

## **Film Documentary** ***DiETING: At War with our Bodies***

### **Discussion questions:**

1. How many of you have dieted?
2. What were the results? What were your experiences with dieting?  
[Allow enough time to discuss questions 1 and 2 before moving on. It's important for people to be able to share their personal experiences.]
3. Did you regain the weight you lost?
4. Did you blame yourself for the regain?
5. After seeing this film documentary, do you think dieting itself may be to blame?
6. What did the film "*DiETING: At War with our Bodies*" tell us about dieting?  
[Include some of the points on page 2 if not brought up.]

### **BEFORE showing the film documentary**

May ask question 1. Or ask questions 1 and 2.

Suggest: "As you watch this film documentary, think about those diets and other weight loss programs you've been on. Afterward we can talk about them."

### **AFTER showing the film documentary**

Repeat question 1 and ask the other questions.

### **Film may generate anger and frustration**

This film documentary may create controversy, as well as discussion. The information may be new – and even somewhat unwelcome. Explain that it is normal for dieters to be angry and frustrated when they learn the truth about dieting. Allow them time to talk about their feelings.

- Some may be angry upon realizing that they have been misled over the years and have been taught to blame themselves for the failures of diets. They understand that they have expected the impossible of themselves and may be ready to move on.
- Some may feel frustrated because they are not ready to give up dieting and the dream of being thin. The realization that there is no magic pill may be too hard to accept for now. Be accepting of this view – it may be enough for them to start thinking about these issues.

### **Take time to summarize the points on page 2. Then hand out page 2 at end of discussion**

## Summing up – Film Documentary *DiETING: At War with our Bodies*

- **We can be healthy at any size.**  
Thin people can be healthy or unhealthy, and large people can be healthy or unhealthy.
- **DiETING leads to bingeing and weight cycling (weight loss/regain).**  
Other problems may be appetite dysregulation, body dissatisfaction, changes in how the body stores fat, disordered eating and stress on the body.
- **DiETING and restrictive eating often lead to higher weight gain.**  
People often get heavier the more they diet, apparently due to body disruptions. (Look at weight you were when you started dieting compared with what you are today.)  
DiETING may be contributing to the increasing prevalence of overweight.
- **Statistics on the risks of overweight are being exaggerated by the diet industry.**  
Why isn't this in magazines or in newspapers? If it goes against what is popularly thought, the media tends to ignore it. What gets published is mostly in sync with current wisdom. People just assume it is true and don't read or believe the research against it.
- **Listen to your body not just your head with healthy alternatives to dieting.**  
Being self aware means listening to your body for cues of hunger and fullness, reasons for eating, and plugging in to your basic needs.
- **Desired outcome needs to be health, not weight loss.**  
If you focus on weight loss and you don't lose weight or keep it off, you are unlikely to maintain the lifestyle change. Also consider the effect dieting mothers have on their children.
- **Improving lifestyle habits provides enormous health benefits, without weight loss.**  
Being healthy at your size involves small gradual "baby steps" where you are responsible for your own health, and the journey is enjoyable. (If change is sudden or drastic and can't be sustained, it is simply a diet under the guise of lifestyle.)

## Handouts and websites

Handouts, websites, or alternatives to dieting in the community will help people learn more and move ahead with healthy lifestyles. Included are handouts "Celebrating Health at Every Size," and "5 Health Care Myths" (for health professionals, and/or lay people to take to their doctor if physician insists they need to lose weight). The author of these documents, Francie Berg of Healthy Weight Network ([healthyweight.net](http://healthyweight.net)), has generously given permission to reprint these handouts with the understanding that citations remain intact.

*Experts and programs in the film:* [hugs.com](http://hugs.com) (info on film documentary and International No Diet Day; alternatives to dieting/free book online); [salal.com](http://salal.com) (Sandra Friedman); [anybody.org](http://anybody.org) (Susie Orbach); Glenn Gaesser, PhD (Big Fat Lies) available at [bulimia.com](http://bulimia.com); Janet Polivy, PhD, (Breaking the Diet Habit; amazon for out-of-print copy).