

# Challenge Diet Culture

Diet culture places value on appearance, specifically thinness, and encourages weight loss. This can increase the risk for negative body image and disordered eating habits. The words you say matter – let’s help make a change by creating a safe, supportive environment for folks of all body shapes and sizes.



NationalEatingDisorders.org

## 1. Avoid Weight Comments

Appearance does not define someone’s health status or their value. Praising or shaming folks for weight loss or weight gain can encourage disordered habits. It’s important to recognize that you don’t know what folks go through – whether it’s a chronic illness, stress, and/or underlying health condition that may impact their weight.

Comments to avoid: “Oh wow, you lost a lot of weight – you look amazing!” “You look great, what have you been doing?” “You’ve really let yourself go.” “You need to get in better shape.”

## 2. Avoid Labeling Food as “Good” or “Bad” or Commenting on Portions

Giving food moral value can leave folks feeling negative emotions around different food categories. All foods can be incorporated into your daily diet. It’s also best to avoid comments on portion or plate size – it’s important for folks to listen to their body’s cues/needs. Folks often label organic, whole foods as “good” while processed foods as “bad.”

Comments to avoid: “Wow, are you really going to eat all of that?” “Do you really think you should be going for seconds?”

## 3. Food Isn’t Something to be Earned

Many folks believe when they want to eat certain foods (such as desserts), they have to either restrict or “burn off” the calories. You don’t have to earn any type of food for nourishment and enjoyment.

Comments to avoid: “I ate pizza last night; I really shouldn’t be eating that today.” “I had a piece of cake so I’m going for a run to burn it off.” “I’m going to have Thanksgiving dinner with my family later, so I’m not going to have breakfast.”

## 4. Clothing

Media has reinforced this idea that some clothing is appropriate for certain body types. Clothing has many uses culturally as it can be a way to express one’s identity. Any clothing can be worn by all body shapes and sizes.

Comments to avoid: “They shouldn’t be wearing that crop top.” “That dress doesn’t flatter their body.”

## 5. Avoid the terms “Obese” and “Overweight”

These terms are stigmatizing and harmful and should not be used to describe a person. It’s important to normalize the term “person in a higher weight body” or “fat.”

NOTE: While some have reclaimed the term “fat” to describe their bodies, please make sure individuals are comfortable when using it.

## 6. Avoid Labeling People as “Good” or “Bad”

A person’s worth or value is not determined by the food they eat. Choosing certain foods does not make someone inherently good or bad. Everyone’s dietary choices are personal and do not define their character or worth.