

# The Obesity Bias

## Critical Conversations: Motivational Interviewing

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**Don't:** Imply you know what's best for the patient whether they like it or not.

**Do:** Let the individual take the lead in their own health. Ask the person what word they would prefer to use to discuss their weight.

**“What words do you feel most comfortable using while we have this conversation?”**

**Don't:** Use words that may have made the person feel shamed and stigmatized in the past such as: obese, fat, heavy, or large.

**Do:** Use neutral words such as: weight or unhealthy weight.

**“I know it's difficult to talk about, but right now you're at an unhealthy weight.”**

**Don't:** Assume that the individual wants to lose weight.

**Do:** Give the person agency to make their own decision and tell you whether or not they want your help to lose weight.

**“How are you feeling about your weight? If you're interested in losing weight, I'm here to help.”**

**Don't:** Point to a BMI chart or a number on the scale and say, “Your number is too high. You're obese because you have an unhealthy lifestyle and you overeat.”

**Do:** Use that BMI or weight number to start a discussion about options.

**“There are many resources to help you lose weight including medication that help patients like you who have found weight loss elusive. Let's talk about all of your options.”**