabetes Prevention Program and delivered NDPP within my organization, MAIN, and within our community for the first time in their native language (Arabic).

I decided to pursue this program after hearing that several people in my community were diagnosed with pre-diabetes and were not taking the diagnosis seriously. I wanted to help them acquire more knowledge about the seriousness of diabetes and support them in making changes to improve their health. We started the program with 10 women who speak Arabic. Our meetings were held at our organization's office. For the first six months, we started meeting once a week as an educational conversation group and shared our own lived experiences around nutrition, exercise, culture, and diabetes. It was challenging at the beginning to successfully encourage the participants in the group to prioritize themselves and their own health; oftentimes in our culture, women will prioritize their family's health before themselves. Through our conversation with the participants in the first session, they agreed that they will be the ones making their own lifestyle changes and that my co-facilitator and I will provide guidance, direction, and support.

I worked with this group to support their efforts to make healthier food choices, increase their activity levels throughout the week, and supported them in making new decisions about their daily lifestyle and healthier food choices. One of the participants shared with us that for years she has always enjoyed having a cup of tea with cookies every evening before bed. The group was able to help her change this routine and to find a healthier nighttime routine, which she now follows.

A few of the elderly participants in the group mentioned how they were unable to go outside to walk. I provided them with some YouTube videos on how they can exercise indoors, which they all now do. One other group participant shared that she never ate green vegetables because she didn't like them. With support from the group, she made some changes and now enjoys salad at EVERY meal. Another participant formed a walking group of six women that walks for 40-60 minutes each day together.

Transportation was one of the biggest barriers, as many of the women do not feel safe taking the bus, don't have their driving license and rely on a family member to give them a ride to join our classes. They started carpooling to class, during which time they share their new ideas and progress in the class. Healthy foods are also more expensive in the U.S, which has been a challenge for participants in the group. However, I worked with the participants to help find less expensive options and we learned how to read the nutrition labels using their phones to translate. We also helped the women sign up for a local, affordable fitness center for them and their whole families.

For the last six months we have been meeting monthly. Many of our participants were able to reach their goal of eating healthier foods by changing recipes and losing weight by increasing their physical activity. This has led to improved A1c levels for many in the group. Changing their cooking habits also has a positive impact on their family's health. Participants have shared that by being part of this program, they have created wonderful relationships with one another by exercising together, sharing recipes, socializing, sharing their experiences, and educating their community. Reaching our goal is not impossible, but it requires flexibility, perseverance and continuous monitoring of our lifestyle to achieve a better, healthier life.