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Fat Like Me



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Introduction

This Teacher's Guide provides information to help you get the most out of *Fat Like Me*. The contents in this guide will allow you to prepare your students before using the program and present follow-up activities to reinforce the program's key learning points.

Imagine that you have been thin all your life and one day you wake up and you are 200 pounds heavier. How would you feel? How do you think people would treat you? This is what happened to Ali when she braved putting on a fat suit and attended a high school where no one knew her. Ali discovered first hand the discrimination, the teasing, and the emotional pain experienced by many people who are overweight.

This program explores the battle of the bulge and how parents and children struggle with what to do when a child is overweight. Psychologists and physicians discuss the emotional and physical consequences of being overweight such as depression, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, asthma, high cholesterol, hypertension, and bone and joint problems. The program also talks openly with students about Ali's experience and how their perceptions have changed since learning more about the emotional trauma that overweight children, teens, and adults suffer on a daily basis.

Learning Objectives

After viewing the program, students will be able to:

- ◆ Identify prejudice and discriminatory behaviors directed at overweight children and teenagers.
- ◆ Understand how weight affects a person's body image and self esteem.
- ◆ Discuss various environmental factors that contribute to overeating and weight gain.
- ◆ Describe how family members and friends

can influence a child's eating and exercise behavior.

- ◆ Identify health risks associated with being overweight.
- ◆ Understand the need for and benefits of treating childhood obesity.

Educational Standards

National Standards

This program correlates with the National Standards for Family and Consumer Science Education from the Family and Consumer Science Education Association and the National Health Education Standards from the Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards. The content has been aligned with the following educational standards and benchmarks from these organizations.

- ◆ Evaluate the significance of family and its impact on the well-being of individuals and society.
- ◆ Analyze the impact of family as a system on individuals and society.
- ◆ Analyze factors that impact human growth and development.
- ◆ Analyze strategies that promote growth and development across the life span.
- ◆ Analyze conditions that influence human growth and development.
- ◆ Analyze principles of human growth and development across the life span.
- ◆ Demonstrate nutrition and wellness practices that enhance individual and family well-being.
- ◆ Demonstrate ability to acquire, handle, and use foods to meet nutrition and wellness needs of individuals and families across the life span.
- ◆ Evaluate the nutritional needs of individuals and families in relation to health and wellness across the life span.
- ◆ Analyze factors that influence nutrition and wellness practices across the life span.

- ◆ Evaluate the impact of parenting roles and responsibilities on strengthening the well-being of individuals and families.
- ◆ Evaluate external support systems that provide services for parents.
- ◆ Evaluate parenting practices that maximize human growth and development.
- ◆ Analyze roles and responsibilities of parenting.
- ◆ Demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting and decision-making skills to enhance health.
- ◆ Comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention.
- ◆ Identify what good health is, recognize health problems, and ways in which lifestyle, the environment, and public policies can promote health.

The National Standards for Family and Consumer Science Education reprinted with permission.

This represents the work of the Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards. Copies of National Health Education Standards: Achieving Health Literacy can be obtained through the American School Health Association, Association for the Advancement of Health Education or the American Cancer Society.

English Language Arts Standards

The activities in this Teacher's Guide were created in compliance with the following National Standards for the English Language Arts from the National Council of Teachers of English.

- ◆ Use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).
- ◆ Adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
- ◆ Conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries.


Standards for the English Language Arts, by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, Copyright 1996 by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted with permission.

Technology Standards

The activities in this Teacher's Guide were created in compliance with the following National Education Technology Standards from the National Education Technology Standards Project.

- ◆ Develop positive attitudes toward technology uses that support lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits, and productivity.
- ◆ Practice responsible use of technology systems, information, and software.
- ◆ Use a variety of media and formats to communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences.
- ◆ Use telecommunications to collaborate, publish, and interact with peers, experts, and other audiences.
- ◆ Employ technology in the development of strategies for solving problems in the real world.
- ◆ Use productivity tools to collaborate in constructing technology-enhanced models, prepare publications, and produce other creative works.
- ◆ Use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity.
- ◆ Use technology to locate, evaluate, and collect information from a variety of sources.





*The National Education Technology Standards
reprinted with permission from the International
Society for Technology Education.*

Program Overview

In this ABC News special—produced in conjunction with Rodale Inc., publisher of *Prevention* and *Men’s Health* magazines—nutritionists, psychologists, pediatricians, and other experts explore the causes of obesity, the physical and emotional damage it can do, and how parents and schools can team up to help kids improve their health. Also included is hidden-camera footage of a daring social experiment in which a slim teen, professionally made up to look obese, goes to school and experiences firsthand the abuse so often aimed at overweight people. A post-experiment discussion underscores the stigmatizing effect of intolerance while emphasizing the need for greater compassion.

Main Topics

Topic 1: Putting on the Weight

In this opening segment, a 15-year old girl braves the stares, the insults, and the awkwardness of being an overweight teen when she attends a new high school wearing a 200-pound fat suit. Two hidden cameras document the discrimination and cruelty Ali suffered, and Ali expresses how the experience made her feel.

Topic 2: The Fat Kid

Kids and teens describe their experiences with being insulted and teased because of their weight. Parents and siblings also share how having an overweight family member affects family meals, activities, and relationships.

Topic 3: Finding Support

Psychologists and nutritionists describe how parents influence their children’s behaviors. This section also offers advice to parents on how they can better communicate with their kids about nutrition, exercise, and being healthy.

Topic 4: Not Worth the Risk

Doctors discuss the health risks associated with obesity and inactivity such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, asthma, hypertension, and bone and joint problems. Individuals recap their stories of how fear motivated them to become more physically fit. Families learn how to be healthier by selecting and preparing nutritious foods and staying active.

Topic 5: A School Takes Action

One school takes matters into their own hands to fight the war on weight by screening students and informing parents if their child is overweight.

Topic 6: Thin to Fat to Thin

Ali returns to the school as a slim teenager and confronts the students who ridiculed her the day before. Some students from the school participate in a discussion group to explain their behavior towards Ali as a “fat” girl, and express how this experience has taught them tolerance and respect.

Fast Facts

- ◆ Among American 15-year-olds, 15% of girls and nearly 14% of boys are obese, and 31% of girls and 28% of boys are more modestly overweight.
- ◆ Only 3-5% of dieters keep the weight off over the long-term. (Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, January 2004).
- ◆ U.S. teens are more likely than those in other countries to eat fast food, snacks, and sugary sodas, and are more likely to be driven to school and other activities, contributing to a more sedentary lifestyle. (Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, January 2004).
- ◆ 90-95% of people who lose weight gain it back because they have not changed their eating habits.
- ◆ Scientists estimate that almost 400,000 cases of cancer in the U.S. could be prevented solely through changes in diet.
- ◆ According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 60% of American adults are either overweight or obese.

- ◆ According to the Centers for Disease Control, excess weight and physical inactivity account for more than 300,000 premature deaths each year in the United States, second only to deaths related to smoking.
- ◆ The number of overweight teens in the United States has nearly tripled in the last two decades.
- ◆ One in four children is considered overweight.
- ◆ In the last ten years the number of people diagnosed with diabetes has increased more than 60%; this number is projected to more than double by 2050.
- ◆ The USDA's "Food Guide Pyramid" endorses the daily consumption of 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

Vocabulary Terms

appetite: An instinctive physical desire, especially for food or drink.

blood pressure: The force exerted by the blood against the walls of the blood vessels.

body mass index (BMI): An estimate of an individual's relative body fat calculated from his or her height and weight.

calories: A unit of food energy; an amount of food having an energy-producing value.

carbohydrates: Starches and sugars; naturally found in fruits, vegetable and grains.

cholesterol: a soft, fat-like, waxy substance found in the bloodstream and in all body cells. It's an important part of a healthy body because it's used for producing cell membranes and some hormones, and serves other needed bodily functions. But too high a level of cholesterol in the blood is a major risk for coronary heart disease, which leads to heart attack.

diabetes: A disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches, and other food into energy needed for daily life. Proper diet, nutrition and exercise can help in the prevention of diabetes.

diet: The type and amount of food selected by a person to meet certain nutritional requirements.

health: Soundness, especially of body or mind; freedom from disease or abnormality.

heart disease: Any condition that causes the heart to malfunction. Heart disease is a generic word for Coronary Heart Disease, which leads to angina and heart attacks.

hypertension: A condition in which the blood pressure in either arteries or veins is abnormally high.

meat substitutes: Meat alternatives or foods high in protein used instead of meats; such as cheese, eggs, peanut butter, dried beans, and peas.

metabolism: The process by which your body breaks down food, gets the nutrients it needs, and generates energy.

obesity: Continued overconsumption of calories; a state of excess accumulation of fat in and on the body. A body mass index of 30 or greater.

overweight: Excessive accumulation of body fat, usually caused by the consumption of more calories than the body can use. A body mass index of 25 to 29.9.


sedentary lifestyle: Performing no physical activity, or physical activity (i.e., walking, running, swimming etc.) that is done for 20 minutes or less, three or fewer times per week.

self-esteem: A confidence and satisfaction in oneself.

Pre-Program Discussion Questions

1. Describe how overweight people are treated in your school; your community; and in society.
2. What are some reasons a person may be overweight?
3. Do you have any family members or friends who are overweight or who suffer from obesity? Describe your relationship with them. Have you witnessed discrimination against them because of their size?



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4. How does the media portray overweight people? Are overweight women perceived differently than overweight men?
 5. How does your family work together to stay healthy?
 6. Who do you think is a good role model for demonstrating healthy eating and exercise behaviors?

Post-Program Discussion Questions

1. What were some of the students' reactions when they saw the "fat" Ali? Do you think their reactions were typical of most people?
2. If you were asked to take part in the study and wear the "fat suit" would you participate? Why or why not?
3. Do you think a school has the right to inform parents that their child is overweight?
4. Describe the similarities and differences between giving a student an eye exam and evaluating a student's weight.
5. Are fast-food companies partly to blame for obesity in America by providing foods high in fat? Should fast food restaurants be required to provide more nutritious food items on their menus?
6. Some people diet to be skinny, while others diet to be healthy. Explain the difference.
7. Describe some ways you can make your lifestyle healthier.

Group Activities

Nature vs. Nurture

Divide the class into two groups. Assign one group to explain obesity from a genetic viewpoint and assign the other group to explain obesity from an environmental/social standpoint. After presenting both sides of the argument, have students select the top three factors that contribute to obesity. Students should devise interventions to combat the causes of each of the three factors.

Shaping Up in Schools

Have the class work in small groups to investigate how their school's nutrition, health, and physical fitness programs measure up. Use the following list of questions to help get students started with their investigation.

- Does the school assess students' weight?
- Do parents receive information about the risks associated with being overweight?
- Who plans the menu for the cafeteria?
- What are the nutritional requirements for foods to be on the cafeteria's menu?
- Does the school have food and beverage vending machines? If so, what kinds of choices are offered?
- How much physical education do students receive in a week?
- Are students required to take phys ed?
- What types of activities are available to students after school?

After gathering the facts, the class should discuss ways the school can help students become healthier, and present these ideas to the principal.

Individual Student Projects

Teens and Dieting

Students should use recent issues of magazines targeted at their age group to find examples of different body types, and then summarize their findings in a report. The report should include the magazine pictures or photocopies of the images.

Find examples of both male and female body types portrayed in the media. What do these images have in common? How do these images affect public perception of what is attractive? Find an example of a body type that you think is underweight; one that is healthy; and one that is overweight. Can you find any examples of more realistic body types?

All in the Family

Students should talk to their parents and/or grandparents to gather a family medical history. Create a list of illnesses, diseases, or health problems experienced by members of your family. Students should include health problems from high cholesterol to cancer. Then research genetic and environmental factors that contribute to each of these problems. What steps can a student take to try to prevent and avoid similar health problems?

Internet Activities

The Rest of the Story

Instruct students to visit the following web page: www.obesity.org/subs/story

This page contains twenty stories of people living with obesity. Assign each student a story. After students read the story, have them write down their thoughts and feeling in a journal.

Health Links

Have students create a set of online resources for health, nutrition, and fitness that appeal to adolescents and teenagers. Collect everyone's web sites and create a comprehensive list to hand out to students. Then have the students visit each one of these sites and rate each site using a 5-star rating system (5-stars for the best sites).

Assessment Questions

Q: What was Ali feeling before she entered the school wearing a 200 pound fat suit?

- (a) Excitement
- (b) Fear
- (c) Embarrassment
- (d) Anger

A: (b) Fear

Feedback: As Ali was driving to the school with her mother she began to cry because she was afraid of how students were going to treat her.

Q: When Ali walked into her Biology class, how was she treated by the two female students she sat with?

- (a) They said hello and started talking to her
- (b) They whispered to each other as she walked into the room
- (c) They ignored her and did not make eye contact
- (d) They called her fat and laughed at her

A: (c) They ignored her and did not make eye contact

Feedback: Ali described her experience in biology as hurtful because the two girls she sat with didn't talk to her, ignored her comments, and did not make eye contact.

Q: Ali wanted to confront the students the next day at school as her true size because she wanted them to know how much their behavior offended her. (*True or False*)

A: True

Feedback: Ali decided to go back to the classroom and talk to the students after the experiment because she wanted them to realize that even though she wasn't really fat, she was still hurt by their comments and behaviors.

Q: Over the past decade childhood cases of type 2 diabetes have increased _____.

- (a) 5-fold
- (a) 10-fold
- (a) 20-fold
- (a) 30-fold

A: (b) 10-fold

Feedback: Obesity is directly related to the onset of type 2 diabetes. It has increased 10-fold in the past decade, and is expected to continue to increase in the future because of the poor eating and exercise habits of society.





Q: What can parents do to help their children better control their weight?

- (a) Have a doctor talk to them
- (b) Be supportive
- (c) Change family eating habits
- (d) All of the above

A: (d) All of the above

Feedback: Parents can help children control their weight by talking to a doctor or a nutrition expert with their children, being supportive, communicating with their children, setting better examples by eating healthier, and by incorporating exercise into their daily routines.

Q: A BMI (Body Mass Index) of 25 or more means that a person is obese. (True or False)

A: False

Feedback: A BMI of 30 or more is defined as obese, and a BMI of 25 or more is defined as overweight.

Q: What was the main reason the principal of the high school decided to participate in this study?

- (a) To get on television
- (b) To make the students look bad
- (c) To allow this issue to be discussed, and to understand that comments can be hurtful
- (d) To meet Meredith Vierra

A: (c) To allow this issue to be discussed and to understand that comments can be hurtful

Feedback: According to the principal, his intentions in doing this experiment were to give students the opportunity to discuss the issue of weight and to better understand how harmful words and behaviors can be to other students. He was hoping to teach the students a lesson in tolerance and respect.

Q: Many people decide to adapt a healthier lifestyle out of fear of getting sick. (True or False)

A: True

Feedback: Some of the people interviewed in this program explained that a family member suffered from diabetes or other health problems because of their weight, and that they didn't want to go through the same type of suffering. As a result, they changed their eating habits and started exercising more.

Q: What did one school do to help parents identify whether their child had a weight problem?

Answer/Feedback: One school conducted a weight screening for all their students and used BMI to determine if students were overweight. If a student was overweight, the school sent a letter home to the parents informing them of the child's problem and explaining the health risks associated with obesity.

Q: Which of the following is a good way to improve a family's eating habits?

- (a) Prepare healthy meals ahead of time and store them in the freezer
- (b) Only eat two meals a day
- (c) Eat in front of the television
- (d) Only eat foods that you have tasted before

A: (a) Prepare healthy meals ahead of time and store them in the freezer

Feedback: One nutritionist worked with a family on how to prepare meals ahead of time so they would be less likely to eat fast food or make less nutritious choices. She also recommended trying a new food each week.

Additional Resources

ORGANIZATIONS

American Dietetic Association
216 Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60606-6995
312-899-0040
www.eatright.org

Overeaters Anonymous
6075 Zenith Court NE
Rio Rancho, NM 87124
505-891-2664
www.overeatersanonymous.org

Weight-Control Information Network (WIN)
1 WIN Way
Bethesda, MD 20892-3665
877-946-4627 (toll free)
www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/win.htm

WEB SITES

American Obesity Association
www.obesity.org

Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2000)
www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2000/document/frontcover.htm

Partnership for Healthy Weight Management
www.consumer.gov/weightloss/index.htm

USDA: Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
www.usda.gov/cnpp/Pubs/Brochures

BOOKS

Overcoming Childhood Obesity, by Colleen Thompson and Ellen Shanley. Bull Publishing, 2003. ISBN: 092352178X

Healthy Teens, Body and Soul: A Parent's Complete Guide, by Andrea Marks and Betty Rothbart. Fireside, 2003. ISBN: 0743225619

Other Products

Big As Life: Obesity in America, VHS/DVD, Films for the Humanities & Sciences
Since the 1960s, the number of Americans with body mass indexes above 40 has more than tripled. This program investigates the causes and health implications of obesity in America while seeking to destigmatize adiposity. Interviews with doctors and scientists and with adults and children dealing with weight control shed light on issues including size acceptance, body image bias, and weight discrimination while considering health risks, genetic influences, and surgical interventions.
Item # 30774, 1-800-257-5126,
www.films.com

Inside Tract, VHS/DVD, Cambridge Educational

This engaging three-part series explains the workings of the digestive tract, describes selected gastrointestinal disorders, and spotlights a variety of approaches to overall wellness through good nutrition. The series includes: *We Are What We Eat*; *System Breakdown*; *The Choice Is Ours*

Item # 29073, 1-800-468-4227,
www.cambridgeeducational.com

Interactive Guide to What's Inside: Nutrition Food Labels, CD-ROM, Cambridge Educational

Starting with a brief look at the history and evolution of the food label, this CD-ROM gives viewers useful information on the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act of 1994. When a label says "light," what does this mean? When a label says "less fat," how much is less? Can a label make a claim to improve health? What is a "Daily Value" and how does it relate to you? How can a food label help you eat a healthier diet? Viewers find answers to these and other questions. Learn how the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Food Guide Pyramid relate to the valuable facts found on labels. An entertaining and essential lesson for those classes studying contemporary nutrition or





consumerism, groups discussing family nutrition, and individuals interested in making the best nutritional choices. (Windows only)

Item # 8461, 1-800-468-4227,
www.cambridgeeducational.com

Healthy Habits = Healthy Children,
VHS/DVD, Films for the Humanities &
Sciences

Keeping toddlers and young children in tip-top health requires nutritious foods, adequate sleep, and exercise. This video reviews the nutritional requirements for children, appropriate serving sizes, and the importance of variety, balance, and moderation in their diet. Along with healthy eating habits, we look at exercise and wellness patterns to teach to young children who can benefit from them as they grow into adulthood. Everyone who interacts with children will want to help them combat the twofold menace of inactivity and obesity.

Item # 11827, 1-800-257-5126,
www.films.com

The After-School Cookbook, VHS/DVD,
Meridian Education

This video shows young people how to prepare quick, easy, and nutritious snacks and mini-meals using utensils and equipment found in most kitchens. Because all family members can have busy schedules, teaching teens and 'tweens to do some basic food preparation is helpful for everyone. All recipes are simple to prepare with ingredients easily purchased in supermarkets. Safe use of kitchen equipment is reviewed.

Item # 11824, 1-800-727-5507,
www.meridianeducation.com



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