EATING DISORDERS & BULLYING/WEIGHT SHAMING

The harmful effects of bullying have received increased attention in recent years, starting an important national conversation. Weight shaming, which is linked to the development of eating disorders, needs to be a significant part of anti-bullying discussions, particularly in the context of the widespread anti-obesity messaging. Many who struggle with eating disorders cite bullying as one of the initial triggers, making it all the more important to teach our children— and each other— that bullying and weight shaming are never okay.

THE DANGER OF WEIGHT STIGMA

Weight stigma poses a significant threat to psychological and physical health. It has been documented as a significant risk factor for:

- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Body dissatisfaction

Low self-esteem is a common characteristic of individuals who have eating disorders.

WEIGHT-BASED VICTIMIZATION AMONG YOUTH IN HIGHER WEIGHT BODIES HAS BEEN LINKED TO:

- Lower levels of physical activity
- Negative attitudes about sports
- Lower participation in physical activity among higher weight students

THE BEST-KNOWN ENVIRONMENTAL CONTRIBUTOR TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EATING DISORDER IS THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IDEALIZATION OF THINNESS:

BY THE AGE OF 6, girls especially start to express concerns about their own weight or shape.

Of American elementary school girls who read magazines...

- 40% are teased about their weight by peers or family members.

Of elementary school girls (ages 6-12)

- 69% say that the pictures influence their concept of the ideal body shape.
- 40-60% are concerned about their weight or about becoming too fat.

- 47% say the pictures make them want to lose weight.

THE DANGERS OF WEIGHT-BASED TEASING AND DIET TALK

Weight teasing predicts:

- Binge eating
- Weight gain
- Extreme weight control measures

AMONG ADULTS IN HIGHER WEIGHT BODIES, THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE WEIGHT-BASED STIGMATIZATION:

- Engage in more frequent binge eating
- Are at an increased risk for ED symptoms
- Are more likely to have a diagnosis of BED
- 79% of weight-loss program participants report eating more to cope with weight stigma

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