WHY WANTING CHANGE, AND WORKING HARD, WASN'T ENOUGH

What changed when I stopped using the outcome
to decide what action to take

"I always knew where I wanted to go.
What changed was finally knowing how to get there."

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For years, I wanted to be lean and strong. I wrote it down over and over again. New Year's Eve was an obvious time to think about it, but not the only one. Whenever my weight started to bother me, my clothes no longer fitted me well, my eating had drifted, or I had just hit another low - the same goals would appear in my diary again: lose ten kilos; get lean; get strong.

The desire was real. So was my willingness to work. But what I lacked was a reliable process for turning that desire into a result. Looking back, that distinction seems obvious now. At the time, it wasn't.

Having goals, but lacking the non-negotiables

My targets were outcomes. Lose weight. Become lean. Get strong. But I hadn't yet translated them into the small set of actions that I now perform every day, regardless of what the mirror or scale tells me.

Prior to following *LeanSeven*, I ate as well as I knew how. I had given up sugar and cut carbs more than a decade earlier, and I had been carnivore for several years. I was playing pickleball several times a week and considered my life on the farm to be more active than most. At times, I had tracked intensely; but there was not yet a daily framework underneath it all - no defined protein target, calorie target, step target or resistance-training schedule. I cared deeply about the destination but I lacked a dependable route to get there.

I was also strongly influenced by the people I was learning from, particularly in the low carb and carnivore world. I believed in the underlying benefits of eating meat and reducing blood-sugar variability - and still do. But when high levels of animal fat were recommended for women largely to balance hormones, I willingly shifted to ‘high-fat/moderate-protein' carnivore. When another coach or influencer emphasised the opposite approach - higher levels of protein relative to fat - I shifted toward ‘high-protein/moderate-fat' carnivore. I tried intermittent fasting to lower insulin, extended fasting to encourage autophagy, grounding to reduce cortisol, sprinting to reduce visceral fat. I started paying more attention to circadian rhythms, electrolytes, breath-work and meditation. Each idea seemed plausible and each promised another way to improve my health.

But some of the messages now strike me as detours - maybe even roadblocks - to my goal of getting stronger and leaner. I believed the advice that I could build muscle on carnivore without necessarily working out; that I didn't need to count calories because satiety would prevent overeating; and that feasting and fasting reflected a natural ancestral rhythm. I was not unwilling to follow a plan. I was following many plans, without yet knowing which levers mattered most.

Measuring outcomes instead of controlling inputs

I used to weigh myself occasionally, not consistently. And at times, I tracked blood glucose and ketone levels closely. Those numbers were interesting and, within the nutritional framework I was following, they seemed important. But they were not the data I most needed for the outcome I was ultimately seeking: to change my body composition.

I had no idea how many calories or grams of protein I was eating, and I didn't see the importance of knowing. I wasn't deliberately controlling daily movement nor measuring the training stimulus required to preserve or build muscle. I see now that I kept checking whether the result had happened without consistently measuring the behaviours most likely to produce it.

At the time, I took satisfaction in seeing my blood glucose fall, believing that lower glucose meant lower insulin and therefore greater access to stored body fat. Higher ketones felt like further confirmation that I was on the right track: evidence that I was fat-adapted and metabolically flexible, with a more stable source of energy available. What I did not appreciate was that those readings could not tell me whether my overall energy intake, protein intake, movement and resistance training were aligned with the body-composition outcome I wanted.

Insufficient clean data

Because the relevant inputs were neither measured nor consistent, I couldn't properly interpret the outputs. If my weight stalled, what did that mean? Was I eating too much? Moving too little? Losing fat while preserving muscle? Gaining muscle? Or had I simply not waited long enough?

I didn't have clean data to know, so my decisions were based on emotions. When I got to the point of being uncomfortable enough (in my clothes, on the scale, after eating sugar and chocolate, or simply feeling fed up), I would react. I recommitted, tightened things up, started tracking again or set another goal. And that same entry, with the same goals, appeared in yet another year's diary. Along with a new one: give up chocolate.

Emotional eating kept interrupting the process

There was also a very practical vulnerability I needed to overcome. I could eat well for long periods, but sugar and chocolate remained my source of comfort when I was feeling low. Dipping back into them, even spasmodically, interrupted my progress and - more importantly - disrupted whatever consistency I had established. I was willing to work hard and give things up, but emotional eating had enough power over me to repeatedly break the continuity of my other actions.

Eventually the strangest thing happened: about two months after following *LeanSeven* consistently, the noise around sugar and chocolate just disappeared. I did not finally 'win the battle'; I realised there was no longer a battle to be won. The negotiation that had occupied me for decades went quiet. Silence. The same became true of the gym, my steps and my protein target. I didn't spend the day deciding whether I would do them. I knew they would be done. The only question was when.

Not understanding the delay

In the past, I had seriously underestimated how long body transformation takes, and especially how long consistent actions may need to accumulate before the body provides visible evidence that they are working. This was perhaps one of the biggest missing pieces.

When I was using the result itself as my feedback mechanism, this created a problem. If the scale or mirror didn't reward me - and reward me fast - I had no way of knowing whether the process was ineffective or simply unfinished. Sometimes, I waited too long and persisted with protocols that were not producing the results I wanted. At other times, I abandoned approaches too soon. I didn't yet know how to distinguish patience from wasted effort.

High-fat carnivore and extended fasting are examples of protocols that may be useful in some situations but which I now think I stayed with for too long. At the same time, I underestimated the power of resistance training and probably under-used that lever for far too long. Ironically, I had

been at my leanest when I was working out regularly, but I was also fasting for extended periods, not tracking lean body mass to know whether I was losing body fat or muscle, and eating and exercising in a way that was not sustainable in the longer term. I could see a result without being able to clearly identify what had produced it.

Moving the goalposts

Even once I had established a useful behaviour, I had a tendency to escalate it. For example, when I first joined *LeanSeven*, I set myself a goal of walking 10,000 steps daily. When this became easy, within a couple of weeks, my instinct was to increase the target. I didn't think of ‘easy' as evidence that the behaviour had become sustainable. ‘Easy' registered as "I can do more". So I kept increasing my steps until I was averaging over 17,000 steps daily. I had confused progression with escalation.

Activity was not the same as muscle-building

Exercise used to mean activity to me. Farm work counted. Pickleball certainly felt like great exercise. Deliberate walking was not a lever I controlled in the past, and resistance training did not occupy the central place in my thinking that it does now. I underestimated how important muscle was to the body I wanted. I was thinking largely about losing weight rather than changing body composition - reducing fat while preserving or building the structure underneath it. I also underestimated how lean I could become and the length of time it can take to transform your body.

Even after several months of following *LeanSeven*, I didn't feel confident interpreting the data without direction from Anthony. It has taken about a year of tracking, watching a coach make decisions, and seeing how those decisions played out for me and others in the group for me to develop a better sense of what the evidence justifies. With Anthony's help, I learned to find an effective dose, to hold it steady, increase it cautiously without simultaneously adding other levers, and let time do some of the work.

The first time I held steady targets and simply completed my daily non-negotiables, something changed psychologically as well as physically. At the end of the day, if I had completed those actions, I felt that I had won the day - even when there was little or no visible change yet. For the first time, success was defined by what I had done, not by whether my body had rewarded me quickly enough.

That shift removed the need to keep asking the mirror or the scale whether that day's actions had been worthwhile. The actions themselves became the win; the outcome could arrive in its own time.

Help is only as useful as the map

I did not stubbornly refuse advice. I sought help, at times giving myself over fully to a new protocol and staying with it for a long time. However, looking back, effort and compliance cannot rescue a poor or inappropriate model. Perhaps some of the approaches I tried taught me things I needed to learn. Maybe I can comfort myself with the idea that I needed to travel from A to Y before I could arrive at Z. But when I watch others go through many of the same approaches I've tried in the past, I can't help but wonder whether the whole journey was necessary. Could they - could I - have simply started at Z?

I do not dismiss the knowledge I gained along the A-to-Y route. I learnt about blood glucose and ketones, feasting and fasting, how to read food labels and prepare nutritious meals. Supplements, breath work, meditation, grounding and cold plunges may all have value in other contexts. But for my foremost goal - body recomposition - much of it now looks like an avoidable detour, or at least a distraction from keeping the more effective levers consistent.

LeanSeven was different because it finally gave me a blueprint and, importantly, the evidence that it had worked for other women my age. I spoke to several of them and reached a surprisingly simple conclusion: I needed to do what Anthony told me to do. Follow the plan. Long enough for it to work.

So I let go of constantly judging the outcome, stopped moving the goalposts and focused on the daily actions. I was content to let him steer the boat while I did the rowing.

The change was not suddenly learning to work harder

This is perhaps the most important correction to the story I might once have told myself. I did not need to work harder. I knew I was not lazy. I knew I was willing to change. I knew what I wanted. But I did need a better map.

I needed actions instead of constant focus on outcomes. I needed to know which levers mattered most. I needed clean data. I needed to understand the delay between behaviour and visible adaptation. I needed to know when to wait and when to adjust. I needed to stop changing the experiment while it was still running. And I needed to discover that consistency is much easier to sustain when you understand exactly what you are being consistent with - and why.

Now the job is different

The most striking difference in what I do now is that I no longer need today's outcome to tell me what to do tomorrow. Through tracking, I've observed that my body can fluctuate. The scale can be irritating. Progress can temporarily disappear inside noise. But none of that changes the basic job.

I do the actions. Record them. Hold the important variables steady. Collect enough evidence. Then decide.

The old me repeatedly looked at the result, even after just a few days of following a new plan, and asked "What should I do now?" The current me knows what to do regardless of the result. Perhaps this is the bigger transformation that has taken place underneath the physical one.

One of the most important lessons has been to move one lever at a time, increase output before considering calorie reduction, and look across multiple forms of evidence - weight, measurements, photographs and gym performance - rather than reacting to just one variable.

If I were speaking now to a woman who is working hard but not getting the results she desires, I would tell her how simple the central framework has become for me: appropriate energy intake, adequate protein, progressive resistance training and sufficient daily movement. Thanks to *LeanSeven*, I now have a reliable map.

I always knew where I wanted to go. What changed was finally knowing how to get there.

Acknowledgement

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To learn more about *LeanSeven*: leanseven.com.au | Instagram: @theleanseven