



Amazing: Sigrid de Castella, then obese, got sick of being compared to her famous relative, the ever-fit Robert de Castella, and set her mind to losing the weight without surgery.

fat?" Like many people, Sigrid thought she was just "different" and had the "world's worst metabolism".

Over the years, she tried every fad diet there was, but nothing ever worked. Sound familiar?

But at 34 years, and weighing more than 143kg, something changed.

Sigrid found a solution to her weight-loss woes: she realised that no one could help her until she was ready to help herself.

"No matter how many people I asked for help, nothing was going to change until I was ready for the journey that would take me from obesity to health and vitality," she writes in the book.

What happened next was simply astounding.

Over the next 20 months, she went from size 30 to size 10, and dropped three full shoe sizes.

In Sigrid's view, healthy eating and exercising took her halfway to

her massive weight loss, and her new-found attitude took care of the rest.

There are no shortcuts to getting healthy.

It takes a long time to get fat, and a long time to lose it.

But it's worth it.

Sigrid suggests basic steps including working out how much you are eating in the first place, gradually reducing calorie intake, ensuring you don't lose more than 1kg a week and removing temptation from your kitchen cupboards.

Sigrid's story is a vital reminder that bariatric surgery is not the only way for morbidly obese people to achieve significant and lasting weight loss.

Bariatric surgery can be a successful last resort, but it shouldn't be a first port of call.

It is expensive, isn't readily available despite a Medicare subsidy, and there can be significant

adverse side-effects. It's also no guarantee of long-term weight loss — thousands of Australians each year need to have a second round of surgery, primarily because they haven't changed their lifestyle and continue to make poor food choices.

As Sigrid says, you can lose weight for your spouse, your kids, or even to fit into a little black cocktail dress.

"But most of all, do it for yourself. You deserve to be all you can be."

Sounds like a healthy recipe for the new year.

Twitter @susieob

Online
heraldsun.com.au

HAVE YOUR SAY

What do you think is the best way to lose weight? Blog with Susie at heraldsun.com.au.

Armageddon used to the end of world

SO, now we know the Mayans were wrong. If you were feeling awkward about giving away all your valuables before December 21, or investing in a giant cellar, don't worry.

You might have been a bit early, but there's still a reasonable chance that the world will end, and soon.

Your obvious hope is climate change. At the rate that we're going, large portions of land will be under water in about 20 years.

If we do nothing to stop the ice shelf in western Antarctica from falling into the sea, 15 per cent of our city by the bay will be just a bay by 2040. While global warming won't end the world, it will make it largely uninhabitable for humans. We're experiencing species loss at the highest rate in 63 million years.

If temperatures rise 6C, the human population will decline to two billion and we will also lose most species, including trees.

At an 8C rise, humans go down to a few million and must retreat to Antarctica. It is possible for humans to continue living underground if the planet gets too hot, but there isn't very good phone reception down there.

There could be a series of massive disease outbreaks any time. Increasing numbers of stubborn, misinformed parents are refusing to vaccinate their children.

They say they're doing it because vaccinations cause autism, despite no scientific evidence.

It boggles the mind that people equate correlation with causation. (Every morning, soon after I get up, the sun rises. My getting out of bed causes the sun to rise.)

These people are evidently setting up their children to be biological weapons, bringing back previously eradicated diseases.

Thanks to their selfish choice, they greatly increase the chances of drug-resistant super-viruses coming to kill us all.

Influenzas named after animals are another option. Bird flu and swine flu have both had a pretty good run at things.

Hippopotamus flu might be in with a chance next year, but pygmy-owl flu is going to be the real killer.

Alien invasion. This is an obvious one because it's crazy to think that there isn't life on other planets.

According to movies, these advanced civilisations want to do nothing more than come to earth and kill us or attack farmers. In this situation, if you're not a farmer, you have a good chance of being OK.

According to video games, aliens mostly just want to kill you and experiment on your corpse. If that happens, you're pretty much screwed.

Just because an asteroid hasn't yet exterminated all living things (except cockroaches) doesn't mean it won't.

Space rocks defeated the dinosaurs, and they looked pretty hardcore in *Jurassic Park*. Smaller meteorites can kill individuals in towns and transform others into super-villains (in *Smallville*, anyway).

In *Buff*, a meteorite gave the world a large insect that quelled crazy people. Our real concern, however, is a big asteroid impact. This might push Earth out of orbit, make us explode, or do massive undefined damage to everything. Large or small, our chances don't look good.

Over-population is another big problem. There are currently more people alive than have ever been dead.

This is a conundrum for people who believe in reincarnation, and is also bad for food stocks, fuel consumption, global warming, and house prices.

Trying to buy a nice apartment in a good area is enough to make you wish for the end of the world. But those other three things are probably the bigger problems.

Once we run out of easy access to food and (especially) water, we will start killing each other over corn and wells and you just know that the nukes will rain from the sky.

The growing gap between rich and poor is another thing that could end the world.

When there are a few people who are disgustingly rich, a large group of people who are extremely poor, and a larger group of people who earn enough to be kind of OK but have no security, this ends in resentment, crime, famine, war and the French Revolution.

Since we've come a long way from muskets and swords, any large uprising of the 99 per cent is going to trigger an epic war that will reduce the world to a post-apocalyptic wasteland. And that's on top of global warming.

Also zombies. Happy New Year.

Alice Clarke



ALIEN WORLD

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Alice Clarke is a Melbourne writer. Follow her on Twitter @Alicedkc

just one day at a time



Snap happy: Rod Chester (right) with wife Anna Lamberton and daughter Meg.

formed back in 2011 whose members continue to share their photos each day, and their lives along with them.

There have been moments of happiness, moments of sadness and

many moments that were, well, ordinary. Along the way, photos were shared and friendships formed.

Some of the pictures were special. So were some of the connections.

About a quarter of us who started

that 365 project in 2011 made it to the end. A year, it turns out, is a very long time.

But many of us who did make it to the finish line are back again.

Taking a picture a day seems like an easy task. Bring out your camera, point and shoot.

And some days it is easy. Some days you go to interesting places and see interesting things.

Other days it's all same-old, same-old. You take the same route to work, sit at the same desk and travel home in the very same way.

Some days you take pictures you are proud of, other days you take pictures that are about staying in the game.

There are people who like to predict the year ahead. I have no idea what 2013 will bring us, all I know is whatever it brings I'll be ready to capture with the camera in my iPhone 5.

This will be a year I look forward to a new challenge. It will let me put the year in perspective, one frame at a time.

Rod Chester is a News Limited writer