

This is Because I'm Fat, Right?

To be taught in parallel with S1E6 of the *This is Probably a Really Weird Question* podcast.

Intended Audience

This educational module is intended for use at an undergraduate level. Students are anticipated to have majors in nursing, pre-medical studies, biological sciences, and other health-related fields. Therefore, the purpose of this lesson is to help prepare students for a future career in healthcare, with an emphasis on provider-patient relationships and discussing the relationships between body mass and wellness.

Required Materials

Season 1, Episode 6 of *This is Probably a Really Weird Question* podcast

<https://www.reallyweirdquestion.com/episodes>

Laurie Cooper Stoll, et al. "Fatphobia," Bristol University Press, 2022.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2vzdgnz.12>.

Elizabeth Millard, "Weight Bias Is a Problem in Health Care. Here's What Doctors Can Do." *Time*, 2023.

<https://time.com/6251890/weight-bias-doctors-how-to-overcome/>

Anticipated Misconceptions to Address

Body Mass Index (BMI) is the most accurate measurement of bodily health based on weight for all patients. BMI was developed by [Adolph Quetelet](#), a researcher who was not medically trained and did not intend for it to be used for medical purposes. His goal in the definition of BMI was to create qualifications for the perfect human, with a sample population only including white men. BMI does not consider health behaviors or body composition, therefore not presenting an accurate measurement of bodily health.

Dieting and weight loss are effective long term solutions to many health concerns. Long term studies of weight loss show that most participants regained their weight lost from dieting [within 2 years](#). Additionally, intentional weight loss has a failure rate of [around 90%](#). Weight loss research often has high attrition rates and short study lengths, which fail to give an accurate picture of weight loss effectiveness.

Higher weight is causal to worse health outcomes. There is an overall positive correlation between BMI and worse health outcomes, however this does not imply a direct causal relationship. People with higher weights may also have other confounding factors, including stress, trauma, and less access to effective medical care.

Lesson Outline

Introduction

At the start of class, take some time to assess students' prior knowledge about the subject of fatphobia, both in and outside of the healthcare field. Students may have personal experiences or knowledge that can guide future discussions, if they are comfortable. Briefly review the required reading materials to account for any students who may not be familiar with fatphobia, specifically related to healthcare.

Class Discussion

Next, students will be given an opportunity to discuss the prerequisite reading assignments and podcast episode with their classmates. Some discussion questions may include:

- When is it appropriate or necessary to discuss a patient's weight, with them or with others?
 - What if the patient had an eating disorder that you didn't know about?
- Why do you think fat patients are often disappointed with their healthcare and interactions with healthcare professionals?
- What are some strategies that can be used to mitigate weight bias and fatphobia during a patient appointment?
 - This is often referred to as a "weight-inclusive approach."
- What are your opinions on the use of Body Mass Index and how its origins relate to healthcare today?
- How does fatphobia intersect with other forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and ableism?
- Was there anything from the readings that surprised you, that you would like to discuss further?

If students become interested in a certain discussion topic, encourage them to pursue it further; these questions are presented as a guideline for class discussion but can be adapted to fit specific classes.

Interactive Activity

Students will be directed to the [Project Implicit](#) test for evaluating participants' implicit biases regarding weight. The test will assess how strongly students associate positive and negative language with different bodies over the course of 5-10 minutes. The results from this test may make students uncomfortable. Make clear to students that there is no judgment or shame in their results. This test is meant to make participants aware of their unconscious biases, which are the result of exposure to social systems that favor some groups over others.

After students have finished taking the test individually, ask them to discuss their results and thoughts about how it may relate to their future profession with a partner or small group. The following questions, provided by the [Rudd Center](#), can be used to guide these discussions:

- What assumptions do I make based only on weight regarding a person's character, intelligence, professional success, health status, or lifestyle behaviors?
- Could my assumptions be impacting my ability to help my patients?
- How comfortable am I working with patients of different sizes?
- What kind of messaging do I give about body size (either intentional or not)? How does this messaging occur?
- Do I give appropriate feedback to encourage healthful behavior change?
- Am I sensitive to the needs and concerns of individuals with obesity?
- Do I consider all of the patient's presenting problems, in addition to weight?
- What are my views about the causes of obesity? How does this impact my attitudes about persons with obesity?
- Do I treat the individual or only the condition?
- What are common stereotypes about persons with obesity? Do I believe these to be true or false? What are my reasons for this?

Additional Resources:

- [The Body Is Not An Apology](#)
- [I am Anna Chapman](#): Fat Self-Care Tips
- [National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance](#)
- [Association for Size Diversity and Health](#): Health at Every Size[®] Principles
- [The Adipositivity Project](#)
- [Stacy Bias](#): Fat Activist and Body Positivity Advocate
- [Aubrey Gordon](#): Fat Activist / Author / *Your Fat Friend*
- [Nolose](#): The Revolution Just Got Bigger, "a vibrant community of fat queers and our allies, seeking to end the oppression of fat people!"

- Kelli Dunham, "[You Don't Have to Love Your Body to Take Care of It!](#)"
- Michael Hobbes, "[What To Do If Your Doctor Fat-Shames You,](#)" Huff Post, September 25, 2018