

# Too Heavy to Move? The Real Weight of Bias: When Bias becomes a burden, physical activity feels impossible

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## ABSTRACT

People in larger bodies often experience weight bias within physical activity settings, which significantly effects their relationship with physical activity. Weight bias refers to negative weight related judgements that are often made towards people living in larger bodies. People in larger bodies are often encouraged to exercise for weight management but are also consistently mistreated and judged in public physical activity spaces. This creates a lose-lose situation fostering fear of judgement, lower self-confidence and a greater tendency to avoid all forms of physical activity. Despite the known health benefits of physical activity, persistent bias undermines physical activity engagement and contributes to poor health outcomes. For fitness and health professionals, recognizing this dynamic is crucial. To foster truly inclusive physical activity environments, a weight inclusive approach is essential. This means prioritize movement for its diverse benefits like strength, stress relief, mobility, and mental well-being, rather than solely focusing on weight management. Practitioners must also reflect on their own biases, in order to create physical activity spaces that are accessible, safe, and respectful for all body sizes, emphasizing health and quality of life over, weight or size related outcomes.

**KEYWORDS:** Internalized weight bias, Physical activity, Weight stigma

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When Bias becomes a burden, physical activity feels impossible

## What is weight bias ?

Negative beliefs about people in larger bodies  
Example: believing people in larger bodies are lazy or unhealthy

What happens when people start applying these harmful beliefs to themselves?

## How does Weight bias discourages physical activity?

- Fear of judgement
- Lower self-confidence
- Greater tendency to avoid all forms of movement

## Physical activity becomes a lose-lose situation

People in larger bodies are told to exercise to lose weight, yet are consistently mistreated in physical activity settings

Movement is important at every size!

## Avoid weight bias by creating size inclusive physical activity spaces

- Recognize that **shame does not change behaviour**; instead, it leads to unhealthy coping mechanisms and avoidance.
- Embrace a **weight inclusive lens**, focus on health and encourage movement for strength, mobility, and mental health.
- **Don't assume** that larger bodies are inherently **unhealthy**.

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