

Chapter 18

Responsibilities of Children at Different Ages



Children of different ages are able to handle different tasks and responsibilities. These may vary from day to day and week to week. This is true for diabetes-related tasks and non-diabetes tasks. It can be helpful for family members to have an idea of what to expect at different ages.

(See the tables of age-responsibilities in “*Understanding Diabetes*,” Chapter 18.)

Below age 8 years

- Parents do all tasks.
- Children gradually learn to cooperate.
- Shots are often given after meals or snacks (rather than before) depending upon what was eaten.

Ages 8-12 years

- Children begin to give some of their own shots. A common mistake is to push for too much responsibility before the child is ready.
- Having a friend spend the night or staying at a friend’s house often begins during this period. As the children are often very active and use more energy

from staying up later than usual, it is best to reduce the insulin dose.

- At this age, fine motor control and the sense of accuracy needed to draw up the insulin develops.
- It is important to continue to check doses of insulin drawn by the child and the blood sugar testing meters to review their readings.
- The idea of maintaining good sugar control to prevent later diabetes complications can initially be understood around age 12 or 13 years.

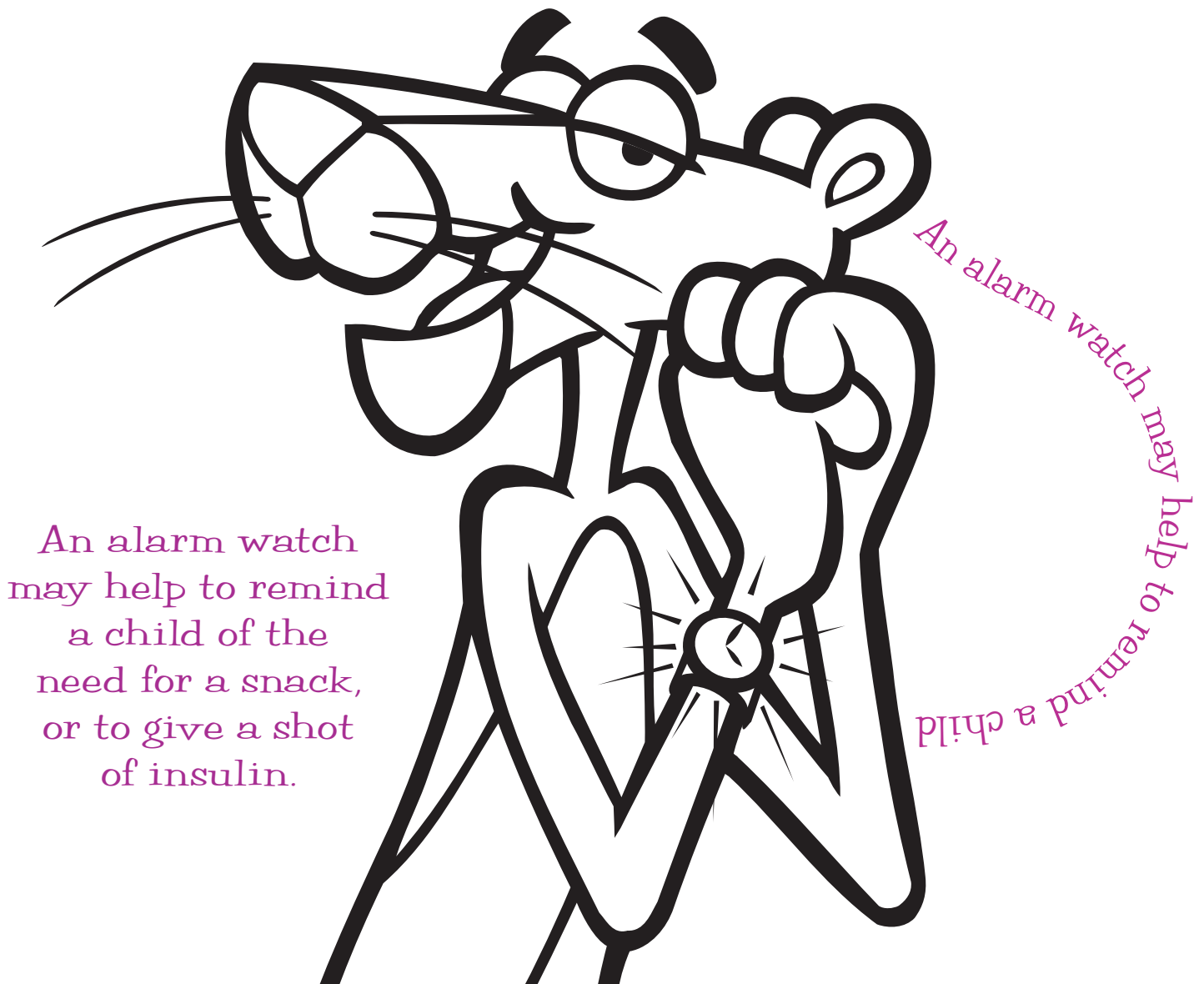
Ages 13-18 years

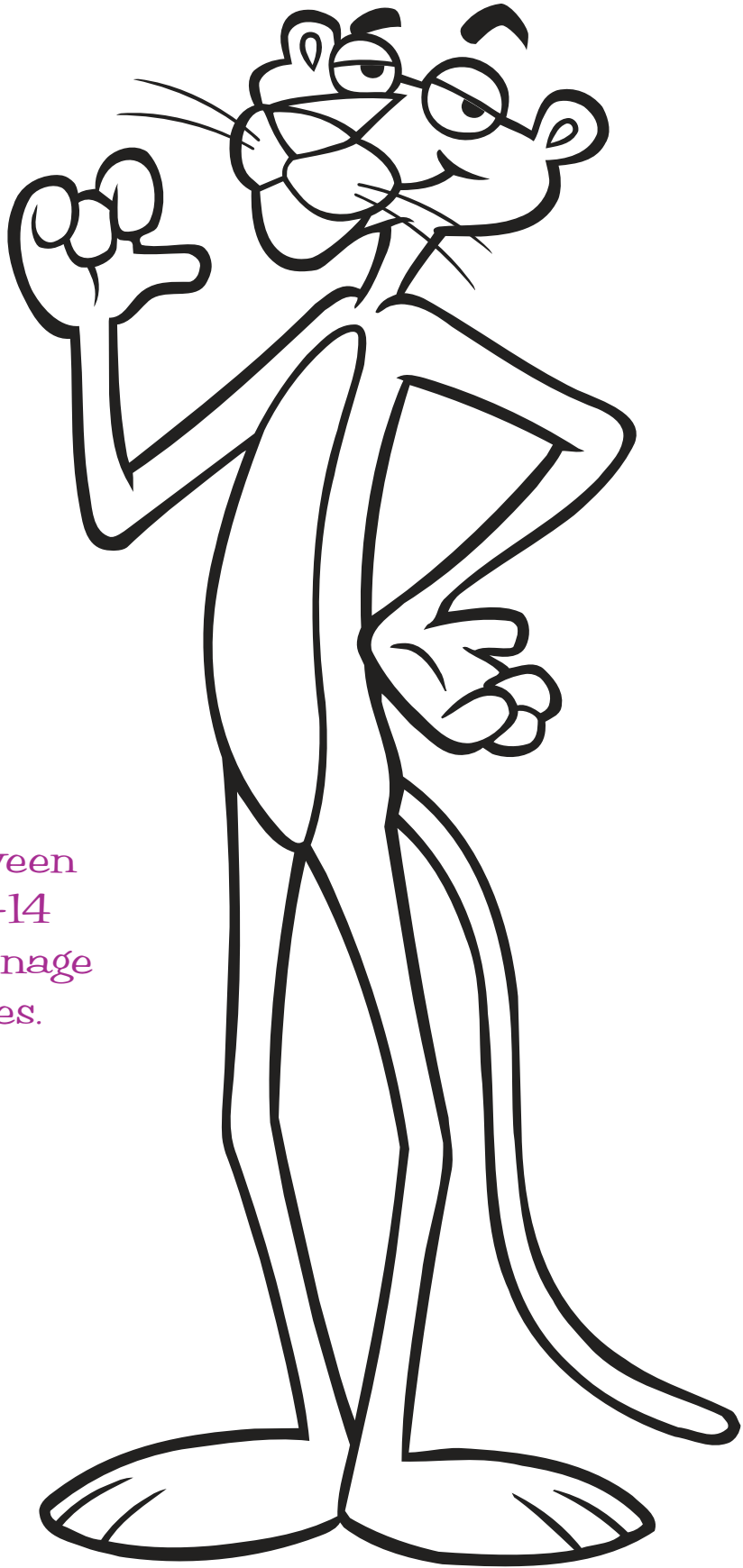
One of the most difficult chores for many teens is writing the blood sugar values in a log book. It is important to do this or trends in blood sugar values will be missed. Often the parents agree to do this (with the teen’s OK). It is also a way for the parents to stay involved with the diabetes care and to step back in if blood sugars are not being done.

WHAT IS THE AGE WHEN SELF-CARE SHOULD HAPPEN?

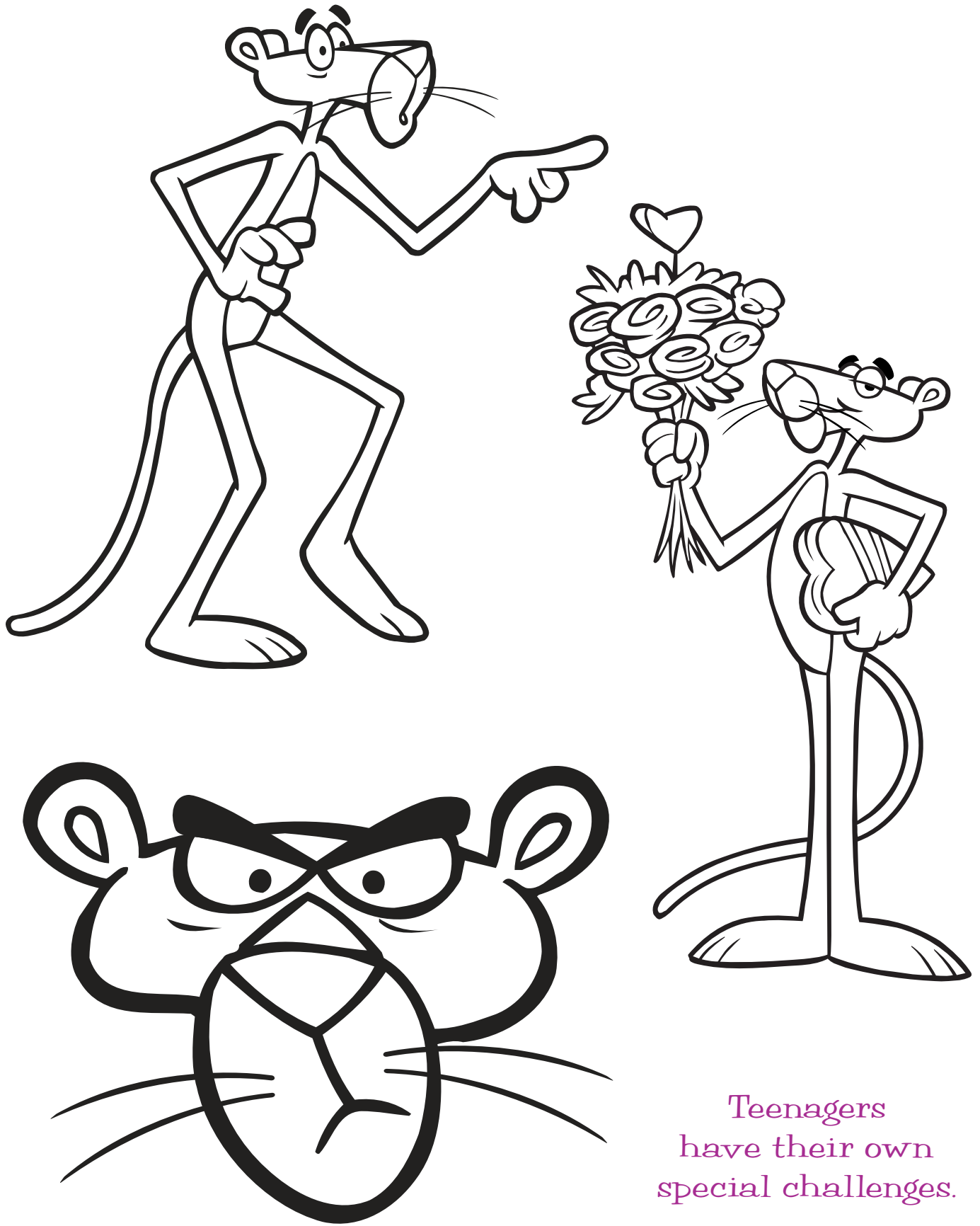
- Children should be encouraged to assume self-care as they are able.
- There isn't a "magic" age when children should take over everything.
- If too much is expected too soon, feelings of failure and low self-esteem with poor diabetes self-care may result.

It is now believed that a supportive adult can be valuable for any person with diabetes, no matter their age.





Children between
the ages of 8-14
can help to manage
their diabetes.



Teenagers
have their own
special challenges.