

Facilitating lifestyle change among body diverse patients

General practical points

As clinicians, we know that making a lifestyle change can be a challenge and often struggle broaching the subject with our patients in a supportive and helpful manner. The following document is a brief summary of practical guidelines for facilitating lifestyle change with body diverse patients

- **Build rapport and create a safe space:** make eye contact, listen actively, and take advantage of every opportunity to respect and validate the individual’s experience. Refrain from giving advice. Earn the right to make suggestions when appropriate and trust that every patient is doing the best they can
- **Respect autonomy and express curiosity without judgment:** open-ended questions work well. Examples: what brings you in today? How can i be helpful? What are your concerns? What is working for you? What would you like to focus on today? What do i need to know in order to be helpful?
- **Promote a climate that enhances compassion and self-respect:** shame, blame and fear prompt short-term obedience but fuel impulsive and self-harming behaviors. Self-care behaviors stemming from an attitude of kindness, compassion and respect are inherently reinforcing and tend to stick over time
- **Adopt a growth mindset:** views change as a learning process and not a hit-and-miss goal checklist. Self-efficacy and agency are built over time by acquiring skills, developing effective strategies and deliberate practice
- **Teamwork:** view yourself and your patient as a team working together to promote change in a mutually reciprocal learning process. Respect the areas of expertise that each member contributes in this collaborative effort to enhance the patient’s health and well-being

Special points to consider if your patient struggles with eating regulation & weight management issues

- Accept the *international consensus statement for ending the stigma of obesity*, that weight is multi-factorial and not necessarily under full control (Rubino et al., 2020). Help differentiate what is controllable (current values, priorities, choices, etc.) and what is not (age, genetics, personal history, etc.)
- View health as a broad concept, impacted by decisions, values and life circumstances. Emphasize living a meaningful life with vitality as opposed to achieving specific weight health-promoting behaviors and goals
- Treat every patient struggling with weight issues kindly as they probably have experienced a great deal of shaming (especially from health professionals). Be part of the solution and not the problem!

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