



UNDERSTANDING ANTI-FAT BIAS



A Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation Resource

WHAT IS ANTI-FAT BIAS?



Anti-fat bias, also called weight stigma or fat-phobia, is *an aversion or hostility to, disdain for, or fear of fatness and fat people*. It includes things like:

- Assumptions about the morality, character, and abilities of fat people
- Treating fat people differently based on their weight
- Shaming, mocking, joking about, or bullying people based on their size
- Relying on weight as a primary indicator of health
- Failing to offer products, equipment, experiences, or services that are accessible to people in big bodies

WHO BENEFITS FROM ANTI-FAT BIAS?

- Thin people. Thin privilege includes kindness, higher wages, greater ease of being hired or promoted, the world being built for their body type, health care providers treating them effectively, and much more.
- The \$254.9 billion global weight loss products and services market (2021, *PRNewswire*). This does not even include weight loss medications, surgical procedures, or "lifestyle" and "wellness" programs.
- The white patriarchy. Anti-fat bias impacts all genders and races, but studies indicate that the impacts are greater on women and people of color.
- The health care industry. By assuming that fatness is the only health problem worth treating or discussing with a fat patient, the health care industry is effectively withholding care from fat people and saving dollars in doing so.



WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF ANTI-FAT BIAS?



Anti-fat bias contributes to:

- Increased risk of heart disease, high cholesterol, diabetes
- Lower pay
- Reduced job/career opportunity (hiring and promotions)
- Delayed care, poor care, missed diagnoses
- Weight gain
- Depression, anxiety, social isolation
- Premature death

HOW DO I FIGHT ANTI-FAT BIAS?

- Start with yourself. As with most bias, much anti-fatness is implicit and unconscious. Start examining your beliefs and assumptions about weight, health, bodies, and fat people. Whether you are fat or thin, liberating your mind and heart from harmful stereotypes and beliefs is the first step.
- Refrain from commenting on people's bodies—including your own. "You look great!" "Have you lost weight?" "I feel/look/am so fat" in a sad or self-critical tone are all reflections of anti-fat bias. Have a rule in your workplace, family, and congregation that we do not comment on people's bodies.
- Challenge your inner voice—whether it's talking about your body or the bodies of others, pay attention to what's being said inside your head.
- Throw out your scale.
- Learn. Start with some of the resources on the next page.



LEARN MORE

CLICK THE UNDERLINED
TEXT TO FOLLOW THE
LINK TO THE MATERIAL



[Everything You Know About Obesity is Wrong.](#) A moderate-length article that dives into many aspects of anti-fat bias.

[Your Fat Friend.](#) A blog by author Aubrey Gordon, who wrote [What We Don't Talk About When We Talk About Fat](#) and brings experience and extensive research together for compelling content about anti-fat bias from a fat person's perspective.

[Debunking the BMI.](#) Learn how this commonly used measure doesn't actually measure anything at all.



[Maintenance Phase,](#) a podcast that examines the science (or lack thereof) behind diet and wellness trends.

[We Can Do Hard Things Podcast](#) with guest Sonya Renee Taylor. Taylor is the author of [The Body Is Not An Apology,](#) a groundbreaking book about radical self-love.

[NPR conversation with Sabrina Strings,](#) author of [Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia.](#)



The Liturgists podcast episode [Does Fat = Bad?](#) The Liturgists' podcast seeks to create content for the spiritually homeless or frustrated. Christian-focused.

[A story about fat ally Jameela Jamil](#) and how she called out diet culture.

[Shrill](#) by Lindy West. A memoir on being a fat woman, a feminist, a comedian and social commentator, and the target of online hate as a result.



[Lizzo's documentary.](#)