



## FAT TRAUMA INTRODUCTION

Fat Trauma is a term that I have coined to identify the emotional impacts of being mistreated for existing in a larger body. Trauma can be defined as a “deeply distressing or disturbing experience.” Through over a decade of working with larger bodied people, I have found patterns in how these experiences impact mental health.

Humans are herd animals and have been socialized to need one another. This need is survival based due to our long history of needing other humans to survive. While we might be independent now, our bodies are still wired to receive being othered or dehumanized as a life or death occurrence.

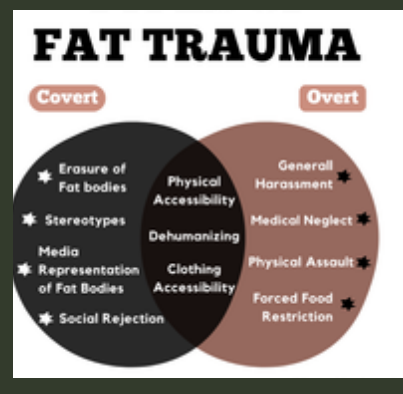
This survival reaction leads to a trauma response in the brain when society excludes larger bodied people. Living in a body that has been deemed a failure has negative long term impacts on mental health. This trauma is a direct cause of our environment.

While that might sound overwhelming, this means that we can do things on both an individual and collective level to heal fat trauma. Targeting the very values that normalized hating one another for genetic differences.

First, we must understand how to identify fat trauma within our experiences in order to challenge unwanted shame or guilt associated with our bodies. Fat trauma happens to most individuals that have lived in a larger body.

## OVERT VS COVERT FAT TRAUMA

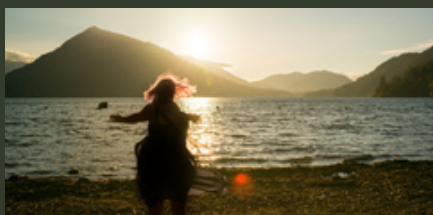
There are two types of Fat Trauma. Overt trauma which is directed and intentional and Covert trauma which is hidden and normalized. Both impact the individuals sense of value. Impacting their goals, livelihood and treatment by peers.



Television, media and books normalize the negative association with larger bodied people. Attaching morality and negative values to a different body type. Our role in healing is to identify the values and beliefs that we have been taught about fatness and personal value. While this can be difficult we might realize that maybe what t.v told us about our value isn't actually true.

## FAT TRAUMA AND DAILY LIFE

**Self Worth** is directly impacted from the trauma examples listed above. When you are constantly told that your body is a “failure”. This can lead to poor relationship choices and poor boundaries with loved ones due to lowered self worth.



**Social Harassment** creates social isolation and avoidance of connection. Lack of inclusivity excludes larger bodied people from joyful activities. Increasing depression and negative self talk.

**Life Goals** often fixate on weightloss or the presence of shame leads to lowering personal goals. With workplace stereotypes, fat people are told that they cannot have jobs or display their talent until they change the size of their body.



**Medical Malpractice**, which includes denying testing in favor of weightloss and negative treatment by providers due to fixation on weight as a health measurement. This is life threatening to larger bodied people and leads to avoidance of medical providers as self protection.



## EMOTIONAL IMPACTS OF FAT TRAUMA

**Depression-** When you are identified as not valuable by others due to body size, fat trauma is a common result of said treatment. Negative self talk, low sense of worth, hopelessness and decreased interest in activities can be associated with how society treats larger bodied people.

**Eating disorders-** Eating disorders are prescribed to larger bodied people. Often being praised for heavy restriction and malnourishment. Larger bodied CAN and DO have eating disorders. Frequent restriction and food fixation impacts daily functioning.

**Social Anxiety-** Harassment in public can result in social anxiety. We have been taught to assume many negative traits based on body size. The body being the first thing we are taught to use in assessing value. Not to mention the lack of activities available to larger bodied people.

**Trauma Symptoms-** Hypervigilance when out in social spaces. Guarded of the self due to fear of future abuse. Poor boundaries, relationship difficulties and nervous system dysregulation due to fear. Fear of medical spaces and struggling with self advocacy.

## THE TRAUMA ROLADEX

Trauma responses in the body are connected to memories. Making the exploration of memories and assumptions associated with messaging integral to healing.

In the worksheet included in this packet you will be asked to explore a trauma memory, emotion and messaging you learned from experience.

**Exposure** to weight stigma leads to fat trauma. This results in long term emotional ramifications. The dehumanization of larger bodied people and the normalization of their abuse leads to mental health issues that must be addressed and validated.

## PHYSICAL IMPACTS OF FAT TRAUMA

**Abuse-** Larger bodied people have high rates of both physical and sexual abuse. Abusers use body insecurity to ensure that the victim does not leave the relationship or does not speak out about the abuse.

**Avoidance-** When the body is considered an enemy our brain develops skills in avoidance and dissociation leading to poor care for the self and body. Avoiding regular medical check ups to avoid shame.



**Malnourishment-** Larger bodied people suffer from malnourishment due to years of prescribed restriction. This fixation on food and repeated restriction leads to long term health ramifications.



**Health Dangers-** With the denial of testing due to body size and the fixation on weight loss as the "cure all" larger bodied people are vulnerable to medical malpractice. Leaving vulnerable unable to get adequate care.

## SELF-REFLECTION:

# IDENTIFYING YOUR TRAUMA

Naming How Fat Trauma has Impacted Your Life is a Crucial First Step in the Healing Process. You Deserve To Be Validated!

1

Name a memory that presented when you read about Fat Trauma. Describe the memory, feeling and message in detail.

2

Identify the message you recieved about existing in a larger body. Does this message feeling true?

3

What evidence do I have you this belief? Have I tried to challenge this belief? How am I collecting this data?

- *While oppression of larger bodied people does occur, we have been taught to ignore evidence that challenges our assumptions of larger bodied people. Ex: Fat people aren't loveable. Have you gone to your local store and looked for larger bodied people in love?*