



SIMPLY being happy, it seems, is getting harder and harder these days — but writing about how you feel can actually make you smile again, writes *Craig Campbell*.

Scientists have found that keeping a diary is one of the surest ways to get a grin back on your face, but there are many other so-called moodboosters to help you through these tough times.

Apparently, writing down any positive experience can be uplifting for even the most downcast of us.

There are plenty other top tips —
 ● A simple walk in the park, whether a brisk trot or a lazy wander, has been shown to increase our happiness.
 ● When you have negative thoughts, ask yourself if there's a more positive spin you can put on it, and you'll often find

there is a cheerier way of looking at things.

● Meditation — simply find a quiet space, sit in silence and try to think of nothing. Not only do your aching limbs relax, the brain does, too.

● Nurture relationships with family, friends and work colleagues. A study found that being socially isolated is as bad for your health as smoking or drinking excessively, and worse than obesity!

● Avoiding consumerism is a must, they say — try not to get caught up in buying things to cheer yourself up, because it just makes things worse. The boffins also found a direct link between

what you can afford and how happy it makes you.

Rich people were given a bar of chocolate, which they gobbled up fast and looked bored again. But poorer folk made it last, and savoured the taste.

Health

The write stuff for better moods

I was shocked to be too heavy for 27-stone scales



Andrew and Clare with *Fat Families* presenter Steve Miller. Right, education about portion sizes is an important factor in any weight-loss programme.



WHEN I bought a new set of scales to try to get a measure of my out-of-control weight, I thought there was a problem when they came up with an error message.

What I didn't realise was they worked fine — I was just too heavy for them.

Looking at the back, I saw they went up to 27 stone, and thought there was no way I could possibly be heavier than that.

But, sadly, I was and, with my dad having had the words "morbidly obese" on his death certificate, friends and family joined my fear for my own health.

Now, though, my new wife, Clare, and I have seen our marriage given a fantastic fresh start and hope to fulfil our dreams of starting a family, thanks to new Sky 1 series, *Fat Families*.

I've always been overweight, even at school and, having worked in a couple of jobs for many years, it all went wrong when I started another closer to home in Liverpool.

It was as a kitchen porter and I only lasted two days.

I just wasn't fit enough and, frankly, I almost collapsed in pain.

I could barely walk at the end of the second day.

Being unemployed made things worse, and I suppose I got lazier and ate more.

I could see people

looking at me twice in the street and it was so embarrassing, I virtually stopped going out altogether. I had no confidence at all.

I'd known Clare since our teens — we're both in our early 30s now — and even when we got married, it was far from plain sailing.

I had to get the biggest possible suit, but even the largest waistcoat wasn't big enough, so an extra panel had to be sewn in to let me wear it. That meant I couldn't

take my jacket off all day as I didn't want people to see what I'd had to have done.

On our honeymoon, we went to Disneyworld in Orlando, but I was too big for almost all the rides.

Horrible

When I did get on one, I couldn't get the shoulder harness to secure no matter how hard I tried to force it, so I had to get off. Everyone was staring

at us, and it was just horrible.

I was simply eating too much.

I didn't always have breakfast but, when I did, it was a full English and, for the rest of the time, when I did start eating, it would be non-stop until I went to bed.

I snacked on crisps, sweets and soft drinks and, whatever meals we had, everything came with chips — even if we had a healthy salad.

Along the way, I tried all sorts of diets but, no

matter what came off, it just went back on with a bit more besides.

Then, I saw the advert looking for people to appear on *Fat Families*, and that really changed our lives.

I've learned it's not about dieting, it's just eating healthier and moving more.

Presenter Steve Miller takes a tough love approach and, when he told us that we were lazy, we couldn't argue. I certainly was.

I was shocked to find that I was 27st 7lbs and Clare was 14st.

We were given lots of help and advice on healthy eating, as well as a treadmill and gym memberships.

The effect has been amazing.

In just eight weeks, I've lost three stone and

Clare has shed a stone and a half.

I've got a long-term goal of getting down to under 16 stone, and I'm absolutely convinced I'll do it.

It's totally changed our lives.

We go out for walks and do things together I'd never have done before when I just wouldn't leave the house.

It's been so good for our marriage, it's been like rolling the clock back to when we first started going out. It's just like having a new relationship again.

● As told to *Bill Gibb*

Andrew and Clare's episode of *Fat Families* is on Sky 1 on Tuesday, November 8, at 8pm.

HIS OWN STORY

by Andrew Brooke

ANSWERING AD TO APPEAR IN TV SHOW CHANGED MY LIFE