(RECLAIMING)
THE WORD FAT
I have lived in a fat body

since I was 12 years old. I left 6th grade weighing 115 pounds, moved into a new household with a new family and school, gained 70 pounds over the Summer, and ended up back at my old school with my old family after the Christmas break of 7th grade. I will never forget the morning I walked back into that familiar building only to find that my sense of comfort was gone. I was fat now and it was apparently all that mattered. Kids I had went to school with since age 6 couldn't look at me or they couldn't wait to lob an insult. Teachers were disappointed in me. My best friend, who was so excited to see me after our months apart, took one look at me, turned back to her group of friends, and declared, "I hope I don't have to sit next to her. She's so fat!"

And, thus began my negative relationship with my body and my self worth. Being called fat was my new fear in life and never really went away until well past college when the internet gave me access to blogs and the fat acceptance movement. Representation is so important. Seeing a body with a big belly like mine wearing a cool outfit just walking the dog out in the world made me question the self hate society had taught me to practice on myself as some twisted penance. They wanted a constant apology as evidence of my shame. They wanted me to agree that my fat body was wrong, and that they were right to point it out to me. They wanted me to be afraid, because it made them feel better about themselves. I was getting so tired of hiding my body and myself away from the world and missing out on life. I am forever grateful for Virgie Tovar's voice.

These days I almost wish someone would call me fat to my face, because I'm ready. On my low self image days I wear a little pin that says
Fat and Happy. Partly to remind myself of my value and capabilities and partly to question those that might disagree. This is my body and I am happy. Why is that so radical?

The absolute truth is fat is a descriptive word. Fat is only an insult if you believe that being fat is bad.

**Radical body acceptance is**

for freedom. For sanity. We cannot walk around this world feeling inherently bad, because we carry more than the average amount of fat. We deserve love, sex, respect, fashion, representation, positive attention, and a life free of shame. We are not sacrificing our happiness or comfort so you can use our fat bodies as examples or scapegoats. We do not accept your warfare. We are not a cautionary tale.
Fat is often a loaded word.

Check your usage. Check your intention. Check your privilege. Check your impact.

Fat is not a synonym for lazy.
Fat is not another word for ugly.
Fat is not a word to be used in ridicule.

We don't want to hear about your inner fat girl because you ate a bunch of pasta. We don't want to overhear you in the dressing room moaning about how these pants make you look fat. We don't want to see you criticising a person's politics by calling them fat. Now THAT is lazy.

Let's reclaim this dang word!

Say it. Use it correctly. Own yourself. Take back its power by refusing to accept the violence, guilt, and shame others have infused into the word fat. This is our word. This is our resistance. We won't be punished! My body is fat. That is true. So what? Who cares? What's next?
Marginalized people are reclaiming words in their community to empower themselves, to connect, to heal. If you are not part of the fat community, you can still be a positive ally in the fight for fat acceptance by respecting and supporting our right to exist. Don't perpetuate stigma by using fat as a negative word. Get out of our way and let us enjoy taking up space.

And listen, word reclamation is not for every fat person and that is okay. The journeys we are on do not have the same destinations. Some will find healing and empowerment in using fat in a positive matter of fact way, some won't. I love you all.

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