

Case study 4 My daughter is 16 and she is gaining weight

Doctors advising parents on how to communicate with their children

- A. For and against.** Doctors often give advice to parents on how to communicate with their children suffering from obesity/eating disorders. Read the case study below and decide on the mother's worries and the daughter's attitude:

My daughter is 16 and is gaining weight. My husband and I are on board with what needs to be done - and there's a lot to do. But as to talking to her about her weight, we are at a loss. She's an ultra-liberal feminist, so any discussion about her weight has and will inevitably lead to accusations of "fat shaming" and make things worse; we've been there already. She points to celebrities who are fat and successful.

The last argument about her weight she pointed to the medical profession's opinion that "a little" overweight isn't the worst thing in the world. And she points to us - her parents - who are also slightly overweight. Perhaps she's right, and perhaps there's a middle ground. And perhaps, she's living under our roof and so our rules? I suspect we need to choose the right time and the right words - this is where your advice is needed.

Some background: She's not obese, but she's about 25 lbs (11 kg) over her ideal weight (she's 5'3" (160 cm), ~160 lbs. (73 kg)). I don't know her BMI.

She's a *'couch potato'*, is in love with her phone and laptop playing games and chatting with her friends. She's in between seasons (she plays field hockey and softball). She does not drive.

Her eating habits are horrible, too. She snacks on junk food and eats second and third helpings. All the junk food she gets she buys herself with money she makes from babysitting - another occasional low-calorie activity she does with a 2-year-old.

We are not the best role models, but we don't eat off-mealtime, and we don't buy junk food. While consistent mealtimes are important, it just doesn't work in our household. We have a son who is in scouts, sports, and a band, and so there is that logistic. I coach both my kids, and volunteer in the scouts and band. So sports and other activities just make each day very different than the other. My son, by the way, is slightly underweight.

We started to limit what we cook and what we put on the table to limit the amount of food she eats.

We try to have dinner ready for early evening. If that can't be done, preparing something in a slow cooker can work - the kids can help themselves if we're not around. Or they can make something on their own.

We plan to lock her out of her phone, laptop, and Wi-Fi until she does things around the house that elevates cardio activity: doing yard and gardening work. We also want to get her a walking app for her phone, and have her walk or jog a couple of miles a day as a requisite for getting her phone and laptop privileges, but the irony is she needs the phone to use the app.

I'd like to get her to a gym, but none of her friends want to go, and none of the gyms will take her without an adult present. The YMCA would take her in a limited duration program but getting her there is another

problem - we work during the day, as do all of her friends' parents. Evening trips to the gym could work in theory, but with sports, scouts, band, and other community groups we're a part of, that all doesn't make it easy or consistent. We are members; we just don't go that often.

Any advice on how to talk to her would be valuable. Adapted from:

<https://wikimho.com/us/q/parenting/34353>

B. Arrange the following comments into the four columns, according to focus of communication:

- 1) Have you weighed yourself today?
- 2) Our family has a history of heart disease/diabetes so we all need to make sure we look after our bodies and have good eating habits. How can we all start to eat more healthily.
- 3) You are making me concerned.
- 4) Your eating habits aren't healthy. How could we address that?
- 5) You've got my thighs.
- 6) I've noticed you change your eating patterns according to how you are feeling. Let's choose some healthier options for the shopping list.
- 7) I'm concerned about your weight and you don't seem happy. What do you think would improve your health so that you feel better?
- 8) You look a bit chunky in those pants.
- 9) Are you sure you need to eat that?
- 10) I've noticed you're not as active as you used to be. I want to be more active, too. What could we do together?

<p>Niggling comments (Small comments that still should be addressed)</p>	<p>Comments that focus on weight (Comments solely about weight issues)</p>
<p>Positive comments (Comments that use positive language)</p>	<p>Negative comments (Comments that use discriminatory language)</p>

Now add your own suggestions:

Answers ON A SEPARATE SHEET:

Niggling comments

Are you sure you need to eat that?
Have you weighed yourself today?
You look a bit chunky in those pants
You've got my thighs

These comments focus on weight

Our family has a history of heart disease/diabetes so we all need to make sure we look after our bodies and have good eating habits. How can we all start to eat more healthily.
I've noticed you're not as active as you used to be. I want to be more active too, What could we do together?
I'm concerned about your weight and you don't seem happy. What do you think would improve your health so that you feel better?
Your eating habits aren't healthy. How could we address that?
I've noticed you change your eating patterns according to how you are feeling. Let's choose some healthier options for the shopping list.

Positive comments

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Negative comments:

You are making me concerned.
.....
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Now add your own suggestions:

Show, don't tell.