

## **Health at Every Size**

The Health at Every Size philosophy encourages all people to adopt healthy active lifestyles by becoming physically active, consuming nutritious foods, developing healthy eating attitudes and habits, and developing social support, self-respect and positive body image. Using this model, we make the same recommendations to fat children and teens that we make to middle-sized and thin children and teens. All people need to be accepted and included in their peer group, and their differences embraced. All people can benefit from shame-free and caring relationships to their bodies, and acceptance of their natural sizes. All people can enjoy fun, non-competitive movement every day. All people can learn to eat a satisfying balanced diet that is responsive to their own hunger and satiety signals. These are the building blocks to healthy living.

The Health at Every Size philosophy recognizes the link between discrimination against fat people and the concurrent rise in eating disorders. Fat discrimination is harmful to fat people, and promotes fear of fat in people of all sizes. The work of eating disorders prevention must include teaching the Health at Every Size paradigm of weight and health, as well as inform people about fat as a social justice issue, because in order to resist dieting and eating disorders, people must embrace their natural shapes and sizes. The Body Positive identifies the myths, misinformation and stereotypes directed at fat people, and works to inform young people about healthy lifestyles for people of all sizes and shapes.

Adults must be role models of size acceptance for young people, starting with accepting our own bodies. We must support the rights of people of all sizes and shapes to eat and move and be comfortable in their bodies. Adults can use their influence to fight discrimination against fat children and adults in school, at home, in the media and the workplace, through discussion and example. Parents can support their rounder children to resist teasing and discrimination, just as people of color support their children to resist racism. Knowing that size and shape are determined primarily by genetics (80%), we can choose to celebrate our unique heritage by embracing beauty, health and active lifestyles in all sizes, shapes, colors and ages.

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Scott, E & Sobczak, C. (2002). *BodyAloud! Helping Children and Teens Find Their Own Solutions to Eating and Body Image Problems*, pp. 21-22. Berkeley: The Body Positive.