

## FOR PEOPLE WHO CONSIDER SIZE ACCEPTANCE DANGEROUS

We've all heard the weight fears: obesity is said to have reached epidemic proportions, posing drastic threats to public health, increasing morbidity, mortality and health care costs, and lowering quality of life. Many well-intentioned people strongly believe that we need to fight obesity and that people who promote size acceptance are dangerous.

But here's the rub. History shows that admonishing people to lose weight is just plain ineffective. The weight loss literature has been consistent for decades: while many weight loss methods are successful for short-term weight loss, only a tiny minority of people actually maintain that weight loss over the long term. Whether you blame willpower or accept the more scientific argument that biologic mechanisms underlie the resistance to weight loss, the simple fact remains: admonishments to lose weight don't result in maintained weight loss for the vast majority of people. You can choose to adopt a self-righteous attitude and blame the individual, or, you can take responsibility and acknowledge that for whatever reason, your advice is not achieving the desired outcome.

Trumpeting obesity fears and hounding people to lose weight is not just ineffective, but downright damaging. They lead to repeated cycles of weight loss and regain, to food and body preoccupation, self-hatred, eating disorders, weight discrimination, and poor health. Few of us are at peace with our bodies, whether because we're fat or because we fear becoming fat. Every time you make fat the problem, these are side effects, however unintended they may be.

Those of us who advocate for size acceptance care deeply about people's health. A large scientific literature demonstrates that improved health behaviors can improve health directly, regardless of

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whether weight changes. The psychological literature additionally indicates that people make better health choices when they feel better about themselves.

The argument for size acceptance doesn't need to depend on whether you accept the considerable challenges to the current assumptions about weight and health. It's really very simple: Your strategy has not only failed, but backfired. Shame doesn't help people make better health choices—though it does contribute to considerable “dis-ease.” I urge you: Lay off the fat people. Science and reason do not support the value of a weight focus.

There is a compassionate alternative to the war on obesity. It's called Health at Every Size and it involves shifting focus from weight to health.

For more information, check out *Health at Every Size: The Surprising Truth About Your Weight* (www.HAESbook.com).

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