



The Facts, Fictions and Clinical Path for Ending the War on Weight and Nurturing Body Respect

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As a diabetes health care provider, you've undoubtedly been well-schooled in weight concerns. You've been trained to recommend weight loss and dietary monitoring and control as essential for diabetes prevention and management.

Yet if you honor your own inner knowledge, you also know the status quo prescription for weight management just isn't effective. Most health practitioners feel frustrated and powerless and often expect that patients will be unmotivated and noncompliant with weight loss recommendations.

Perhaps you're noticing, despite all the attention to weight, clients aren't getting thinner. Maybe you're aware of the well-established finding that only a small percentage of people maintain weight loss over the long run and that biological safeguards – some we understand and others we don't – cause our bodies to resist long-term weight loss. Maybe you've also noticed another trend well-established in the literature, that diabetes is rarely improved even for those few clients who do lose weight.

You may also have observed the negative consequences of prescribing weight loss, with patients becoming increasingly preoccupied with food and weight and exhibiting disordered eating behaviors. You've noticed clients' shame and discomfort in discussing weight – and perhaps are aware of the well documented finding that patients avoid or delay health care to steer clear of the weight loss lecture and feelings of failure and self-blame.

Perhaps, too, you feel shame about your own body size and concern about what it may telegraph to others about your own behaviors and competency as a health provider.

I want to encourage you to trust your intuition. Something has gone really, really wrong in our “expert” understanding of weight.

Not just ineffective and damaging, weight-focused diabetes care also obscures the fact that lifestyle factors, all tolled, account for less than a quarter of health outcomes. It puts the burden on the individual to assume personal responsibility for discomfort around food and weight and disease, deflecting attention from the more pernicious problem: systemic injustice. The emphasis on lifestyle change can also add a new stressor, giving people a way to blame themselves for not doing better or for bringing about their diabetes.

Let's switch our focus to what we know to be true about diabetes. It is well established that people suffering from discrimination, poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment, and high exposure to crime and violence, suffer a



higher prevalence of health disparities, including diabetes. Historical trauma and cultural alienation contribute to the disproportional high prevalence of diabetes among American Indians compared to other stigmatized groups. Scientists have been able to trace the biological pathways from these stressors to diabetes.

We're at the brink of a paradigm shift in diabetes care. The old and still entrenched paradigm focuses on high weight, poor diet and lack of physical activity as the causal factors for the high incidence of diabetes and fails to raise sufficient awareness to the impact of stress, and the political, environmental, and social structures that have created and continue to feed the prevalence of diabetes among American Indians.

The new paradigm starts from affirming the individual's worth, value, and cultural traditions, and recognizes the physiology of oppression: that our environment, including economic, political, social, and one's individual stress response trigger biological reactions within the body, like diabetes, and affect lifestyle behaviors.

It recognizes that while behavior change is valuable, it can't remove the stressors one faces. No matter how much we change our eating or activity habits, the factors that make up our lifeworld - things like discrimination, stigma, insecure work, poverty, and caring responsibilities - remain unchanged. These factors play a much larger role in health and well-being, and they also affect our ability to make those lifestyle changes.

The new approach focuses directly on health, without using weight as a mediator, moving away from the stigmatization of weight and avoiding the metabolic dysregulation and behavioral fallout of cognitive restraint. It also enables us to integrate clinically meaningful data about social determinants, stigma and stress into our work with clients.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Linda Bacon is fostering a global transformation – away from our obsession with body weight and to body respect. Her mission is to provide the critical thought, inspiring vision, and practical strategies needed to empower individuals, organizations, and institutions to respect all bodies and support compassionate self-care. Dr. Bacon holds graduate degrees in physiology, psychology, and exercise metabolism with a specialty in nutrition. A professor and researcher, for almost two decades Dr. Bacon has taught courses in social justice, health, weight and nutrition; she has also conducted federally funded studies on health and weight and published in top scientific journals. Dr. Bacon is co-author of the paradigm-shifting *Body Respect: What Conventional Health Books Get Wrong, Leave Out, or Just Fail to Understand about Weight*. She also wrote the iconic and bestselling *Health at Every Size: The Surprising Truth about Your Weight*. Dr. Bacon's advocacy for body respect has generated a large following on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, health and nutrition listservs and specialty blogs, and the international lecture circuit. She is committed to centralizing the ways in which power, privilege and disadvantage complicate our experience of our bodies. A compelling speaker, writer and storyteller, Dr. Bacon delivers a unique blend of academic expertise, clinical experience, and social justice advocacy, all couched in a raw honesty and compassion that touch and inspire.

Recommended Resources (Free download at LindaBacon.Org/Resources):

- Bacon, L., & Aphramor, L. [Weight Science: Evaluating the Evidence for a Paradigm Shift](#) Nutrition Journal, 2011, 10(9).

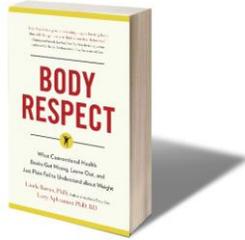
This is the premiere peer-reviewed article that has up-ended thinking about weight. Includes convincing arguments that support a paradigm shift from weight to respect, meticulously referenced. In academic voice.



- Bacon, L. & Matz, J., [Intuitive Eating for People with Diabetes: Enjoy your Food, Respect your Body](#)
Diabetes Self-Management Magazine.

The Health at Every Size approach for diabetes management is introduced, including tips for switching from a "diet" mentality to intuitive eating. Non-academic, accessible for clients.

Books



Linda Bacon & Lucy Aphramor

Body Respect:

What Conventional Health Books Get Wrong, Leave Out, and Just Plain Fail to Understand about Weight

BenBella Books, 2014.

Integrating a social justice agenda, Body Respect critiques weight science, explains the fallout of a health agenda based on thinness as the goal, and offers an alternative path to compassionate and effective health care and self-care.



Linda Bacon

Health at Every Size:

The Surprising Truth about Your Weight

BenBella Books, 2010.

Renowned for its captivating storytelling (including behind-the-scenes government and industry exposés!), easy to implement self-help advice, scientific information, and details of a research study that helped put HAES® perspective on the map. Promotes an earlier conception of HAES, which has a greater emphasis on lifestyle change and less integration with social justice perspective than reflected in Body Respect and the current HAES movement.

Social Media/Newsletter

Follow LindaBaconHAES on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to stay on top of news and get inspirational tidbits. Subscribe to the [newsletter](#) for occasional updates and otherwise unpublished insights.

Additional Resources (written by others)

[The Weight-Inclusive versus Weight-Normative Approach to Health: Evaluating the Evidence for Prioritizing Well-Being over Weight Loss](#), by Tracy Tylka et al., Journal of Obesity, 2014.

[Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat With Diabetes: A Mindful Eating Program for Thriving With Prediabetes or Diabetes](#), by Michelle May and Megrette Fletcher, Am I Hungry Publishing, 2018.

For more information, visit lindabacon.org



JOIN THE HEALTH AT EVERY SIZE COMMUNITY



ASDAH: THE ASSOCIATION FOR SIZE DIVERSITY AND HEALTH

www.sizediversityandhealth.org

As a non-profit organization with an international membership committed to the practice of the Health At Every Size® (HAES®) Principles, ASDAH envisions a world that celebrates bodies of all shapes and sizes, in which body weight is no longer a source of discrimination and where oppressed communities have equal access to the resources and practices that support health and well being.

(Linda is a supporting member of ASDAH, but is not, nor has she ever been, in a leadership role.)



HEALTH AT EVERY SIZE COMMUNITY RESOURCES

www.HAESCommunity.org

www.HAESCommunity.org is in three parts: the **HAES Pledge**—a great way to help you channel your energy and feel like you're supporting the cause; a searchable **Registry** for finding (and promoting) HAES practitioners; and a list of HAES-sensitive books, websites, and other **Resources**. Well over 10,000 people have signed the Pledge. Will you join us? (Linda established the community and financially sustains it. Community members are responsible to enter their own information into the database, which is moderated by volunteers.)

VISIT WWW.LINDABACON.ORG

Take advantage of the searchable resources (hundreds!), whether to arm yourself with the tools to be a good advocate for the cause, to learn about a specific topic (intuitive eating? thin privilege? weight stigma?) or to send a link to the specific pages that can support and educate your doctor, dietitian, fitness instructor, kid's teacher, dieting friend, and more...

The Body Manifesto highlights the importance of this global change movement. The accompanying video series can help inspire you and help you educate the people in your life, both personally and professionally.

SOME VIDEO TEASERS:

- Diets. Don't. Work. Here's what does...
- BMI and weight are lousy measures of health. Here's why...
- Too many victims in this war on obesity. Let's put health - and caring - back at the heart of health care. Prescription here...
- The real villain in poor health revealed. Hint, it's not weight...

To keep up with breaking news, opinion and commentary, join the community over on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). It's a great way to share conversation and support. Linda mines the web, her networks, the latest research, and posts the links; you get to talk!

Linda's traveling the world building community, offering workshops, speaking at conferences, schools, worksites, and other venues, writing about injustice and revolution, and fostering transformation.

Subscribe to her free newsletter for occasional updates and insights.

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