



"We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring, will be to arrive where we started... and know the place for the first time."

T.S. Eliot



June - July - August 2006

## Weight Loss - Are you a Conqueror or an Explorer?

We all know what it takes to lose weight and keep it off long term, don't we? Simply burn more calories than we consume to lose it, then maintain a healthy lifestyle to keep it off... Simple, you say? Absolutely. Oh, so you mean it's easy? Er... No.

What makes it so hard? Why are all the books, programs, diet plans and weight loss products failing to prevent our collective, expanding waistlines?

There is a strong case to support the notion that the modern diet is to blame. Processed, convenience foods have become public enemy number one as health professionals admonish these nutritionally void, energy dense impersonations of food. Still, statistics of obesity continue to bulge. Current figures indicate around 7 million Australians are overweight or obese, with this number expected to double by 2020. (1)

Lined up on the target range next to the food companies, sit the general advances in technology which have led to a dramatic reduction in our levels of physical activity. The International Diabetes Institute recently conducted a national survey examining the link between lifestyle factors and health risk. Director Paul Zimmet believes "exercise is being engineered out of our lives". (2)

Undoubtedly, these aspects of modern living present real challenges to anyone struggling to manage their weight. But the

fact remains, we as individuals, always have the power to choose the right actions. The question is, how do we make those choices on a consistent basis? How do we maintain the level of motivation and will power that seems so strong when beginning a new health commitment, long enough to follow through with actions that will produce a result?

The most common approach to weight loss is to embark on a program based on the principles of decreasing "energy in" and increasing "energy out". If only it were this simple...

Perhaps if we were more like machines, this rudimentary formula would be enough to "banish the bellies" and "trim the thighs" of our alarmingly fattening nation. But alas, the human drama is far more colourful than that. Individual personality traits, varied family, work and social commitments constitute a kaleidoscope of different challenges for those attempting weight loss. Even the best laid plans, well set out goals and firmly made commitments can come unstuck when the pressures of life start piling up.

Many people try to conquer their weight, wielding the weapons of "intense exercise" and "deprivation" of food. Unfortunately, this just takes the fun out of life and sets up an inevitable fall. Whether in a week, a month or a year, sooner or later, the "good things" start creeping back in and many people slip back to an even poorer state of health than before they began.

Effortless, long term weight management requires a change in psychology.

Why not approach the task of losing weight as an exciting challenge of self discovery, rather than an overwhelming problem to be “dealt” with. Rather than trying to conquer your weight, why not just explore the reasons why you became overweight in the first place? You’ll learn so much about yourself along the way that you’ll never be the same again... and neither will your weight!

Here are some practical tips for the courageous explorer attempting safe, maintainable weight loss.

#### KNOW YOUR OBJECTIVE

Before you embark on this intrepid adventure, you’ll need to commit yourself to getting beneath the surface of your actions. Your objective, oh brave one, is to find the glorious hidden truth of why you’ve taken the actions that have led to you being the weight you are today.

#### WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?

Imagine bounding out of bed in the morning full of energy, ready to embrace your day. In order to feel this way, how much weight would you need to lose? You may need to weigh yourself first to establish a realistic goal. If you are unsure of a safe goal weight to aim for, please consult a qualified health professional. Write down the goal weight you decide upon.

#### HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO GET THERE?

Write down the date you will start (today of course... NOW is the only time you can do anything!) and the date you aim to reach your goal. Do not try to lose more than 1kg per week as this usually requires unrealistic, unsustainable changes to your diet and exercise plan which will be counter productive in the long term.

#### BEFORE YOU SET OFF, OBSERVE YOUR HABITS FOR ONE WEEK

Your unconscious habits are the reason you became overweight in the first place. You need to observe them, objectively before you can go about changing them.

Keep a food diary for seven days. Make sure it includes the type and quantity of food, the time you ate and your energy levels immediately before and one hour after the meal. This is a valuable investment of your time as it will give you an insight into how you “ended up” at your current weight.

Record your level of physical activity within the same seven day period. You may like to measure your daily steps using a pedometer. Also, record any structured exercise you do including time, type and intensity level.

#### TAKE FIVE COMPANIONS WITH YOU

Commit to changing FIVE things (big or small) that you discover about your habits in this week of observation. They may be related to how, what, when, where or why you’re currently eating the way you are. They may also include an increase in your current level of activity. Maybe you’ll set yourself a time to get to bed by, or make a commitment to drink more water.

The changes must be realistic and maintainable. Make up a checklist, put it on your fridge and tick them off each day as you do them.

#### DOCUMENT EVERYTHING

Record your weight (and body fat if possible) once per week. Chart your results and put them on your fridge (next to your change checklist). You may like to take girth measurements (waist, hip, thigh, chest, arm) once per month.

It is also a good idea to measure your cardiovascular fitness, as this will help keep you motivated until your weight starts to shift which may take a few weeks. Choose your favourite form of movement and measure how far you can walk, jog, cycle, swim, skip, row or rollerblade (driving doesn’t count!) in 10 minutes. Start from the same point each week and watch the distance grow!

You may like to keep a journal of private thoughts and emotions as you go. This can provide a wonderful insight into the real cause of your actions.

#### ENJOY THE JOURNEY!

If there really is such a thing as a weight loss “secret”, this is it. Ultimately we are all drawn to what we enjoy and to what makes us feel good. Healthy, vital, energetic people are those who have learned to tap in to the positivity of movement. There are so many ways to feel good while you move. You could try listening to music while you walk, joining a team sport, finding a gym buddy, breathing slowly and deeply while you stretch. The list is endless and the choice is yours. Whatever you decide, do it consciously and enjoy the ride. Your body is the most amazing instrument you will ever own. Don’t you think it’s time to discover what you are capable of!

#### References:

- (1) Victorian Government Health Website  
[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)
- (2) “Australia’s Obesity Time Bomb” – Julie Robotham  
The Age Newspaper. 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2006



## What's New?

### Online Health Crosswords – Test Your Knowledge

Check out one of the popular new features on our site. Online crosswords designed to challenge your knowledge of all things health and fitness.

Have fun! [www.risehealth.com.au/interactive/games](http://www.risehealth.com.au/interactive/games)

## Success Story

### Excellent Educators Enjoy Energetic Exercise!

Margaret and Sarah White share a passion for education. Both spend their days lighting up the minds of their students, so they are no strangers to what it takes to inspire a positive change.



It's been a pleasure to help them apply that energy to their own health over the past seven months. Margaret has lost 11kg and is over half way towards reaching her goal, while Sarah can now run for 30 minutes without stopping and is currently working towards her new goal of 10 (GI Sarah Jane) push ups off her toes!

Here's a little tribute to the literature lovers. Well done gals!

Mum and daughter sat down one day  
And said "The time is right,  
To ditch the snacks and eat more fruit...  
Be healthy, fit and light."

"We'd best employ a fine young chap  
Who knows just what to do.  
Who'll rev us up and calm us down  
And keep us honest too!"

They walked and ran and skipped and stretched  
And shared the time together,  
Committed to their written goals  
Regardless of the weather.

Along the way they've had some help  
From "Tiff" the family pet.  
But most importantly for them  
A new routine's been set.

Good exercise and breathing work  
Bad habits left behind.  
Now happily they're feeling great  
In body, breath and mind!

## Health News Review

### RSI Danger From Excessive Texting

Experts have warned of the dangers of overuse of mobile phones and game consoles in children after a young girl developed repetitive strain injury.

Isabelle Taylor, aged eight from Lancashire in England, noticed pain in her fingers and wrists after sending up to 30 text messages a day.

RSI is normally associated with office workers who spend hours hunched over a computer keyboard.

But the condition is becoming common in children addicted to technology.

Isabelle's mother Jane Taylor, 40, said her daughter was "constantly" texting on her mobile but that it wasn't until she was diagnosed with RSI that the extent of her texting became apparent.

"She got the phone when she was six and she's constantly on it. I tried to take it off her but she started sneaking it to school. But then she started complaining about pains in her arms and hands a couple of months ago."

Mrs Taylor has limited Isabelle's texting to 30 minutes before and after school and she is doing exercises to alleviate the condition.

Sending text messages can lead to RSI because mobile phone users tend to hold down their shoulders and upper arms when pressing the buttons, cutting off blood to the forearm.

### Technology overload

Dr David Cosgrave, who treated Isabelle said he sees two children a month with RSI from overuse of gadgets.

"A lot of youngsters who operate their Playstations or use their phones a lot can suffer inflammation which can be quite painful in the upper arms and wrists."

"Many times these pains are put down to growing pains when there is actually something else causing it."

Tim Hutchful, from the British Chiropractic Association said that text messaging regularly, over a long period of time, could cause repetitive strain which may cause both short and long term injuries.

"As mobile phone technology develops, mobiles are getting smaller, with buttons closer together. Small, fine movements tend to aggravate more than larger movements - this coupled with the smaller buttons can lead to injury as smaller buttons are harder to activate."

"When you are text messaging, you tend to hold your shoulders and upper arms tense. This cuts down the circulation to the forearm, when in fact it needs a greater than normal blood flow to achieve the fine movements of the thumbs and fingers."

Source: BBC News. 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2006

