

# Overweight people stressed by being called fat will eat more, study says

**Overweight people teased for their weight – fat shaming – will actually eat more, a study says. For overweight peoples' family, friends, and peers, "just being honest" about fat gain can have consequences.**

By Lisa Suhay, Correspondent / July 26, 2013



Calling people fat discourages weight loss, a study found. In fact, they may eat more. Doughnuts are fried in cooking oil in New York, Feb. 24, 2012.

AP Photo

“Fat shaming” and weight discrimination, be it from [Abercrombie & Fitch](#) or your university professor, are not the ways to help people shape up physically, socially, or academically according to a report published this week in the journal [PLOS ONE](#).

“Weight discrimination, in addition to being hurtful and demeaning, has real consequences for the individual’s physical health,” says study author Angelina Sutin, a psychologist and assistant professor at the Florida State University College of Medicine in [Tallahassee, Fla.](#), [NBC reports](#).

Weight shaming, the study found, can send people to the Twinkie Zone faster than you can say “binge.”

Rebecca Puhl, deputy director of the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale University, told NBC:

“Stigma and discrimination are really stressors, and, unfortunately, for many people, they’re chronic stressors. And we know that eating is a common reaction to stress and anxiety -- that people often engage in more food consumption or more binge eating in response to stressors, so there is a logical connection here in terms of some of the maladaptive coping strategies to try to deal with the stress of being stigmatized.”

How is it that we didn’t know this by now?

I say this from the perspective of a life-long, diet yo-yo fat girl. Telling me I need to lose weight has never worked for me, or any obese person I have ever met.

What worked for me was my son, age nine, saying a few months ago, “Can we go to the beach this summer? I think you look fine. Nobody cares how you look and when we’re in the water it totally doesn’t matter.”

That acceptance inspired me to begin Weight Watchers two months and 16 pounds ago and keeps me moving down the weight chart.

Love, compassion, and telling me my size is irrelevant made all the difference.

This study should also be a lesson to people who feel no guilt when they weight shame because they say they're "just being honest" or "trying to help."

Perhaps the most damaging of these honesty binges come from influencers. [University of New Mexico](#) evolutionary psychologist [Geoffrey Miller](#) recently [tweeted](#):

"Dear obese PhD applicants: if you didn't have the willpower to stop eating carbs, you won't have the willpower to do a dissertation #truth."

It sounds like one of those commercials for cable television: "If you're fat you have no willpower. When you have no willpower, you agree to be the driver in a bank heist. When you agree to be the driver in a bank heist, you hit a fire hydrant and flood a pet store. Don't flood a pet store. Get skinny."

Miller is still employed there as an associate professor of psychology at UNM, according to the university's legal advisor Diane Anderson.

"I want to mention that [Miller] made that tweet while on loan to NYU and wasn't even here at that time," Ms. Anderson said. "He quickly deleted the tweet and apologized."

For those students Miller was addressing I would give a better tweet from Eleanor Roosevelt to put out today in response, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. #Truth."