



at a certain point, it is no longer about adding things to your life - but taking them away.

fast? easy? simple steps?

how about this.

step 1:

un-fuck your head.

now, to be fair - every following step will just a sub step on your way to completing step one - or a mechanism for dealing with your inability to do so. when i say "un-fuck your head" i am not just being cheeky, the first thing to accept is that the mechanics of eating is not your problem * - it is the emotional involvement. we know what to eat - we just keep looking for better answers. we sabotage ourselves not due to confusion over the consequences or actual circumstances, we just allow those moments to excuse petulant behavior. we want what we want and no-one, especially not ourselves, will get in the way of this self destructive toddler having a tantrum in our heads.

at this point i need to bring up a dear friend and client of mine - he has always been a big guy - 6'4" ish and, back in march, he weighed 378#. the month of march is important because that is when he

went to the doctor feeling a little "off" only to find that his blood sugar was a complete mess. the message from the doctor was pretty simple - "you finally did it. fat guy prize. you are diabetic. i hate calling this a disease, it is just your bodies reaction to the shit you have been doing to it for the last 35 years. i can give you medicine to manage it and you can die in 15 years due to complications and maybe loose your foot along the way, or you can start acting like a fucking adult and get this under control." i am paraphrasing here, but that was pretty much the gist. he switched to a low GI diet, focusing primarily on the low half of the low. initially he counted calories but after learning that he could have 4700 a day and still lose weight gave it up because he was never even close. he has lost over 120# since then and it is still dropping.

now, there are a few other factors that i feel are very important - one is that he is a bit of a hypochondriac, and he is also passionate about jujitsu. being a hypochondriac made chronic disease a lot scarier - provided a stick - while jujitsu (and the improvement of it) provided the carrot. the spell was broken, the shock was enough to change his perspective. the emotional reward from a piece of cake now had very real cost - one he was not willing to pay. he simply stopped wasting time looking for an answer he liked and acted on the information he had the whole time. he made a decision - truly decided to do what was necessary - no bullshit, no excuses, just right action. every decision could now simply be weighed against the goal - not perfection, but progress. lamenting about mistakes does not advance us - act, access, move on.

there were other small decisions he made that i feel made a difference - he did not waste time or energy lying to himself. yes he missed cake - so what? he wasn't starving. he wasn't even hungry. when he ate cake every week he missed it the second it was gone - he realized how temporary the reward was, and how lasting the cost. forced into a rational moment, he realized that he could feel that longing, react to it, and stay the same, or feel that longing, exercise some restraint, and improve. the choice was simple. he would also never say that he couldn't have something - he simply didn't have certain things. things that weren't worth their cost. we all exercise restraint - with our pocketbook, with our relationships - as adults, we recognize that there are things we *can* have and the things we decide to acquire - all based on cost - he just applied that to his diet. he is adamant that what he has done is not special - it wasn't even that hard. praise is meaningless because most people have not *really* tried, they don't really understand so their opinion doesn't matter. in addition, he realized that feeling like he has "accomplished" something makes a small part of his brain want to snap back into old habits. simply put - praise does not help him, so he does not accept it. in fact, i would say he is just a little embarrassed that he hadn't acted earlier. he had the information the whole time, he was never actually "confused" - he just didn't like the answer and kept waiting for a better one. in recognizing his reactions, he can now correct them - in fact - each night he asks himself what he could have done better that day. not to gripe or berate himself, just to take stock, make sure he wasn't slipping back into complacency. constant, ruthless self assessment.

that is the stick - now for the carrot.

jujitsu. that's the only reason he stepped into the gym. just one hour a week with me - focused solely on improving his sport performance. he was already spending 6-8 hours a week at jujitsu - grinding. slow and steady progress. he had learned the secret - show up. just show up. pay attention and don't

quit. he approached the gym the same - he would tell me how much he hated how it made him feel, during warm up he would laugh and share all the excuses that went through his head as to why he should stay home, and then he would work to his limit without complaining. every time. the discomfort he felt in the gym was the price he had to pay to improve. he recognized that his habit was to find easy ways out, to bullshit and make excuses and cut corners. he decided that that was not the man he wanted to be. not the father he wanted to be. he loved jujitsu because there was no hiding - there was a moment where all the talk was washed away. it was honest. and it had to be met honestly. he would work. he bought an airdyne because he saw how it would help with his goal. he ignored the people who told him that he was working out too hard, or that he should take a break. he knew his budget. he knew the cost. he acted accordingly.

end of story. find a way. un-fuck your head.

this is an issue of personal narrative. of emotional involvement. we need to learn to tell ourselves a different story. we need to learn to believe differently.

absent a shock, this new story must be structured. reinforced. deliberately constructed. it doesn't matter what you believe, it matters what those beliefs make you do. hi-carb vegans and rampant, near carnivorous paleo adherents. people who spend 300-600 dollars monthly on supplements, intermittent fasters and food robots. there are many ways to reshape your ideas, to retrain your habits and emotions. the funniest part is that the box you think you fit in is probably the last one you need (unless, of course - you actually know yourself and then it is probably perfect) this is where it gets confusing. gets messy. but there really are a few simple steps that can help give you a little perspective.

be less emotional.

this can be tough. start with being aware of when you are making decisions based on emotions. food does not need to be a reward. a celebration. a treat. if you are reaching for something sweet because you "deserve" it, you are being emotional and irrational. fucking stop it. this also has to do with seeing other people who can get away with shit that you can't. you can't outwork a shitty diet - and i mean you personally. if you could we would not be having this discussion. i know skinny people who drink soda and pound cheesecake - so what? what does obsessing about that do for me? play the hand you have been dealt and don't waste your precious energy pretending things are different - instead, try using that energy to make things different.

log your calories.

chances are you have no clue what you are eating. i use my fitness pal. we usually say log everything for 2 weeks before trying to change anything. logging is usually enough to get me to start leaning out - the awareness itself is enough to keep my choices on track. i also will log first - put the food and the serving into the computer - decide for your self that is worth it, then measure out that serving and eat. this will also create that moment for you think, to separate the emotion from the action and respond to an urge instead of simply reacting to it. on this same note - myfitnesspal and most other calculators will have a place to enter your workout - don't. log your workouts, but not here - not to give you an excuse to eat more food. there will be a point where that is important, but chances are it is not now.

eat often.

again, this is not the only way - but if you never let yourself get truly hungry you are less likely to make poor decisions. the starved mind is less discerning and "i needed to eat something" is usually a manufactured problem. we "forget" to prepare so we "have to" go out to lunch... to McDonalds... it is bullshit and we all know it - the social contract just everyone from calling us out. a good baseline is to keep all feedings under 500 calories. never eat to the point of being truly full - and never let yourself get truly hungry. that being said - being hungry wont kill you. it may be worth intentionally fasting for periods of time to get used to the feeling.

fat. protein. carbohydrates.

learn some basics about macronutrients. you have google and 5 minutes - "i just don't get it" is not an acceptable answer. what that really means is that you have found shelter in deliberate ignorance. use a few online calculators to determine your daily caloric load - take the average - try and split it into roughly equal caloric value from each.

source matters.

a good read is "good calories, bad calories" from gary taube. you don't need sugar. you probably don't need pasta or bread either. you sure as shit don't need soda (even sugar free or diet) or to drink calories in any way. eat green vegetables. lots of them. using vegetables as your carbohydrate source will more or less guarantee that you do not overeat (assuming you are sticking to the thirds rule). also if you don't read the label before you eat it you are again clinging to inexcusable, willful ignorance. my friend from the above story chose low GI as yardstick. find yours.

replace your addiction - and mind your budget.

find something. anything. something that you can use to burn off excess emotions, something to justify your discomfort. combat sport makes this clear - "i am going to resist cake today... and someone is going to pay for it" - we joke about it all the time, transferring our frustrations, taking it out on others. our minds are good at that sort of redirection - it fits our story. use that.

resistance without reward has its cost - know what you can spend and work smart. know how to build equity. manage consequences - with a drug addict smoking weed instead of shooting heroin is a step in the right direction. take the edge off - but remain just uncomfortable enough. we grow to fit our surroundings, manage those and you will be alright.

plan ahead.

be honest - you know how you are going to fail. you have done this before, probably more than once. what were the mechanisms of your failure? the circumstances? why didn't you have a plan to deal with that? come home late and hungry? leave a go-to meal in the freezer. ready to crack if you don't go out? check 4 or 5 local restaurants, sit with their menus and plan out a good meal or two at each. stick it to your fridge - these are now the carryout options. they are not problems if you have a plan to deal with them. honestly assess your shortcomings - they will only be an issue if you allow them to be.

manage your expectations.

the goal here is to change - with that in mind the only way to fail is to die or to give up. anything shy of that just changes the timeline. it is hard - to change what you believe - it will take time, but not working at it won't make it happen any faster. tricks like these are part substitute, and part process - changing how you see yourself, how you see your place in the world - that is the goal here. i have met many people who tell me that they can stick to a change for about 6 weeks and then they give up - they want to know what i can do for them... i don't even know where to start. if you know the problem why don't you fix it? if you have already organized an exit strategy, orchestrated your failure - isn't there a more productive way you can spend the next 6 weeks? again, this is about a story - the only story that matters. you are the hero here - to grow, you need to fight. you need drama. but you also need to survive. there are a lot of things we cannot control in this world, so cling hard to the things you can. too big of a bite causing you to choke? take smaller fucking bites and keep moving. small victories can build momentum - use that.

it is time to start telling yourself a different story.



ultimately, the goal is to understand yourself. this work is a mirror, it will show us everything - and provide us with the means to change it.

*now, if you have a glandular issue, severe metabolic damage or some other issue - get blood work done, see a doctor and fix that first. if you diagnosed yourself with a thyroid condition than get it checked out and under control - not getting it checked is the definition of being fucked in the head.