

Hurting doesn't help

National Editorial

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A by-product of the good life brought on by prosperity in developed countries is that many people have put on weight. In fact, a recent study showed that 30 per cent of schoolchildren in the UAE could be classified as overweight or obese.

While the causes of obesity, and its treatments, are well understood, researchers have discovered a disturbing social trend that not only prevents overweight people from slimming down, it actually causes them to become heavier.

"Fat-shaming" is active discrimination against overweight people. As Florida State University psychologist Angelina Sutin says in health journal PLoS ONE, this discrimination "in addition to being hurtful and demeaning, has real consequences for the individual's physical health".

Stigmatising overweight people can lead to depression and further overeating, exacerbating their already considerable health problems. While shaming clearly does not work, gently encouraging overweight people to make changes in their lifestyle may do the trick.

Offering gold for weight loss, as they are doing in Dubai, may be an extravagant "first world solution", but it's far better than being nasty.

Read more: <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/editorial/hurting-doesnt-help#ixzz2bVV6dtG>