

What do you think of fat?

Do you like fat, or are you repulsed by it? The stuff on the side of a decent lamb chop, or the soft bits a lot of us carry on our bodies? What about butter, the oily bases of skin creams and lotions, the delicate drizzle over olives, tomatoes and feta cheese?

We live in a culture that has been taught to despise fat, and with it, fat people. But can we as fitness professionals take this same line? Yes we have the scientific knowledge that if you cram an artery full of the stuff you'll die. Yes we know that if you are obese then you are more prone to life threatening illnesses such as stroke and diabetes, but this cultural obsession with fat goes much further than that.

Recently I saw two (slim) personal trainers with an i-phone application that could take a picture of someone, and then through the wonders of modern science make them look obese. These personal trainers were screaming with laughter at their pictures and saying things such as "oh that's gross!", "that's disgusting!", and I couldn't help thinking that this didn't show much respect or understanding for their clients.

I've heard people say "they've done it to themselves, so they've only themselves to blame". However, if we claim to want to help people change their lives, can we start from a position of despising them?

If we can't stand having any fat on our bodies, how can we care about people carrying several stone of the stuff?

If we think obese people are hilarious how can we take their needs seriously?

Hopefully as fitness 'professionals' we can step beyond cultural fads and face values, and get beyond the surface fat, to the things that, as human beings, really matter.

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