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What Do I Do? by Dr Ian W Campbell

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What expertise do I have?

I've spent my career trying to treat the whole patient, not just isolated symptoms. I view obesity as a lifestyle induced but serious medical problem. In addition to helping my patients change their lifestyle I work with the psychologically to try and alter their relationship with food, and often themselves. I have lots of experience using medication to aid weight loss, but see lifestyle change, supported by environmental change at a local and national level as the key factor if we are to help people lose weight, and keep it off.

What do people most struggle with?

Consistency. We are all looking for a quick fix, but it doesn't exist. Crash diets fail, and dieters are soon demoralised. But it's hard to keep going when the results of your efforts are only one or two pounds of weight loss each week. Many people give-up too easily. One lapse often leads to a relapse, then complete collapse.

What advice do I give?

Think long term, at least a year. Set small reasonable, achievable goals, and reset them if they're too difficult. Make time to do the things that are most important to you, and that includes time to be more active. It's almost impossible to maintain weight loss if you haven't kept up with increased activity

What question do I get asked most?

Most people want to know if there's an underlying medical reason for their weight. I can do various tests to check, but the reality is that for the vast majority the answer is no. Many of us are genetically more likely to be heavier, but some weight loss is almost always possible by making the right lifestyle changes

Why is it important to be a healthy weight?

Even carrying a few kilogrammes more than we need can increase our risk of raised blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. There's good evidence that losing just 5% of our body weight, maybe 3-5kg, can dramatically decrease that risk again and make you feel more energetic. Losing weight is never easy though; it's better if you can prevent gaining weight in the first place

What one thing will I change this year?

One year ago I set out to exercise regularly. It's been difficult with work and family commitments, but I feel so much better for it. Next year I want to continue to build on that and make it more consistent. While I know it's improving my health for the future it's still the immediate effects of fitness, stress relief and losing inches around my waist loss that keep me going!