

One Man's 'Point of View'

An ICN (modified-meal replacement) patient's experience. He lost 50 pounds in approximately 16 weeks

You asked me to write this at this point in my weight loss attempt. I agreed to, but as I sit down to do it, I think it may be a bad idea. I'm afraid of the big hex. It might be a jinx. I promised myself at the beginning of this several things. I wouldn't become a great big dieting bore. I wouldn't make others suffer if I have to suffer. I wouldn't accuse my family of sabotaging my diet. The world doesn't revolve around this project. A project it is. Here I am, 4 months into it and I have lost 40+ pounds. Oh, and I also promised myself if there were any successes, I wouldn't be a self-righteous weight loss braggart. (Whoops) Nevertheless, this is uncharted territory for me. I have never come close to losing this much weight no matter the length of time. Everything fails. I ate enough meat with the Atkins diet to gag Tyrannosaurus Rex and couldn't look steak in the eye and it failed. I tried South Beach, and got sick of bland food taking all day to prepare. I tired of the niggling point count with Weight Watchers. I finally concluded I would rather be fat and die young than eat bland garbage. No crap on a shingle for me. So why has this worked so far? (I say so far because I can hear the future laughing at me. The future can be a vicious monster.) Let me count the ways. (My fingers are crossed against the hex. I have full realization this may not work at all, etc. etc. etc.)

1. I have admitted something consciously. I love food. It is my friend, my companion, my Valium and Ambience. No, it is my cocaine and Oxycontin. Like most people I must have it. Unlike some, I MUST have it. It is my lover, and to paraphrase the poet, ..."it is my North, my South, my East and West, my working week and my Sunday rest." (I got that from the movie Four Weddings and a Funeral, WH Auden.) I wouldn't have it any other way. Food is wonderful in its endless variety and tastes and textures. I love every cuisine. Every diet so far has demanded I deny that. I am deprived of things I love. I can't master that. I shouldn't be required to. This plan acknowledges this simple fact. I am denied nothing. I can eat Beef Wellington, just not a great deal. I have to watch what I am eating, more carefully with calorie dense foods, less carefully with calorie dilute foods. I can eat it though and I'm not deprived.
2. It doesn't do any good to blame my obesity on external factors like genetics (although it most certainly is a component. Everyone in my family is fat.), stress, Republican legislature or President Bush. I can't do anything about President Bush, my DNA or stress. (I can do something about the Republican legislature though.)
3. The powder packets prevent me from kidding myself. This is what I can eat, and nothing else. I can't drop 20 potato chips in addition and forget about it. (Somehow I could with other diets.) That's all I can have. Nothing else. Don't even think about it. I do wish Novartis would get on the ball and provide more flavors. How about Lobster bisque? The bars are inedible.
4. This is strange but it works for me. When I obsess about food and feel empty and hungry, I have found it useful to give in to that rather than suffer. The way I give in is a little counterintuitive. I prepare it. I cook it. I fix it. All my favorite things, sometimes in great quantities. My wife puzzles at the quantities of leftovers in the refrigerator. (Not quite so much now.) Having prepared it, I don't have to eat it. In fact, I don't necessarily want to eat it. Preparing it is almost enough. I don't expect this to work for anyone else. I guess I'm a little strange.

5. I have a new weapon. It is the way I talk to myself. I must do this and raise kitchen grazing to a conscious rather than an unconscious level. When I reach out for something almost unconsciously I have found that I can say almost audibly; "No, not now." Maybe in the future. Maybe later, but just not now." The old "just say no" routine. It may not work for sex and drugs, but works for me and food. Having done that a great deal, it becomes part of the day.
6. Cynicism, skepticism. This can't work It never has. The future is against me. No way, no how can this be successful. Give me a break, you weakling, this is doomed. Rah rah speeches leave me cold. Fat people being sweet and positive make me want to hurl. Spare me the motivational crap. Cynicism is what I need. It motivates me to prove myself wrong.

After all is said and done, the future is still out there. I can hear it jeering and mocking me. When it does, I can raise my clenched fist, and yell back, "You may be right, the future is yours, but the present is mine. All mine." And I think I won't eat that, not just now. Maybe later, maybe never, but just not right now.

We'll see.

An ICN Patient