

Willpower is the crucial factor

THE story of Nik is an all-too-familiar one of an obese person going on a successful weight-loss programme and then putting back the pounds for a variety of reasons.

Nik, who is diabetic because of obesity, embarked on a weight-loss programme after persistent advice from his doctor.

In three months he lost considerable weight and saw an improvement in blood glucose, cholesterol and blood pressure levels.

But he slackened, reducing his brisk walking to once a week or sometimes to none at all. Work obligations saw him attending social dinners, and soon he could not resist the extra portion.

Why have the Niks stopped controlling their diet and doing regular exercises?

Recognise the reasons

If dietary modification and being physically active are two things that seem difficult to maintain, you need to figure out why.

So many question to ask yourself. Did you lose your motivation in the process?

Did you visit a fast food outlet for a snack that you did not need, or when dining out, do you tuck into the extra helpings? Were you unable to turn down food offered by anyone at any time?

Exercise is no exception when it comes to losing your mental strength. "I have no time" or "I have no companion" are all common excuses for discontinuing exercises.

Your quest for weight control should not solely be about numbers on a weighing scale, but rather, a long-term change of lifestyle.

Control your mind

TRY not to let your mind go astray. Keep it strong and clear, while reminding yourself of the real reason for wanting to lose weight.

Be kind to yourself. Pressuring yourself to keep to a strict diet and exercise regime will not help; instead, be aware of your actions.

For example, allowing yourself a slice of chocolate cake or a fast food meal once in a while is fine.

However, you need to be aware that you have taken a high-calorie food. If you eat it frequently by giving the excuse that it's a reward for yourself, then you'll only be deceiving yourself.

When it comes to exercise, don't be rigid about it. Allow yourself some flexibility but do not come up with excuses for not exercising.

If you are diabetic or obese, for that matter, it does not mean that your life has to revolve around calories and exercise.

Focus on something else, like re-decorating your house or acquiring a new hobby. A sense of joy and peace will help you develop a more positive and optimistic attitude to life and help you with your effort to lose weight.

Eat right

THE simplest way to start getting in control is by changing your behaviour with respect to eating outside the home. We live in a society where food is abundant and no more considered a luxury.

Since eating out has become a part of many people's lifestyle, carefully selecting what you eat will ensure that you enjoy your meal and maintain your weight.

At the hawker stall choose foods like clear soup or *tom yam* soup, watery gravies or *assam*, instead of oily gravies or *santan*-laden curry.

Choose steamed, grilled or baked food instead of fried food. While having rice, eat only a moderate amount.

At the restaurant, study the menu and order healthily-prepared foods, like steamed, grilled, baked items. Request that your dishes be cooked with less oil, fat and salt.

Ask for a low calorie sweetener instead of sugar in your coffee/tea.

At a buffet-type restaurant never go on a hungry stomach, have a snack before you leave home.

Start with a soup as it will help fill you up. Follow with a salad but limit the dressing you put on it. Take small portions of the other

dishes. Choose high-fibre carbohydrate foods (eg whole grain rice or wholemeal buns)

At a fast-food restaurant choose mashed potatoes instead of French fries, as they are less oily. Limit your intake of dessert/soft drinks as they usually contain large amounts of sugar.

Limit intake to once a week.

Keep on exercising

BE aware of your limitations. Try to make your activities as comfortable and enjoyable as possible, to motivate yourself to continue exercising. Here are some tips for sticking with an exercise programme:

Schedule a time in your day (or every other day) to exercise, just as you plan time to eat and sleep. Vary your activities so that you won't get bored.

Don't overdo it. Plan your exercise regime in such a way that you can slowly increase frequency and duration.

Take your physical condition into account when choosing an activity. Injury-free exercise is important to enable regularity.

You should do proper warm-ups and cool down before and after any exercise.

Try brisk walking, cycling and swimming. They are among the suitable activities for most people, including those who are overweight and diabetic.

Choose proper, comfortable footwear. This is especially important if you have diabetes and suffer from decreased feet sensitivity, a condition caused by nerve damage.

One form of exercise is to just increase your physical activity level by making an effort to change your daily actions. All you need to do is move your body more.

Exercise tips

TRY to take the stairs, not the lift. Park at the far end of the parking lot and walk to where you're going. Wash your car yourself instead of going to the car wash. Take a brisk walk at the park or around your housing area, or do gardening instead of watching TV over the weekend or after dinner.

■ Fight Against Diabetes is supported by unrestricted educational grants from Pharmaniaga Berhad, the Taj Mahal Rice For Life programme, EQUAL Sensicare Bureau, OneTouch Centre by Lifescan and the 10-20-30 Healthier Weight Programme by Abbott Laboratories. For enquiries, please call (03) 5637 8588.