

What is Weight Neutrality?

The weight-neutral approach to health is based on the tenets:

- 1)** A person's health status, risk level, or quality of life cannot be assumed based solely on a number on a scale.
- 2)** Bodyweight is determined by a complex set of genetic, metabolic, physiological, cultural, social, and behavioural determinants, some of which individuals cannot change.
- 3)** Bodies have always come in a variety of shapes and sizes - and it is not reasonable to expect that the majority of people can attain and maintain a bodyweight in a relatively small range.
- 4)** Individuals of all sizes can benefit from interventions that help them take charge of their thoughts, feelings, and decisions, which ultimately lead to improved well-being, regardless of weight.

"Making the transition to a weight neutral world view is a daunting task. Such a perspective is a decidedly minority position, in opposition to broadly held cultural assumptions, and will most likely be under assault for years to come. Why even try to swim upstream against the cultural current?"

For people to do the hard work of caring for themselves, defending themselves, or loving and advocating for themselves, they have to believe they are worth caring for. Caring for our bodies is hard work, and some environments make it especially difficult. The first order of business is to understand that all bodies, of all sizes and all socio-economic classes, are precious and deserve care."

- What's Weight Got to Do with It?

Health at Every Size

A great starting point for beginning to dive into weight-neutrality is the Health At Every Size (HAES) Movement. The HAES model draws upon the general research on health and well-being to identify its important aspects: pleasurable physical activity, restful sleep, social support, safety, and freedom from stigma.

The Association for Size Diversity and Health lists five principles that are key to any HAES approach.

1. **Weight Inclusivity** - Accepting and respecting the diversity of body shapes and sizes.
2. **Health Enhancement** - Improving access to information and services; attending to physical, spiritual, social, economic, emotional and other needs.
3. **Respectful Care** - Owning biases, ending weight stigma and discrimination.
4. **Eating for Well-Being** - Promoting eating in a matter which balances individual nutritional needs, hunger, satiety, nutritional needs, and pleasure.
5. **Life-Enhancing Movement** - Promoting individually appropriate, enjoyable, life-enhancing physical activity rather than exercise that is focused on a goal of weight loss.

References:

The Association for Size Diversity and Health (ASDAH). (2020, October 16). The Health at Every Size® (HAES®) Approach. Retrieved April 22, 2021, from <https://asdah.org/health-at-every-size-haes-approach/>.

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