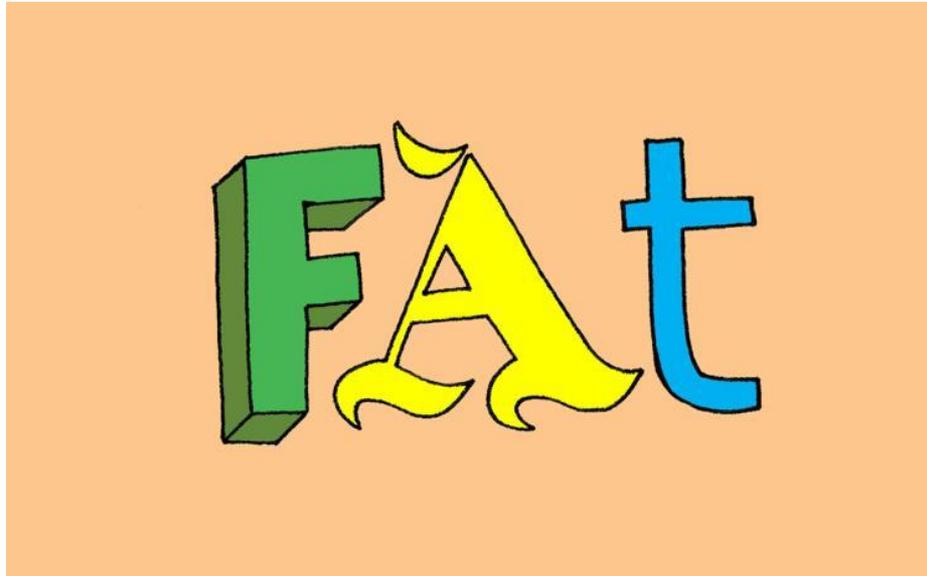


Weight Bias and Health Equity for CHWs

Sossity Chiricuzio, ORCHWA
Alix Sanchez, Multnomah County

BRAINSTORM

What comes to mind when you hear the word



Weight Bias and the BMI

BMI = weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared.

- Not created for use in a medical setting. The creator was a statistician, not a doctor
- No allowance for the relative proportions of bone, muscle and fat in the body, or for differences in bodies based on age, sex, etc.
- Does not take into account any other relevant health information like metabolic processes, blood pressure, etc.
- Leads many physicians to make assumptions about the health status of patients without building any rapport or relationship.

People of size and healthcare access

According to a 2015 study

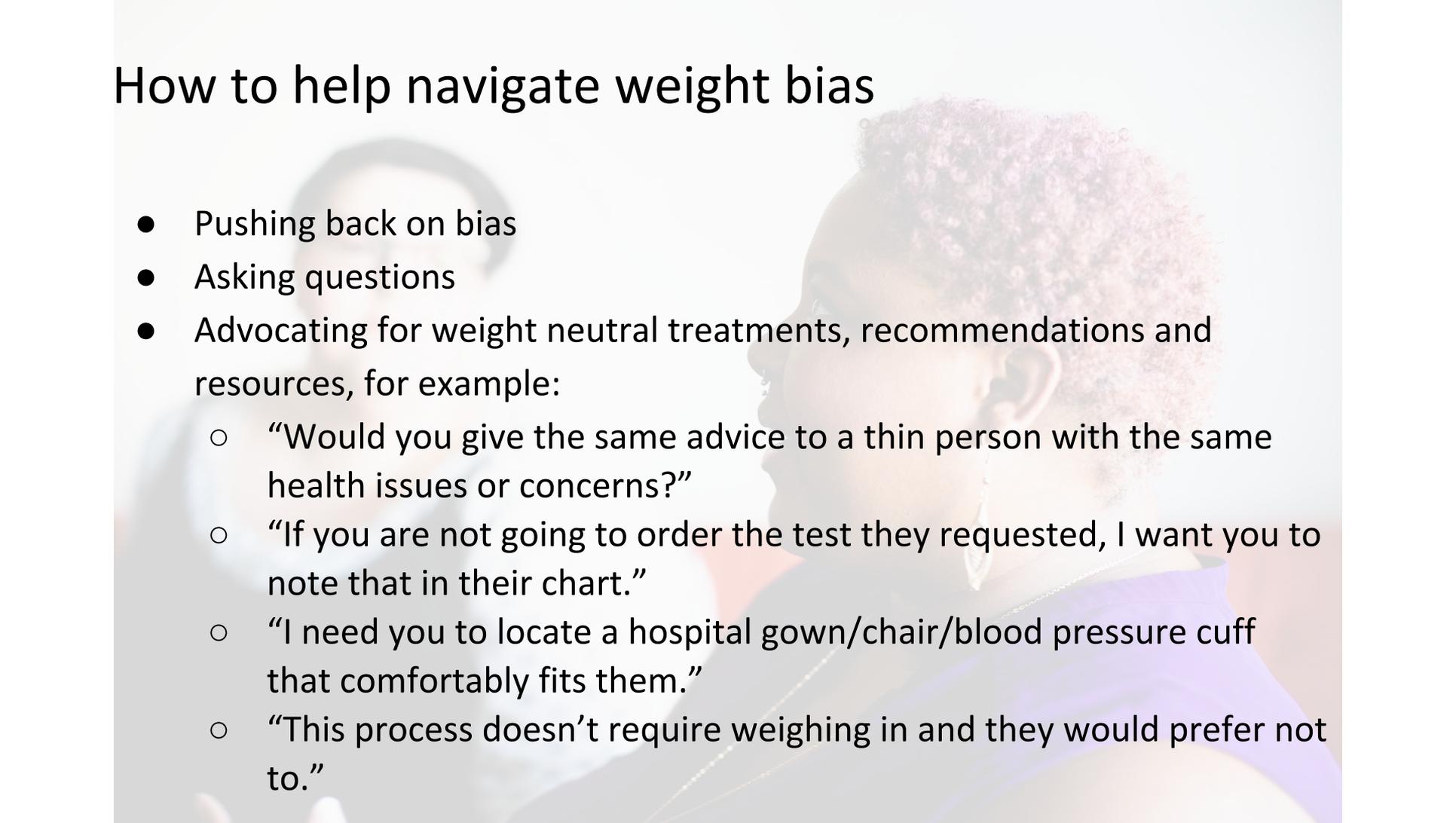
- Many healthcare providers hold strong negative attitudes and stereotypes about people of size.
- These attitudes may impact the care they provide.
- Experiences of or expectations for poor treatment may cause stress and avoidance of care, mistrust of doctors and poor adherence among patients of size.
- Stigma can reduce the quality of care for patients of size despite the best intentions of healthcare providers to provide high-quality care.

Weight Neutral Care

Diabetes education and management is a good example of a place to use a [weight neutral](#) approach, where the CHW encourages the individual in behaviors they can control which have been shown to improve glucose levels like attention to emotional well-being, intuitive and balanced eating, taking their medication, maintaining regular medical care, managing stress, and engaging in enjoyable and [accessible physical activity](#).

We suggest that CHWs, health care providers, patients and communities familiarize themselves with the prevalence of [weight bias](#), and with the principles of Health at Every Size, which are intended to help advance social justice, create an inclusive and respectful community, and support people of all sizes in finding compassionate ways to take care of themselves.

How to help navigate weight bias



- Pushing back on bias
- Asking questions
- Advocating for weight neutral treatments, recommendations and resources, for example:
 - “Would you give the same advice to a thin person with the same health issues or concerns?”
 - “If you are not going to order the test they requested, I want you to note that in their chart.”
 - “I need you to locate a hospital gown/chair/blood pressure cuff that comfortably fits them.”
 - “This process doesn’t require weighing in and they would prefer not to.”

Questions?



Follow up questions from the Conference session

Question: What are your thoughts about the idea that people HAVE fat vs. people BEING just fat?

Sossity: Speaking for myself, I find that idea can be a useful entry point for some people to think about fat as something fairly universal and not automatically bad, but also I think that the distinction between it being something you have vs something you are is a further reinforcement that being fat is not good.

Fat is a descriptor, like 'athletic' or 'tall' or 'young', and is not mutually exclusive from other descriptors. Pushing back against the shame that has been assigned to that word, and to bodies that are defined by that word, feels more long term productive and healthy to me than trying to separate myself from it as a descriptor.

Follow up questions from the Conference session

Question: How do you suggest to support people who are with diabetes or pre-diabetic, are overweight, are complaining that they cannot lose any weight even though they have tried everything?

Alix: I would encourage you to shift the focus away from weight loss as a goal. The numbers on the scale are not an indication of anything related to diabetes. Try eating in ways that support healthy blood sugars (and remembering that eating more frequently and avoiding long periods of fasting is actually more supportive of steady blood sugars); movement that brings joy and feels good to the body; and remembering to check in with how those changes feel physically and emotionally.

Follow up questions from the Conference session

Question: Do you have a recommendation for body positive websites etc to show children?

Sossity: There are several books and also some websites that cover body positivity that I will list on the children's resources slide.

I also think the best examples a child can see are the adults around them being body positive and not focusing on losing weight/being a certain size. Any time an adult around them, especially someone they love and respect, comments negatively on their own body (weight, skin color, hair type or texture, being unattractive, etc) that impacts the child's ideas about what is and is not OK in a body, and how they should feel about their body.

Follow up questions from the Conference session

Body Positive Resources for Kids:

[Chunky](#) by Amina Leila

[Her Body Can](#) by Ady Meschke, Katie Crenshaw

<https://www.confidentbody.net/> (*caveat: we don't support the idea that you need to involve a medical professional if your child is "overweight" because the medicalization of weight does so much harm, but otherwise the advice is fairly helpful*)

<https://healthateverysizeblog.org/2013/02/19/haes-matters-a-health-at-every-size-model-for-our-children/>

Follow up questions from the Conference session

Question: Do you have a recommendation for body positive websites etc to show children?

Alix: This blog from NW Primary Care has some great tips for parents and caregivers on supporting body positivity in kids <https://www.nwpc.com/teach-kids-body-positivity/>

Resources and Further Reading

- *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*
[By Sabrina Strings](#)
- *Impact of weight bias and stigma on quality of care and outcomes for patients with obesity*
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4381543/>
- HAES (Health at Every Size)
<https://haescommunity.com/>
- The Body is Not an Apology
<http://thebodyisnotanapology.com>
- Your Fat Friend
<https://www.instagram.com/yrfatfriend/>

Credits and contact information

Thank you to AllGo for the fat positive stock images!

<https://canweallgo.com/plus-size-stock-photos/plus-size-stock-photos-home/>

AllGo is a review app where plus-size people rate the comfort and accessibility of public spaces so others can know what to expect. We help people of size go out more, with less anxiety.

<https://canweallgo.com/>

If you have further questions or need tips on more resources, please feel free to reach out to Sossity directly: sossity@orchwa.org