

How I lost 5kg in 5 weeks!

As you know, my husband and I have been on a “diet” since 28/8/19 and he’s lost 5 - 6 kg so far and I’ve lost 4kg. You might remember I mentioned how he got a gee-up from the GP about his fats and sugars trending the wrong way – and the doc sent him off to lose 4 kg before November. It turned out to be very motivating!! (Also, I told him I wasn’t interested in spending my retirement looking after a stroked-out diabetic husband and that I was re-thinking the “*in sickness and in health*” bit of the marriage vows (joke))

Anyway, when I looked at our food and meals – we generally weren’t too bad. I already planned meals for the week and didn’t have a lot of rubbish food in the house. But we did eat a lot of chips on weekends and cakes/biscuits at work, and usually had a heavy-duty carb with each meal.

So when you advised a Mediterranean diet: more fish, less red meat, much more veg and fruit etc. . .

- I added more fish (tuna/salmon for lunch and another evening fish meal/week). My husband already eats a can of sardines for breakfast at work (hardy soul!)
- I doubled the amount of veg we eat at each meal using lots of greens – essentially I think “meat and greens” for the meal.
- We eat fruit twice a day – for me usually a banana on a work morning and then berries or melon or pawpaw with or without a dollop of yoghurt in the evening. My husband has an afternoon apple or pear sometimes and then same as me in the evening.
- Cut out all sweet stuff, any processed stuff. So I try to cook from scratch avoid all that pre-marinated, pre-cooked stuff. Very little bread, no pasta, very little rice and then brown only, occasionally Hokkien noodles; and easy on potatoes, peas and corn. But still eat sweet potato, pumpkin, parsnips, and carrots. And all manner of greens.
- I don’t fuss very much about fat –we use full fat milk and yoghurt, we eat bacon, lots of olive oil for cooking and in dressings, mostly eat some fat on meat. I roast and grill, and stir-fry a lot.
- We still drink alcohol on the diet but it does bring home an awareness about the KJ content of booze when we have to log it all the time. A whole round of exercise can go in a drink or two! We are working on trying to get a few days booze-free now.
- We increased our exercise – I walk 1 hr/day, manage a 3K run on most weekends and continued with gym 2/wk. My husband continues to ride to work but has also taken up going to a gym 3/wk.

We use an app on our phones to track meals – a free no-frills version on MyNetDiary. If I do a recipe I can calculate the KJ and I send them to him – so tracking is pretty easy – especially after you’ve been going awhile and built up a library of our usual meals. The visual representations of our day’s worth of KJ and of

our progress over all (little bike running down a slope to our goal) are really helpful, really motivating. The app has little snippets of information that come up from time to time and I think they are very good – really sensible advice – I haven't found one yet that I thought was dodgy information. The app says no matter what happens keep tracking – which is really helpful – Because inevitably there are days when we go over the day's budget but if you keep tracking, it doesn't look so bad the next day and often we've lost weight anyway, but we haven't thrown it all away in disgust and gone back to old eating.

We don't regularly eat at the table for evening meal – usually on our laps, sometimes in front of the TV. I eat breakfast at home at the table but I read the paper at the same time! On weekend we eat breakfast and lunch at the table. At work we eat at a table. I still eat quickly. But I have learned to wait a bit before eating anything else – and often a drink is actually what I want, more thirsty than hungry.

Portion size was controlled for us by the app – because we had to weigh food for a bit to get a handle on KJ tracking. Also now, when I make a recipe for 4, I serve it up into 4 plates/bowls straight away and put two away for another day or lunch the next day, which keeps portion size steady. With vegies – I just put heaps of food there – no portion control at all! I also give my husband more protein than for me – he was hungry in the afternoons at first and he's at the gym trying to build upper body muscle so he probably needs it.

The biggest help has been working on the changes together – the social angle is really important. Support at work has been great too – especially for my husband. All the other young blokes who are fussing about their weight are in awe of him and his progress! He gets good support at the gym too – they are very complimentary about how he is prepared to have a go and mix it with the youthful and actually do quite well.

Coming up, we will still have to negotiate the maintenance “diet” but really what we are doing now is not that burdensome – there is a bit of planning for the week's food involved which I have been doing forever anyway – having food in the house when you get home after a big day at work is essential – when you're tired and hungry the temptation is huge to just go and buy take-away rubbish. It will be a big matter of not letting the sweets/cakes/biscuits/chips/ice-cream creep back into the menu.

So there you have it. For these and probably other reasons it all seems to be working for us right now. We have been mulling this over for years but never actually got off our butts and addressed it – feels good to have done that.

Client X

My response next page 😊

Wow (Client X)... Thanks for giving me such a thorough insight into what has worked for you guys. If possible I would love to include some of this in another newsletter with your consent. Of course you would be anonymous... I'm thinking client X? Let me know your thoughts? I feel it is great to share real world insights as to what has worked. Of course everyone is unique and has different needs, lifestyle constraints, and genetics.

Reading between the lines it sounds like the app has really worked for your husband. Some people really like technology and playing a "game of numbers." Seeing change on a screen can be really motivating, especially in the beginning when you mightn't see other changes. In terms of long-term motivation connecting to the "**hear now benefits**" of the lifestyle change has been shown to be most effective:

e.g. "I have **more energy** and **feel vital** on my new eating plan. It fits into my lifestyle doesn't feel like an imposition like other plans and is something I feel I can maintain. I know in the future I can sometimes enjoy small treats but have strategies in place to not resort to my old behaviours. I am **enjoying** my movement... it no longer feels like a chore! I notice I am more **solution focused** at work, have more **resilience in stressful periods** and am **more present** with my partner. I really am enjoying our walks together that allow us a regular time to **connect** and **feel good** without alcohol! What's more I fit into my old wardrobe and am excited by new possibilities."

In regards of taking the first step in lifestyle intervention, people often react to a strongly emotive event such as medical/ health issues and take action. The research however, suggests in terms of a long term focus, "fear" wears thin and loses its effect. Unfortunately most health and weight loss changes happen in the distant future. It is very easy to resort to old patterns when the sold benefits of most lifestyle interventions are far away and not tangible. Hence the above reframing example. A useful intervention is to focus on a "vision of a brighter future" e.g.: "In my 70's my vital lifestyle enables me to work around the farm and tinker with machinery. I have the endurance to keep up with my grand children which are very young and energetic, (because my children took a long time to get it together :) I love the annual international holidays... My fitness allows me to venture to place that my friends can only dream of..... INSERT your own values, dreams and inspiration. Create a compelling vision that draws you forward as opposed to running away from a fear based event (medical/ health) concern.

I am excited that your husband is trying another form of exercise other than the bike. In the short term he might find benefit in somehow using his app strategy with his exercise? It might be as simple as tracking numbers in his boxing circuit. How many push ups he can now do in his circuit? How quickly his heart rate recovers from the session? Subjective measuring of intensity (1-10) during each session or how he feels (1-10) after.

My final insight is to remember that this is a journey and not a destination. It's important to enjoy the ride, but note that it is likely there will be times of lapsing into old patterns. The key is getting back on the horse sooner rather than later. Well done :) J