



NAAFA Newsletter

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More Cool Ideas

Lisa Tealer, NAAFA Director of Programs, reminds us that large companies often offer a voluntary "Matching Program". They will match your charitable contribution through payroll deduction or a one time donation up to a certain dollar amount. This kind of program allows you to double your efforts by donating to NAAFA through your company's charitable giving program.

Some companies also offer contributions to your charity of choice for your volunteer efforts. Contact your Human Resources or Payroll Department to see if your company has such programs.

About NAAFA

Founded in 1969, NAAFA is a non-profit human rights organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for fat people. NAAFA works to eliminate discrimination based on body size and provide fat people with the tools for self-empowerment through public education, advocacy, and member support.

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My Life Is Not a Run On Sentence!

by Ivan Greene

Before I found the fat acceptance community, the storyline of my life was a run on sentence that ended with, "and if he would only lose the weight then his life could really begin."

"He is so smart. If he only lost the weight, he could do so much with those smarts." And so on and so on and so on . . .

If you are reading this, then you know what I am talking about. It is that message that somehow everything in my life is diminished of its value because I am fat. It is not as overt as most of the fat hate but I think it might be more harmful. These are the lies that I was told over and over and over to the point where they became truth in my mind.

My life was this tragic run on sentence that ended with me drenched in self pity.

I could tell my personal version of the horror story that is growing up fat in a fat hating world. Everyone that endured this torturous path has the horror stories of cruelty from friends, family, and strangers. The details might change a little from person to person, but the stories are all very similar.

A big part of my story is Crohn's disease and all the surgeries I had in order to stay alive. My last surgery was an emergency. After 5 weeks in a coma, I woke up on a ventilator unable to move. Today I can walk by myself but need to use a walker for any distance. I work with doctors to manage my chronic pain. I tell you this because I am fat and disabled. I know that most people who see me in public blame me for eating my way to needing a walker or needing the lift on the bus . . . I know this and I persevere.

I am still a work in progress. I still have my personal internal struggles. However, getting involved with the Fat Acceptance and HAES movement has helped me to see that I deserve.

I deserve everything! Just because I am fat doesn't mean I give up my right or chance at a happy life. I deserve respect and dignity! I deserve happiness! I deserve a love life! I deserve a rich and full life and everything that means to me.

Because of the fat acceptance community I see the con job that our culture perpetrates that had me believing that I was unworthy of all the good life has to offer simply because I am bigger than most.

Because of the fat acceptance community, I now believe I deserve all these things and I am on my own personal path to realizing a rich and fulfilling life...period!! No more con job run on sentences anymore!

Ivan is a NAAFA member who lives in New York City and blogs at <http://fatinnyc.blogspot.com>



Connecting the Dots: Advocacy, Alliances & Achievement

by Brandon M. Macsata

The National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA) is unique in that it has been fighting size discrimination in all its forms for over 40 years, but it shares one thing with virtually every other non-profit organization: **a need to form strategic alliances.** It is rare that an advocacy organization can "go it alone" to achieve success!

In April 2009, NAAFA forged an important strategic alliance with the [Association for Airline Passenger Rights](#) (AAPR) in the wake of United Airlines' announcement that it was codifying its size discrimination policy. AAPR recognized that the ill-conceived policy did little to improve the quality and comfort for airline passengers - regardless of their size - but rather singled out an already marginalized segment of our population. AAPR agreed with NAAFA that people come in all shapes and sizes - fat, skinny, tall, short, wide-hipped and long-legged - and providing a comfortable and safe travel environment was the cost of doing business in today's society. As a result, nearly one year later NAAFA and AAPR are working closely together to ensure that the airlines' decision to discriminate against passengers of size doesn't go unchecked.



But there remain many more potential allies on the horizon. For example, NAAFA was among the first organizations to endorse a national sign-on letter to the Honorable Ray LaHood, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), calling for the USDOT to require commercial air carriers to provide better accessibility on all in-flight entertainment for their deaf and hard-of-hearing passengers and for passengers with vision loss. While DOT requires that captioning be available on all safety and information related videos, it does not enforce the same accessibility standard for in-flight entertainment such as movies and television shows. Furthermore, much of this video material already includes captioning and may even have video description for people with vision loss. The letter contends that by not ensuring pass-through of available captioning and video description, DOT has created two separate yet unequal standards, one for passengers with sensory disabilities and another for those without sensory disabilities.

So what do subtitles on in-flight entertainment have to do with size discrimination? The answer is: **EVERYTHING.** First of all, some fat people also have sensory disabilities. But equally important, isn't treating passengers of size differently than their non-fat counterparts much like treating deaf or hard-of-hearing passengers differently than hearing passengers? The bottom line is that NAAFA benefits when it supports advocacy efforts that create synergies outside its narrowly-defined mission statement.

In doing so, NAAFA stands to gain favor and support from like-minded organizations that are also fighting for equality in the workplace, marketplace, and elsewhere. In the final analysis, NAAFA's achievements are directly related to its successful alliances that help pave the way for effective advocacy efforts in the future! There is strength in numbers and only by connecting the dots can NAAFA achieve success moving forward.

Brandon M. Macsata is a NAAFA Advisory Board member, Managing Partner of The Macsata-Kornegay Group, Inc. and founder of the Association for Airline Passenger Rights. You can find their website at www.flyfriendlyskies.com

The Pursuit of Thinness

by Judith Matz

The following article is excerpted from *The Diet Survivor's Handbook: 60 Lessons in Eating, Acceptance and Self-Care* (Judith Matz and Ellen Frankel, Sourcebooks, 2006). In keeping with the theme of Women's

History month, I chose a section that connects the relentless pursuit of thinness through dieting to the core values of our nation.

Pursuing the American Dream

Underneath the weight loss frenzy is the conviction that with any diet, it is ultimately a question of willpower, strength, and determination that will render you successful in your quest to be thin. It is no coincidence that these are the traits that are valued so greatly in the dieting culture, as they mirror the highly valued qualities embedded in society at large. They are the traits that are told in the tales of those who achieved the American Dream. The notion of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps, and the idea that with enough hard work, perseverance, determination, and commitment you can achieve success, are the stories upon which this nation was founded. Those who achieved such positions, the political and economic elite, have had great influence on the shaping of beauty ideals at various points in time as a reflection of who has achieved "success" and who has not.



In the late 1800s, a full, plump body was a sign of health and prosperity. Having a round, fat body signaled that a person had achieved a high level of financial success and could afford to eat well. As the agricultural economy of that time moved into the industrial revolution, immigrants came to this country to find work. Many of these immigrants were genetically shorter and rounder than the early American settlers who were of Northern European descent. Cities became heavily populated as people sought out jobs. With the advent of railroads and refrigeration, large companies that were now processing food could distribute these goods to a greater number of people. Food became abundant and available to all but the poorest. When great numbers of people of modest means were able to become plump, and when so many immigrants naturally fell into this body type, members of the financially well-to-do wanted to distinguish themselves and their financial success from the rest of society. The signs of prestige shifted. People who were rounder were seen as common and inferior, and being thin became a sign of wealth. After all, the concept of an ideal is always in relation to what most people cannot attain. Once a majority of people develop that characteristic, it is no longer idealized.

Thin and fat have become code words full of meaning, and the national pursuit of slenderness has entered a point where the character of a person is deduced from the size of his or her body. If the origin of the American Dream is about attaining a certain level of economic success *regardless* of one's initial circumstances, attaining the American Dream in the physical realm means getting and staying thin *regardless* of one's initial circumstances i.e., body type. Just as the American Dream promises that in this land of equality and opportunity, with enough self-reliance, hard work, and determination everyone can achieve economic success, so too have we been taught this holds true in the realm of dieting to become thin.

Over the years it became apparent that while the American Dream was held out as the reward for those who exemplified those highly regarded qualities, not everyone who was determined, worked hard, and persevered attained economic success. The fact that inequities existed within the system, which impacted on one's ability to succeed, ultimately led to the involvement of the judicial and legislative branches of our government in an effort to address an uneven playing field.

It's Not Mind Over Matter

We are here to tell you that as a dieter, you are on an uneven playing field as well. Despite the fact that you are *determined* to lose weight, that you have *worked hard* to stay thinner and that you have shown *perseverance* in your dieting attempts, not all bodies are created equally in size and shape. In this current climate of "thin is in," everyone is clamoring to reach this ideal, this American Dream represented in this body size. But we are all starting at different points on a continuum. Some people are naturally thin while others are naturally larger. Some people are short while others are tall. Body size is less malleable than the current beliefs about dieting would have you believe. In fact, it is

estimated that between 50 to 80% of our weight is due to genetics, and our genes largely determine our metabolism, which, in turn is a major factor in determining our weight. The prevailing notion that you can lose weight and keep it off if you just tried hard enough, stayed committed, and remained determined, is based more in fiction than fact. But do we tell ourselves that? Do you tell yourself that?

The fact that you have been on at least one diet and regained the weight places you deeper into the physiological forces that, along with genetics, so greatly influence the body. Through evolution, the body has developed a predisposition to hold on to fat after each period of food shortage. The body does not distinguish between food scarcities brought on by a famine and a self-imposed weight loss diet to meet the current ideal of thinness. In trying to reach the American Dream of thinness through dieting, those restrictive measures actually move you closer to the American Nightmare of the diet/binge cycle.

The idea that dieting is the great equalizer of body types, and that it is possible for anyone committed to dieting to permanently lose weight, has hurt countless numbers of people. Every person has a set point or weight range that the body seeks to maintain. When you take in less food, your body compensates by lowering your metabolism to conserve energy. When your body takes in more food, your metabolism speeds up. In this way, your body is able to maintain its set point range, the weight that is natural and healthy for you.

When you go on a diet, regardless of what plan, your body prepares for a famine. When you do eventually take in more food - and you will - your body learns to store fat more efficiently in preparation for the next famine/diet. This is why dieting so often leads to higher than pre-diet weights. Far from being the great equalizer, dieting wreaks havoc on your body and encourages physiological responses that move you further away from your intended goal.

Our bodies naturally come in different shapes and sizes, and our weight falls within a range that suits our make-up. Attempting to alter your body through dieting often results in the exact opposite of your intended goal: weight gain. While your body is protecting you and keeping you alive by fighting your diet restrictions every step of the way, you feel like you have failed by not trying hard enough. Stop. Your body is not your enemy. When did you first learn it was you against your stomach, hips and thighs? You don't have to continue engaging in this civil war. Let's call a truce. You deserve to live in peace.

Judith Matz, LCSW, is director of The Chicago Center for Overcoming Overeating, Inc. and the co-author of The Diet Survivor's Handbook: 60 Lessons in Eating, Acceptance and Self-Care (2006) and Beyond a Shadow of a Diet: The Therapist's Guide to Treating Compulsive Eating (2004). Her website is at www.dietsurvivors.com and you can read her blog at <http://dietsurvivorsgroup.blogspot.com>

Video of the Month

by Peggy Howell

Last month's article from NAAFA member Mary Rockus resulted in readers offering feedback that they want to hear more. They want to hear more experiences from people at various places in their journey to acceptance and freedom. Those of us who have been living this life a bit longer than others are especially encouraged to hear the stories of young people embracing size acceptance and Health at Every Size. We feel especially encouraged to see new leaders emerge in our community.

In addition to Ivan's moving story, I want to share a video with you this month. Google alerted me because this young woman talks about NAAFA as well as HAES in her delightful video. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rP2EQQP3ILO>

Media and Research Roundup

[Editor's Note: As we continue to play catch-up in this column, you can find the latest size acceptance news, good and bad, at the NAAFA News RSS Feed at <http://naafa.org>]

July 8, 2009: NAAFA Board Member Lisa Tealer is interviewed by KSRO discussing the CDC's "obesity cost calculator" and the trend of employers requiring employees lose weight.
[Program no longer online.]

July 16, 2009: There seems to be no explanation for the increased risk, no research has been done and the evidence is anecdotal, but according to a report out of University of Michigan, fat people may be at higher risk for complications from the H1N1 virus.

<http://www2.med.umich.edu/prmc/media/newsroom/details.cfm?ID=1230>

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm58d0710a1.htm>

July 29, 2009: A new study clearly indicates that the generally accepted rule that being fat is associated with morbidity and mortality does not apply to hospitalized elderly patients, for whom fat mass is associated with a decreased risk of adverse events.

<http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/90/3/505>

August 4, 2009: According to new study when fat kids eat with their fat friends they "overeat", when they eat with nonfat friends their intake is restrained and all kids eat less when eating with strangers. However, the researchers do not seem to have a baseline of what constitutes engaging in "normal" eating, making concepts of "overeating" and "restrained eating" ambiguous at best.

<http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/90/2/282>

August 6, 2009: In her article "Does Size Really Matter", Dr. Maura J. Cullen looks at both height and weight discrimination. Although Dr. Cullen admits to being pro-diet, kudos to her for learning the issues and writing a good article on size prejudice and discrimination.

<http://www.articles-heaven.com/articles/?Does-Size-Really-Matter&articleid=38372>

August 10, 2009: We all know that doctors often have fat bias; but according to *The LA Times*, fat doctors face bias from other doctors and patients.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2009/aug/10/health/he-surgeon-general10>

August 12, 2009: Despite medical and scientific evidence to the contrary, according to *The New York Times* our government is capable of turning fat people into thin people. Even if this were possible, it would require making value judgments and limiting people's choices, which the government has no business (or right) doing.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/16/magazine/16FOB-wwIn-t.html>

August 19, 2009: NAAFA comes out with a statement against PETA's billboards showing a fat woman in a bikini, and urging people to "Save the Whales, Lose the Blubber, Go Vegan". Most media coverage agrees that the billboards are not only offensive but misleading. There is no evidence showing that simply eating a vegan or vegetarian diet will lead to weight loss. The billboard campaign was pulled after 6 weeks.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/naafanews/message/395>

http://jacksonville.bizjournals.com/jacksonville/blog/daily_dose/2009/08/petas_jax_billboard_blunder.html

August 19, 2009: Under a proposed government crackdown, weight-loss programs and products in Australia will have to prove they help people keep weight off long term.

This follows growing evidence that diets may actually be making fat people fatter, something the fat community has known for years.

<http://www.news.com.au/features/federal-government-cracks-downs-on-weight-loss-industry/story-e6frfl49-1225763615232>

August 19, 2009: According to the CDC, life expectancy in the US has reached an all time high. So, once again: Americans are fatter than ever. Americans are living longer than ever. Do the math.

<http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2009/r090819.htm>

August 24, 2009: Although the FDA is not advising anyone to stop taking orlistat at this time, it is reviewing new safety information regarding reports of liver-related adverse events in patients take orlistat. Orlistat is marketed in the US as Xenical and Alli.

<http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch/SafetyInformation/SafetyAlertsforHumanMedicalProducts/ucm180025.htm>

August 25, 2009: Apparently *The New York Times* didn't hear about how old fat people do better in hospitals. (See July 29, 2009 Roundup item). They can't figure out why, as our nation becomes fatter, the number of hip fractures during hospital stays is going down. Gee, I wonder how that happened . . .

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/26/health/26hips.html>

August 25, 2009: *The New York Times*' article on the evacuation of the New Orleans Medical Center shows that some fat patients were triaged as patients who should be evacuated last, along with patients who were considered unlikely to survive evacuation following Katrina. Murder charges were brought against some of the healthcare professionals for their actions, including administering lethal injections.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/30/magazine/30doctors.html>

August 26, 2009: The headlines say fat people have smaller brains. A new study claims that elderly fat people have less brain mass than elderly people with "normal" BMI. This study was based on only 94 people with an average age of 77, only 14 of which were "obese". The study did not say when brain mass was lost, and during the period of the study (5 years) they found no trend of brain mass loss.

<http://www.usnews.com/health/family-health/brain-and-behavior/articles/2009/08/25/as-waistlines-widen-brains-shrink.html>
<http://www.loni.ucla.edu/~thompson/ObesityBrain2009.pdf>

August 27, 2009: *Newsweek's* article, "Who Says Americans Are Too Fat?" does a great job exposing the lies and hype centered around the "obesity epidemic", shows how fat bias feeds the flames, and talks about HAES. Sadly at the end, the article still claims fat equals unhealthy, but at least admits the focus needs to be on health, not fat.

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/213807>

September 3, 2009: Lizzie Miller is a model. Her nude photo in *Glamour Magazine* is newsworthy because Lizzie Miller is a size 14 and she has a little pooch of a tummy. The photo is only 3 in. square and hidden on page 194, yet it sparked a whirlwind of positive reaction. Thank you *Glamour Magazine* for publishing a beautiful photo of a beautiful woman.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1210814/Lizzie-Millers-Glamour-magazine-shoot-How-models-picture-shook-world-flabby-tummy-all.html>

September 7, 2009: *The New York Times* reports on a study claiming that WLS may be beneficial to children born following surgery. The good news is that the article points out some of the problems with the study as well as the dangers of WLS.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/08/health/research/08child.html>
<http://jcem.endojournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/94/11/4275>

September 8, 2009: Fashion model Crystal Renn's memoir *Hungry* is published. Renn "couldn't walk another step without being exhausted, or having hair clumps falling out" when she was on her last diet. That's when she realized that thin does not always equal healthy, and began to accept herself as a larger (size 12) woman.

<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/BeautySecrets/size-model-crystal-renn-gains-weight-finds-success/story?id=8514206>

September 9, 2009: Although in the first paragraph of Michael Pollan's article in *The New York Times* lists plenty of reasons why the US health insurance system is in trouble, he wants us to believe the real problem is fat people and their eating habits. Could part of the problem be the inclusion of money spent on diets and other weight loss quackery in figures for health care costs of fatness? These are costs of fat hatred, not fatness.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/10/opinion/10pollan.html>

September 13, 2009: Website *Viewbook* posts a wonderful photo story including shots from the 2008 NAAFA Convention in LA, Bay Area's Making Waves fat swim, and a Bay Area NAAFA meeting. Visit the site, enjoy some great pictures and leave a comment.

<http://www.viewbookphotostory.com/2009/09/the-bigger-picture-fat-acceptance-advocates-in-america>

September 13, 2009: Bill Fabrey comments on Sheila Himmel's (author of another book named *Hungry*) opinion piece in the *San Jose Mercury News* titled "Focus on obesity obscures other eating disorders". [Note: The article itself has been archived and costs \$2.95 to read.]
<http://forums.siliconvalley.com/topic/opinion-focus-on-obesity-obscures-other-eating-disorders>

September 13, 2009: Connie Schultz of *The Plain Dealer* points out that fat discrimination is wrong. She doesn't seem to quite understand that fat does not equal unhealthy, but she makes good points about why it is difficult for many fat people to live a healthier lifestyle.
http://www.cleveland.com/schultz/index.ssf/2009/09/punishing_obesity_compounds_th.html

September 15, 2009: NAAFA's Peggy Howell is interviewed on *Good Morning America*. Although the focus of the interview is about the TV reality show *More to Love*, as always Peggy gets in some good points about size acceptance.
<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/BeautySecrets/reality-show-love-feeds-weight-debate/story?id=8453486>

September 18, 2009: Studies of Arena Pharmaceuticals' weight loss drug lorcaserin show that after a year of taking the pill (with diet and exercise) the pill takers in the study loss an average of 14.3 - 17 pounds while the folks taking a placebo lost an average of 8.7 pounds. Investors found the results underwhelming. [Note: FDA acceptance of the drug was announced on February 24, 2010.]
<http://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory?id=8610279>

September 18, 2009: Writing for *Medcity News*, Chris Seper discusses Dr. Toby Cosgrove's backpedaling following his comments supporting fat discrimination and the severe criticism he received afterwards. It seems Dr. Cosgrove has simply substituted the word "wellness" for "obesity" in the programs he is urging on government and employers, but has not changed the real aim of such programs - to punish fat people.
<http://www.medcitynews.com/2009/09/apology-out-of-the-way-cleveland-clinic-ceo-continues-with-obesity-wellness-campaign>

September 24, 2009: Researcher Andrew Renehan of the University of Manchester claims that fatness could become the leading cause of cancer for women in the near future, but his research doesn't even study causality. Nutrition researcher Paul Ernsberger, Ph.D. finds the claims "stunning, because cancer fatalities decline with rising BMI, right up to BMI of 40."
http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2009-09-24-cancer-obesity_N.htm
<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/122527327/abstract>