

# Fat Liberation & Health at Every Size

A Presentation for Rad Fat Adventure Camp  
by Ani Janzen  
Radical Health Alliance

## Today's Agenda

- Fat Liberation
- Health at Every Size Basics
- Integrating HAES and Fat Positivity

# Fat Liberation

A social justice movement raising awareness that fat people are systematically discriminated against and advocating for fat rights.

Also known as: Fat Acceptance, Fat Activism, Fativism, Size Acceptance, Fat Justice, Fat Power Movement

# Healthism

“Health-ism is a belief system that sees health as the property and responsibility of an individual and ranks the personal pursuit of health above everything else, like world peace or being kind.

It ignores the impact of poverty, oppression, war, violence, luck, historical atrocities, abuse and the environment from traffic, pollution to clean water and nuclear contamination and so on. It protects the status quo, leads to victim blaming and privilege, increases health inequities and fosters internalized oppression.

Health-ism judges people’s human worth according to their health.”

-Lucy Aphramor, Ph.D., RD

# Healthism + Fatphobia

## Size-Based Discrimination

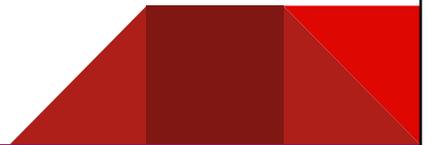
- Employment
  - Fat people are paid less, less likely to be hired, less likely to be promoted and more likely to be fired even when their job performance is good.
- Education
  - Fat students face weight-based bullying by students and teachers, are more likely to be seen as unintelligent or not hardworking, and are less likely to be admitted to higher ed programs
- Healthcare
  - Fat patients are perceived as less compliant with health recommendations, physicians spend less time with fat patients and are more likely to make inappropriate comments to fat patients

Rudolph CW, Wells CL, Weller MD, Battes BB. A meta-analysis of empirical studies of weight-based bias in the workplace. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 2009;74(1):1-10. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001879108000912>. doi: [//doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2008.09.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2008.09.008).

Puhl RM, Heuer CA. The stigma of obesity: A review and update. *Obesity* (Silver Spring). 2009;17(5):941-964. doi: [10.1038/oby.2008.636](https://doi.org/10.1038/oby.2008.636).

## Size-Based Discrimination, cont.

- Internalized weight bias
  - Fat people believe they deserve the discrimination they face because they believe their size is due to their own laziness, gluttony, and lack of willpower
- Discrimination increases and presents differently with additional marginalized identities.
- Discrimination in all settings usually increases with increased size.



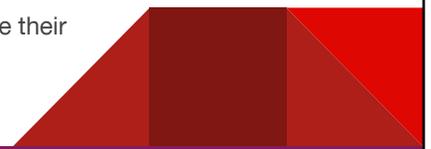
## Size is a Spectrum

- Small fat
  - Fits in most seating with minimal discomfort
  - Can find clothing in many stores, including those catering to straight sizes
  - Has representation in body positive campaigns
  - Health care providers are generally more accepting of their decisions to not focus on weight loss
- Medium fat or Fat fat
  - Can physically fit into most seats, but is often uncomfortable, painful and results in bruising
  - Finds clothing in brick-and-mortar specialty stores catering to plus sizes
  - Has minimal representations in some body positive campaigns
  - Health care providers generally believe that weight loss would improve their health and should be a priority



## Size is a Spectrum

- Super fat
  - Cannot physically fit into seating
  - Clothing options in brick-and-mortar store are very limited, even in plus size specialty stores
  - Rarely has representation in body positive campaigns
  - Health care providers are generally very concerned and focused on weight loss as a solution to most health concerns, even those not traditionally related to weight
- Infnifat
  - Cannot physically fit into seating
  - Finding clothing is very difficult, even online
  - Never represented in body positive campaigns
  - Health care providers push weight loss as imperative and see their patient has facing imminent death



“But fat people can be healthy, too!”  
Who does this leave out?

# Health at Every Size™

## Definitions

Fad Diet = Patterns of eating that are generally accepted as unhealthy and unsustainable (aka crash diets)

[Weight Loss] Diet = Any pattern of eating for the express or implied purpose of weight loss (with or without calorie restriction or macronutrient restriction)

Dietary Choices / Pattern of Eating = the foods an individual or group eats in general, habitually

## Definitions

Intentional Weight Loss = measured decrease in weight after purposeful behavior change taken for the express or implied purpose of weight loss (including “lifestyle changes”)

Weight Loss = the actual measured decreased in body mass

*Weight loss is not a behavior*



What is the mainstream thinking that connects “obesity,” health, and weight loss?

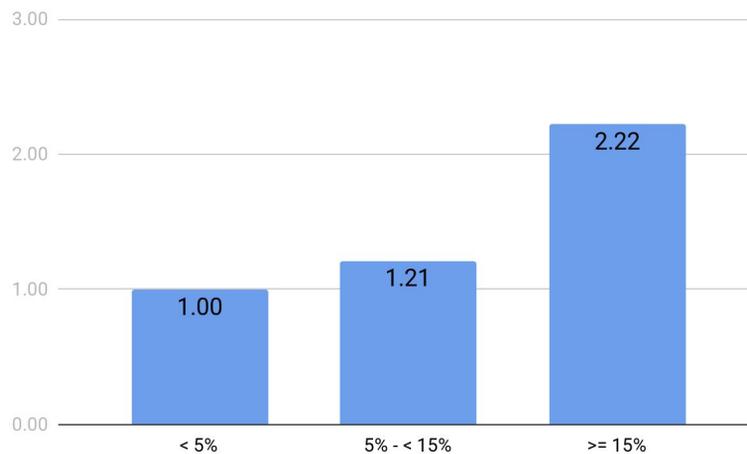
If you were going to prescribe weight loss to someone as an intervention for their health, what would the research on weight loss need to show?

## Diets don't work

Number of studies	14
Follow up range (years)	4-7
Retention rate (who completed the study)	12-88%
Average initial weight lost (kg)	-29.7 - -4.5
Average weight loss (kg) at follow up	-6.6 - +3.6
Regained all or more from baseline weight	29-64%

Mann, Traci, Tomiyama, A. Janet, Westling, Erika, Lew, Ann-Marie, Samuels, Barbra, & Chatman, Jason. (2007). Medicare's Search for Effective Obesity Treatments: Diets Are Not the Answer. *American Psychologist*, 62(3), 220-233.

## Dieting & Mortality Ratios - Obese Women

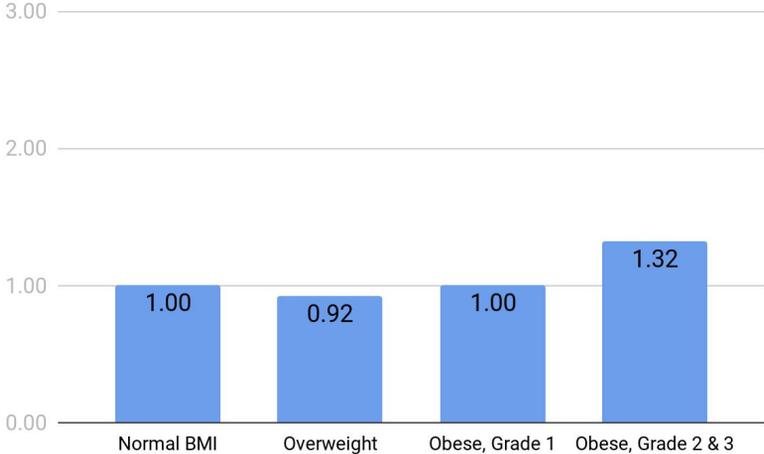


D D Ingram, & M E Mussolino. (2011). Weight loss from maximum body weight and mortality: The Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey Linked Mortality File. *Ožirenie i Metabolizm*, 8(1), *Ožirenie i Metabolizm*, 01 March 2011, Vol.8(1).

As health professionals our prime directive is not to get people healthy and it's certainly not to get people thin. It's to first do no harm.

Dr. Jon Robison

# Mortality Hazard Ratios by BMI

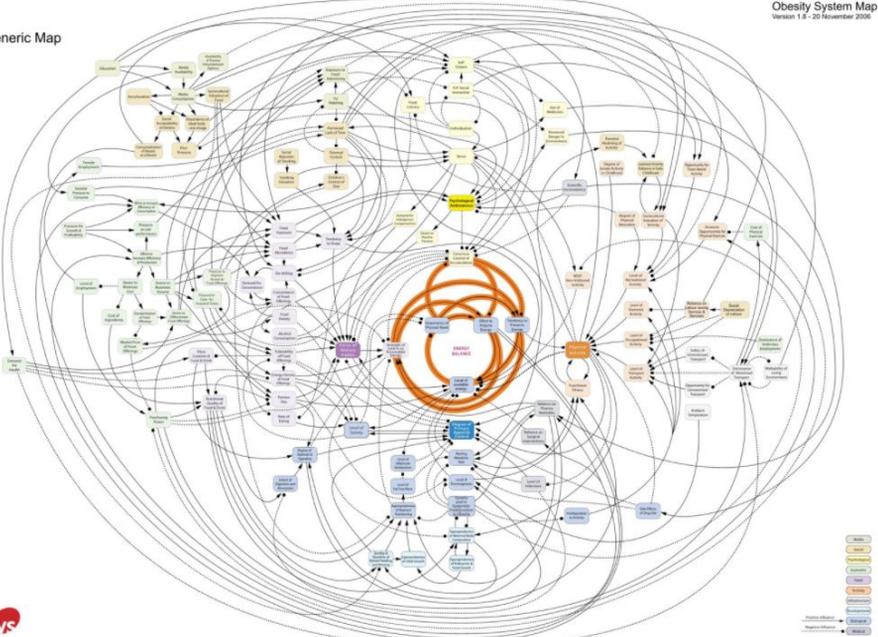


Flegal KM, Kit BK, Orpana H, Graubard BI. Association of All-Cause Mortality With Overweight and Obesity Using Standard Body Mass Index Categories: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JAMA*. 2013;309(1):71–82. doi:10.1001/jama.2012.113905

## OBESITY SYSTEMS MAP: DSI FORESIGHT TEAM 2006 -2008

Map 0  
Full Generic Map

Obesity System Map  
Version 1.8 - 20 November 2006



## Health at Every Size™ Principles

1. Size Diversity
2. Multi-dimensional health: physical, social, spiritual, sexual, occupational, emotional, intellectual
3. Eat for well-being
4. Joyful movement
5. Respectful care for all body sizes that honors multi-dimensional health



FALSE ASSUMPTION

A hand is shown drawing a scale on a whiteboard. The scale is a simple line drawing with a circular dial at the top. The words "FALSE ASSUMPTION" are written in pink, stylized, outlined letters across the top of the scale. The hand is holding a white marker and is in the process of drawing the scale's frame. The scale is positioned between two thick black horizontal bars.

## Weight normative vs Weight neutral

- There is a narrow range of sizes that healthy people are
  - When people are not a “normal/healthy” size, it is a disease that requires an explanation and treatment
  - To reduce weight-related stigma and harassment, lose weight
  - When someone is in the Overweight or Obese BMI categories, weight loss will improve health
- People are naturally diverse in size
  - No body size is inherently healthy or unhealthy, focus on the holistic and multi-dimensional nature of health
  - Make weight-related harassment unacceptable
  - Focus on health behaviors without using weight loss as a measure of success

**Eat Right  
+ Exercise**



**Lose  
weight**

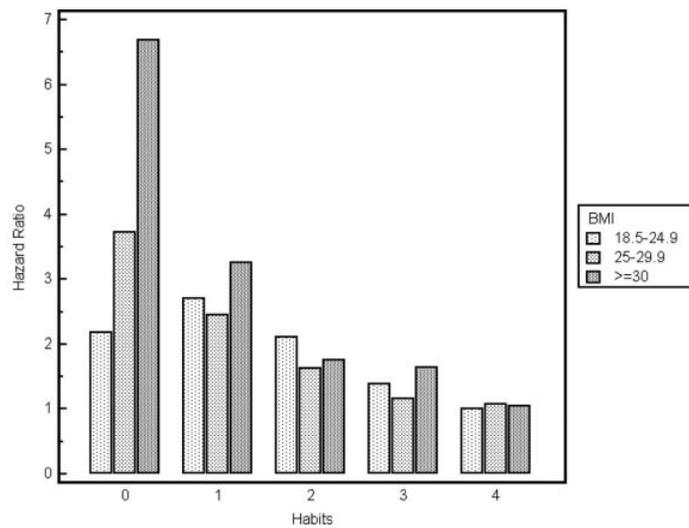


**Be  
healthier**





**Figure 1. Hazard ratio for all-cause mortality by body mass index (kg/m<sup>2</sup>) and number of healthy habits (ie, fruits and vegetable intake, tobacco, exercise, alcohol). Data from Table 3.**

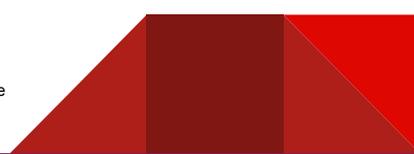


Matheson, E. M., King, D. E., & Everett, C. J. (2012). Healthy lifestyle habits and mortality in overweight and obese individuals. *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*, 25(1), 9-15.

## Health at Every Size Study

- Highly-respected diet researchers
- Publicly funded
- Randomly-assigned to conventional diet plan or HAES plan
- One year intervention

Bacon L, Stern JS, Van Loan MD, Keim NL. Size acceptance and intuitive eating improve health for obese, female chronic dieters. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 2005;105(6):929-936.  
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0002822305003226>. doi: //doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2005.03.011.



## Health at Every Size® Study

### Conventional Diet Plan

- Count calories and fat
- Food diary
- Weekly weigh-ins
- Info about healthy diet & physical activity

### HAES Plan

- Started with body- & self-acceptance
- Info about healthy diet & physical activity

## Health at Every Size® Study Results

### Conventional Diet Plan

- 40% dropped out
- Initial weight loss & health improvements
- Neither were sustained
- Self-esteem TANKED

### HAES Plan

- 8% dropped out
- Greater initial health improvements
- Sustained health improvements & behaviors

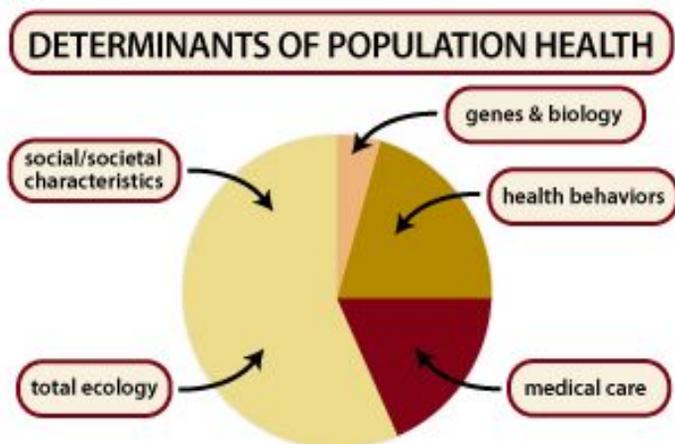
**Eat Right  
+ Exercise**



**Be  
healthier**



# Social Determinants of Health



Sources: Tarlov, A.R., Public Policy Frameworks for Improving Population Health. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1999. 896(SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND HEALTH IN INDUSTRIAL NATIONS: SOCIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND BIOLOGICAL PATHWAYS); p. 281-293.

# Multidimensional Health

What is 'healthy'?

Who gets to decide?

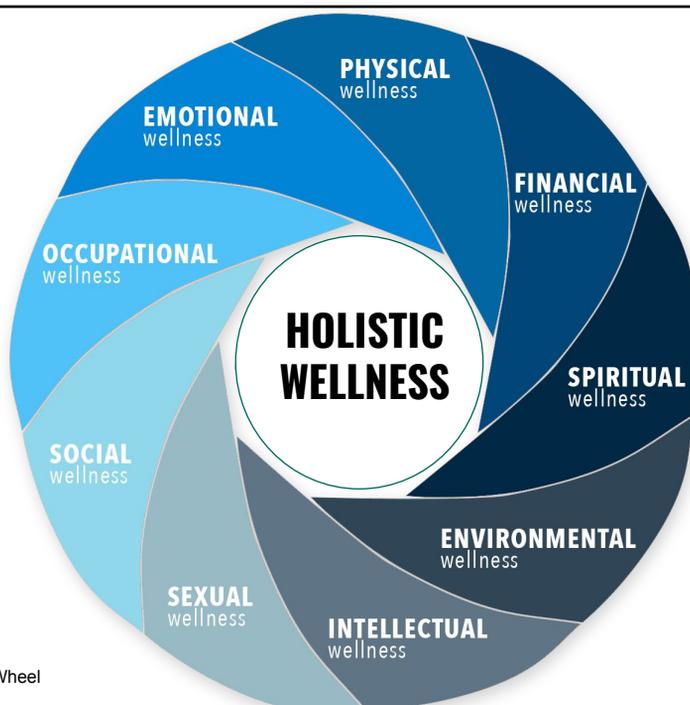
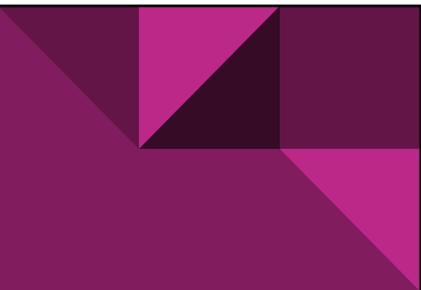
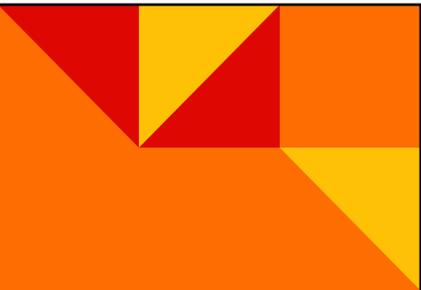


Image Source:  
<https://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/Hoya-Wellness-Wheel>

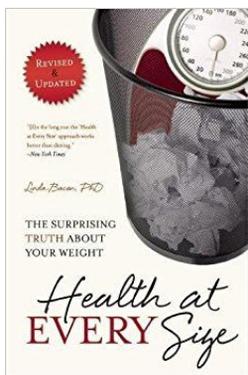


# Integrating HAES and Fat Liberation: Two Movements that need each other



What happens to  
the HAES  
movement without a  
Fat Liberation lens?

# What happens to Fat Liberation without Health at Every Size?



## More Resources



## DANCES WITH FAT

LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS ARE NOT SIZE DEPENDENT

Questions?

# **RADICAL HEALTH ALLIANCE**

championing health for fat people



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[ani@radicalhealthalliance.org](mailto:ani@radicalhealthalliance.org)