

From *BodyImageHealth.org*...

The *Model for Healthy Body Image* challenges 5 pervasive, myths that promote unhealthy body images, eating and weight problems in the American culture...

...and then provides the *antidotes* needed to resist these destructive fables.

Here's an outline of how it works: (You can learn more about these antidotes in the *Healthy Body Image** curriculum guide, or by inviting its author to speak to your group.)

Myth #1: “It's not who you are, it's how you look. Image is everything.”

Antidotes:

- Gain a clear sense of historical perspective on today's body image attitudes
- Become media literate. Learn to be knowledgeable about advertising strategies; think critically about and be skeptical of media messages that influence body image attitudes.
- Develop a strong sense of who you are based on *inner* qualities, *NOT* on appearance

Myth #2: Fatness means “overweight.” Fatter people eat too much, or are not active enough.

Antidotes:

- Understand well and be prepared for normal weight gain during puberty
- Respect the vast genetic diversity of body shapes and sizes
- Learn about the internal weight regulatory system and how this involuntarily *limits* the extent of long term control that is possible over weight

Myth #3: Fatter people are undesirable/bad. Thinner people are virtuous/good.

Antidote:

- Use words that define body sizes as *descriptions*, not judgments

Myth #4: If you work hard enough, you can do ANYTHING. When it comes to weight, dieting is the “cure” for the “wrong” body.

Antidote:

- Accept that there are predictable negative consequences when biological nature is discounted. Become aware of the counterproductive effects and dangers of denying hunger satisfaction through calorie or nutrient restrictive “diets.”

Myth #5: The prescription for fatness is: “Lose some weight.”

Antidotes: People need prescriptions they can implement: what to do (NOT what the outcome will be.) The prescription for people of all sizes and weights is healthy behavior (NOT a goal weight.)

- Eat well and be active for health, energy and satisfaction.
- Limit sedentary entertainment, develop a physically active lifestyle.
- Discover and accept the diverse sizes that result. Even if everyone ate exactly the same food in exactly the same quantities and exercised to the same degree, bodies would still represent a natural distribution of fatness, from very lean to very fat.
- Look for realistic role models and resist unhealthy social norms about weight, dieting, low nutrient food choices and sedentary entertainment.

* *Healthy Body Image*, 1998, published by EDAP, Seattle, WA. See *BodyImageHealth.org* for more information.

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