

STOP SIZE STIGMA & PROMOTE POSITIVITY!

Obesity is a word that holds a heavy stigma that brings on a sense of shame to those who carry extra body weight. This shame is due to the long held bias of overweight people being lazy, sloppy, unmotivated, unhealthy, unsuccessful, and other negative, unfounded associations.

According to Rebecca Puhl, Director of Research and Weight Stigma at the Rudd Center for



©Rudd Centre Image Gallery

Food Policy & Obesity, weight stigma carries major concerns for psychological and physical health including high blood pressure, increased stress, and poor quality of life (Puhl, & Latner, 2008).

In a U.S. study of 218 women, a positive link was found between BMI and the delay or avoidance of health care. As well, it showed that “getting weighed” and “being told to lose weight” were common reasons for delaying or

avoiding health appointments (Drury C., & Louis M., 2002).

It is quite shocking to learn that people who may benefit greatly from visiting a health care provider are reluctant to do so for fear of being judged.

So Who's To Blame?

We all know that the media plays a large role in the weight stigma by portraying heavy people engaging in unhealthy behaviors,

but what else is driving the problem? In recent discussions with nurses at a health unit in Ontario, they described working in settings that used ‘one size fits all’ tools which are not accommodating to large clients. These included scales, hospital gowns, blood pressure cuffs, waiting room chairs, and fitness equipment. These ill-fitting tools suggest to people who are overweight that they are abnormal and not accepted in today's society.

CHECK YOURSELF!

Prevent stigmatization by:

1. Not making assumptions of lifestyle based on someone's size.
2. Standing up to fat ridicule & challenging stereotypes.
3. Treat individuals as equals. Remember that everyone, regardless of size, can benefit from healthy eating and physical activity recommendations.
4. Focusing on promoting healthy living messages that shift the focus away from weight and towards making improvements to their health overall.

BY TAKING A STAND AGAINST WEIGHT BIAS AND WEIGHT DISCRIMINATION YOU ARE TAKING A STAND AGAINST WHAT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE LAST SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE FORM OF PREJUDICE!

For More Information visit:

The Rudd Centre For Food Policy & Obesity, www.yaleruddcenter.org

The Obesity Action Coalition, www.obesityaction.org

The Obesity Network www.obesitynetwork.ca

Health At Every Size, www.haescommunity.org

References

Drury C., & Louis M. (2002). Exploring the association between body weight, stigma of obesity, and health care avoidance. *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*, 14(12), 554-561.

Puhl, R., & Latner, J. (2008). Weight bias: New science on a significant social problem. *Obesity*, 16(S2), S1-S2. Written By: Jessica Rivers, Dietetic Intern, Jan/2012