

Journey to WELLNESS

Dr Manisha Bandishti struggled with her weight before realising that she needed a permanent solution to resolve her issues related to food and self image. The founder director of lifestyle and weight management clinic, For Heart, shares her story with **Baani Sethi**. Photographs by **Charles Joseph**

Most of us depend on short-term measures, including quick-fix diets to lose weight. The truth is, the only way to ensure that those stubborn, extra kilos stay off is by adopting a change in lifestyle—a diet and exercise plan that you can stick with for life.

Lifestyle management need not be a prison sentence, though, as Dr Manisha Bandishti, founder director of For Heart, a cardiac fitness clinic in Pune, would testify herself. She ought to know, considering she has come by her knowledge at great personal cost and on her journey of self-realisation and self-healing.

IN HER SHOES

As I enter the lifestyle and weight management clinic on Dhole Patil Road, I am told that I will need to wait a while, as the doctor is in the midst of a consultation. I am offered a glass of coconut water and a smile, in lieu of an apology.

While waiting, I browse through a file titled, 'Our Achievers' that list the success stories of the people Manisha has helped over the years.

"I used to be obese," reveals Manisha, adding that she doesn't mind providing her own example,

as it helps patients understand that she can empathise with their condition. "I know how it feels to be obese. I weighed eighty-nine kilos, post my pregnancy," adds Manisha with a rueful smile.

While Manisha lost the weight, she was disappointed that her weight would keep fluctuating and that she could not seem to find any permanent fix to weight loss.

"An individual, especially a woman's, emotions are related to her body. Being a medico, I was even more concerned, since my health was directly in proportion to the welfare of my family, says Manisha, who decided that she needed to get to the root cause of weight gain.

"I found that it's not just our eating habits, but our lifestyle as well that contributes to obesity," she reveals.

BACK TO SOURCE

A new study released by the Registrar General of India indicates that obesity-related diseases have joined malnutrition, as the leading causes of death. As our country's economy grows, so does the temptation to eat more and lead sedentary lives.

Consider this: Tired and home late? Cholesterol-laden fast food is just 10

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digits away. Plus-size? Looking for love? Not to worry, now there's an Indian dating site for overweight people looking for soul mates.

The irony is that in a country where the Global Hunger Index shows that nearly half of all children are malnourished, many of India's affluent citizens are now seeking treatment for obesity.

"When the human race began, we all walked in order to find food or a place to live. Today, all we do is sit and eat, sit and work, sit and talk. We just keep on sitting. Obviously, we will gain weight," says Manisha.

There's no denying that obesity is now an industry, says Manisha, adding, "Obesity has been commercialised. It has become a 'demand-supply' scenario."



Manisha rues the fact that few believe in losing weight the healthy way. "Everyone goes in for crash diets. One needs proper nutritional guidance to lose weight. If you are doing strenuous workouts and following crash diets, you are anyway going to gain the weight back."

THE FOOD RULES

Manisha describes lifestyle diets as personalised nutrition plans that are tailored for the individual and are easy to follow.

"There is a rule that I tell my patients to follow, it's called the four Ws and one H programme," says Manisha. The Ws are: Where am I eating (is the place hygienic? Is the food cooked in good oil?); When do I eat? (timing is important, as waiting

too long or not enough between meals is not good); Why do I need to eat? (am I eating because my body needs fuel, or because I am bored/ tired/ angry?); What am I eating? (is the food nutritious or am I eating something that is high in fat and smells good? And the H is: How much am I eating?)

"Remember, portion control is necessary as well," says Manisha.

STRIKE A BALANCE

"Nothing can beat *ghar ka khaana* (home-cooked food)," says Manisha, adding that beating obesity is a game of patience and perseverance.

"People need to have the will power and not feel bad about their condition," says Manisha, adding, "I make sure that my patients lose

weight gradually and, yes, I do let them cheat once in a while—but in a healthy way."

If you are craving a chocolate, Manisha's advice is to eat just one piece, and not the whole bar. "It's human to have cravings," she says.

FUTURE PLANS

"We are very soon expanding our clinic. It's going to be the first lifestyle management institute, not just a weight loss institute," says Manisha, whose aim it is to inculcate a healthy attitude towards eating.

"We want to give parents' proper guidance, so that they can set a good example for kids, with respect to food and exercise habits." ●