



# DEBUNKING DIET CULTURE MYTHS

Diet culture is an ever present and pervasive part of our culture. We are taught from very early on what food is 'good' or 'bad', what bodies should and should not look like, and how we should behave so that we may be seen as moral and desirable. Here are a common myths we see in diet culture:

## Myth 1) Smaller Bodies are Healthier

- The truth is that bodies come in a diversity of sizes and all can be healthy, and in the same way that folks in small bodies can be unhealthy, folks in larger bodies can be healthy.
- We know that health is a lot more than weight, there are so many other factors that play a role in someone's health more so than their weight, such as:
  - Social connection - the quality of one's relationships
  - Meaningful work and leisure - valuing these parts of one's life and finding meaning in them
  - Housing security - access to reliable housing, electricity, running and safe water, etc.
  - Accessible Healthcare - access to culturally appropriate and sensitive healthcare
  - Physical activity - movement that brings joy and feels good

## Myth 2) Weight is a simple energy in-energy out equation

- The truth is that there are over 300 factors that are responsible for weight, so there are so many things that play a factor in the way that our body looks and what our weight is. These factors include:
  - Genetics: 70-80% of our weight and height are genetically determined
  - Socio-economic Factors - Food security - access to reliable food resources, means to store and prepare food
  - Stress - this can include general lifestyles factors such as work and relationships, but also stress that exists as part of broader social systems -including experiences of racism, classism, ableism or other marginalizing factors
- All of these things and many many more impact and influence someone's weight.

### Myth 3) It is possible to control one's weight/shape

- Part of diet culture's message is kind of this neoliberal approach to health, in that every individual has the opportunity and capacity to change their weight if they 'just try hard enough' or 'just commit themselves to change', etc. The reality is that the majority of factors that influence weight are beyond individual control.
- Trying to control weight and/or shame about one's body is often harmful to health:
  - Dieting is a risk factor for eating disorders and disordered eating behaviours (restriction, binge eating, compensatory behaviour, etc)
  - Can greatly impact self-esteem and body image