ADIPOSITION
a fat body positive manifesto
MY FAT BODY IS NOT YOURS

There is a silence to being fat. An expectation of uncomfortable smiles and apologetic nods. There is a grace to being the literal elephant in most rooms. I move through life much like a trained dancer works a stage. Carefully. Deliberately. Exposed, with a soft blank face. The difference in my daily life and their performance is they are asking for the spotlight, asking for eyes to be glued to their body’s every move. They want your criticism, your opinion. I do not.

MY FAT BODY IS NOT AN INVITATION

Let's talk about what fat is. Fat is a descriptive word, but it's not a feeling. No one feels fat. If you have ever said that, thought that, heard that, you were witness to a gross misuse of our dear English language. Fat is not a synonym for unattractive, lazy, sad, dumb, or the lesser. Fat people are all around you. Some are healthy, some are not. Same goes for thin people. This is a hard concept to grasp for some. It goes against everything we are taught about the obesity epidemic and the stereotype of the fat slob. The possibility of health at every size is real. It's more common than you were taught to think.
MY FAT BODY IS NOT AN EPIDEMIC

I used to patiently listen to it all, take it to heart, and always walk away from these conversations feeling several things: (1) that I am a failure, (2) that my continued relationship with this person is incumbent on me correcting my fat failure ways, (3) that I must admit that I look unacceptable, (4) and that loving myself was something I could not possibly do until I lost weight.

Now I know about fat phobia, health myths, and the fact that even if they were 100% right and I 100% wrong that it would not really matter. It's my body, and none of their business. Mine has to be the one and only opinion that matters when it comes to my self image. My health only affects me. Judging another body under the guise of health concerns is weak. Troll someone else.

MY FAT BODY IS NOT A NEGOTIATION
They stare; sometimes with mouths agape, wide eyed, completely inconsiderate of the fact that I am a person standing in a line just trying to pay for my groceries. They point; then they turn to their table companions, share some whispers, and one at a time everyone at the table across the restaurant turns to look at mine, at me. A fat person daring to eat in public. They scowl and sometimes are even so bold as to run me through that shopping scene in Pretty Woman. But, I have money to spend in here. We don’t have anything for you, and we don’t want you stretching out anything you might try on. They assume; that I have diabetes and high blood pressure, that I can’t get laid, that I constantly smell, that I cry myself to sleep, that I have no friends, that I hate myself. They laugh without realizing that they are actually laughing at themselves.

Older women are particularly disgusted with my body type, and seem the most comfortable with sharing their unprovoked opinions. Years ago, I sat on a park bench in New York to eat my lunch next to a woman in her 70’s. She studied me a little too much as I ate my sandwich. As I turned to flash my angrily perplexed can I help you look she said, “You know, in my day, a woman of your size would not be caught dead eating in public.” I literally ran away.
Hate is just a reflection of the hater. That park bench woman could have been jealous. Maybe she felt oppressed by the social norms of her day. Maybe that was a poorly chosen opener to a conversation about how things are changing. Maybe the interaction could have turned positive. I’ll never know what her motivation was, but I can say for sure that it had nothing to do with me.

**MY FAT BODY IS NOT AN EMBARRASSMENT**

Most commentary I receive about my size is subtle. The backhanded compliment is a sneaky little shit of a sentence designed to appear to be a positive comment, but really it just makes you feel confused and judged. “Your new haircut slims your face,” translates to you have a fat face. Thanks, I know, so what? Or, “I wish I had the confidence to show my legs off, like you are, in such a short skirt.” Again, thanks for noticing that I am awesome, but what this really means is that you are calling out my legs for not being up to beauty standards.
You think your insults are correctly placed consequences. After all, I did this to myself with Cheetos, right? Maybe I did, maybe there is more to that story. In any event, why must we fight?

**MY FAT BODY IS NOT A WAR ZONE**

Unwelcome body commentary is uncomfortable and rage inducing. I am past the point of being shocked by its intrusiveness, its ignorance, or its righteousness. And, way past the point of thinking it is ever going to stop. In my younger years I mostly responded with a painful half smile while others ripped my body down, taking my insides with it. I apologized for people that should have been apologizing to me. I almost craved the taste of shame.
I'm 34 now. I consider myself a fat activist. My feet are firmly planted wherever I choose to press them, but I still lose my head in occasional clouds of insecurity. Body positivity, the fat acceptance movement, and all the beautiful self-loving people of size that put their bodies and hearts on display through the interwebs have given me such strength and wisdom. Yet, I still struggle against internalized beauty standards. I still think twice before answering party invitations, before wearing tight clothing, before trusting compliments and relationships. I know my worth goes beyond my size, but I have not yet figured out how to deal with the attention my body attracts.

I posed this question to a close group of girlfriends the other day, “how do you deal with unsolicited body comments?” We are a sassy lot, so the first round of responses were something like, “just tell them to fuck off!” That often suffices, especially when the comment is some bro yelling fatty out of a car window. But, a more nuanced approach is often necessary, not just for the commenter or the context of the environment, but for ourselves. What is the point of fighting hate with hate? I don’t always have the energy, but when I can I try to engage people a little further. Ask them why they felt the need to comment, ask them what is the point? Maybe that goes south and is more trouble than it is worth. Maybe they don’t deserve a gentle lesson. I don’t know.
All I can say is that comments be damned. I no longer have conversations about other bodies, because the point of them always seems to be making someone feel superior and thus another inferior. I am slowly retraining myself to look beyond bodies, to value people for their contribution to any given moment of life, and to practice compassion instead of criticism. Value comes from within. I don’t let people in that space anymore, and I do not attempt to intrude on others. I am starting to get brave enough to confront others when they turn judgmental. These people are often my friends, which makes it an extra risky confrontation, but I think also the most worthy. Out of respect for my body positive self I refuse to be complicit in body shame, and I just want all the people I love to join me.

MY FAT BODY IS NOT BROKEN
I am no longer interested in being a good fatty. I wear what I want, which sometimes includes tight clothing that shows the visible outline of my big belly. The clothes that go on my body are there for me. I no longer make a point of discussing my food choices so as to appear to smaller people that I am doing everything in my power to become one of them. I do workout, I do bench triple digits, I can run a mile without falling over. I love myself enough to train my body to do those things so I can enjoy activities I like, nothing more. The opinion, praise, or approval of others where my gloriously fat body is concerned are unnecessary.
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themilitantbaker.com/2016/02/
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