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In Defense of Fat

by Tasha Fierce



There is a widespread belief in Western culture that it is necessary to police the health of every fat person. Judgments are made about the state of the *inside* of fat bodies based on the appearance of the *outside* of their bodies. Most people don't see that as a negative thing, or an inappropriate thing. We're used to diagnosing illnesses from afar. We call drug-fueled, out-of-control celebs "crazy" without having a clue as to their actual mental health status. We cattily tell people whose bodies we feel are too thin to "eat a hamburger," assuming they have an eating disorder. But with fat people, there is a hate and a system of oppression behind our culture's so-called "concern" for their health. It's beyond simple comments and offhand remarks. There is a concerted effort by the diet industry, government, media, and our culture to use the guise of concern for health to shame fat people into dieting or continuing to diet, regardless of the health problems the dieting may bring. Urged on by the media and the current "obesity epidemic" hype, ostensibly well-meaning people nag family members and friends to lose the "unhealthy" weight. Yet more and more studies are showing that it's completely possible to be fat and healthy. What can be deadly is the stigma associated with being fat. The question is, why are we so stuck on fat equaling poor health, and why do we feel that based on their assumed poor health, it's okay to treat fat people as second class citizens?

Because the state of being fat is considered to be due to weakness, or defect of character, or some other fault of the fat person, the compassion behind actual concern for someone's health is not there. We don't shame breast cancer patients for doing something like drinking milk with hormones because we actually do care about the fact that they

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have a life-threatening disease. We're not looking for reasons why having cancer is their fault. We don't yell at them and tell them they're causing health care costs to go through the roof. You wouldn't do something like that to someone else in poor health, so why would you do that a fat person—unless you actually could give a crap about their health and are instead just personally repulsed by them or angry at fat people in general because they killed your father. Any way you slice it, it's not like most people are concerned for fat people's welfare. They just want them to go away.



No one addresses the issue of how all this “concern for health” and the social stigma of being fat affects the *mental* health of fat people. For example, if you're so sure that a fat person is fat because they're say, an emotional eater, how do you think he'll respond to being attacked emotionally by you calling him out for being fat? If you think a fat person must be two cheeseburgers away from a heart attack, do you think upping her anxiety and heart rate by making fun of her ass is something that might help her? No one considers these questions because, again, most people don't take the “it's for your health” track because they are actually concerned. It's just an acceptable way to shame fat people for their appearance. Period, point blank. Fat stigma is extremely detrimental to a fat person's mental health. It's extremely detrimental to a fat person's physical health. Shame is not helping.

There is an entire industry, a multi-billion dollar industry, built around the goal of improving the health of fat people by turning them into thin people. Think about this one for a second. If this industry, and dieting in general, was actually effective, it would not be a multi-billion dollar industry. You would use whatever product or service they're hawking, and then never have to again, right? Because losing weight is just calories in, calories out, it's very simple, and fat people are just lazy which is why they stay fat—not because weight loss products and programs don't work and can actually cause you to gain MORE weight and become less healthy. Fat people are expected to fight the fat their entire lives. If you're not doing this, you're shamed for “giving up” and again, being unhealthy. You would think if fat people could just be healthy, they would be left alone.

Well, fat people actually CAN be healthy. Health at Every Size is a way of living and eating that is in tune with what's best for your body, and is not a weight-loss program. The goal of Health at Every Size (HAES) is just that, health, and it can be practiced by anyone, fat or thin. Making your goal health rather than thinness only means that you're “giving up” on harmful yo-yo dieting and choosing to let your body find the weight that is healthiest for you.

Again, it comes down to basic dignity. Health status should not be something that is used to discriminate against anyone. You do not deserve to be treated as less than human because you are unhealthy—you have the right to do whatever you want with your body. If you want

to treat it like crap, that's your call. And fat does not automatically equal unhealthy. So assuming that a fat person is unhealthy simply because you can see that they're fat is lazy thinking at best. Take the time to read information on Health at Every Size, do your own research about the health problems caused by fat stigma, and at least outwardly treat the fat people who come in and out of your life with respect. No one deserves to be made a pariah over their body size, and no one deserves to be treated inhumanely because of the quality of their health.



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- [damidwif](#)
also keep in mind that being obese affects women in the area of menses & reproduction, including their fertility, hormonal contraception, pregnancy & birth.
- [ariel](#)
This audience really needed this message, but most of them still missed the point.
- [Carol N.](#)
There is no convincing people. Being fat = being the anti-christ to them. Don't give pseudo concern about fat people's health. Because I guarantee you the only thing they care about is making fat people disappear.

This is coming from a fat black anorexia survivor who got encouraged by various black people to keep on losing that weight! I was skinny and killing myself, but hey, as long as I ain't fat, I'm all good right?

- [Theresa Bakker](#)
Beautifully stated.

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