

GUIDED SELF-REFLECTION

Our understanding of the world is influenced by our own lived experiences. As a result, we all have unconscious biases and blindspots, which can lead us to make judgements about others who have different lived experiences than our own.

In the healthcare setting, one's blindspots, beliefs, and values can hinder effective patient care. Through self-reflection, we can become more aware of our biases about body size, which can help us change our behaviors to reduce weight bias and provide more supportive care to patients of all body sizes.

Questions for Self-Reflection

First, think about your views and assumptions about obesity:

- *What are your beliefs about body weight and people with obesity?*
- *Where do your views about body weight come from?*
- *In what ways does your own experience with body weight affect how you view people with obesity?*

Next, reflect on your interactions with patients:

- *How might your assumptions about body weight affect your interactions with patients?*
- *How often do you consider your patient's perspective about weight, and their prior experiences?*
- *What things affect your ability to listen to patients when discussing weight?*

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- *What do you find most challenging when communicating with patients about body weight? How have you dealt with these obstacles?*
- *How might your views about obesity affect your decision making with regard to patient care? Do you notice any patterns in your decision making that might be impacted by bias?*
- *What do you want to improve on in your interactions with patients who have obesity?*

Finally, consider the professional environment you work in:

- *What stereotypes do other healthcare providers and/or staff have about patients with obesity?*
- *Have you witnessed weight bias amongst your colleagues or staff in your work setting?*
 - *What did you observe?*
 - *How did you react?*
 - *What feelings come up for you as you reflect on this?*
- *Are there any elements or practices in the clinical environment that are weight-biased?*
- *What steps could you take to increase awareness of weight bias in your work setting?*
- *What steps could you take to help counter weight bias in your work environment?*

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Practicing Conscious Awareness

Self-reflection is part of the journey of self-discovery and learning. Understanding our own biases is a key first step in creating actionable change. Continuing to examine our biases through ongoing, reflective practice can create new awareness and knowledge to foster the kinds of attitude and behavioral changes needed to provide more compassionate patient care.

When we are busy or distracted, we are more likely to make biased decisions. Practicing conscious awareness can reduce the impact of unconscious bias on our choices and behaviors. To practice conscious awareness and work toward actionable change, these strategies can be useful:

- Acknowledge and accept that you have bias.
- Recognize stereotypical thinking: Catch yourself in the moment when a biased thought enters your mind and challenge the thought.
- When you recognize a bias, try to substitute this thought with new information that has been learned.
- Consciously consider the language you use to talk about obesity and people with higher body weight.
- Get feedback from others: solicit feedback from your team about potential blindspots you may have, and whether aspects of your communication unintentionally reinforce bias.
- Engage with people of diverse body sizes and expose yourself to people who challenge common weight stereotypes.
- Seek out accurate literature, stories, documentaries, and other information that can help you to expand your views and consider other perspectives.

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