

A Moment on Your Lips . . .

Category: Eating

written by Pam Adelstein | December 19, 2021

Nine-year-old me, while devouring Judy Blume's book *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself*, came upon what seemed like a brilliant adage: "A moment on your lips, forever on your hips." I thought, "Perhaps this ditty was the missing piece in the how-to-be-thin puzzle."

Needless to say, deprivation and fear of food are not a route to healthy eating and feeling fit. I have struggled all my life with how to eat intuitively and how to love my body for its function, rather than its appearance. In my formative years, I sampled from the buffet presented by family, peers, and the media: Giant scoops of fad diets, with heaping tablespoonfuls of novel workouts, whisked into a bottomless bowl of messaging that one can never be thin enough or pretty enough. Since "thin + pretty = successful" in my mind, the task was crystal clear. Despite cognitively understanding the faulty logic of this equation, banishing such thoughts from my psyche has been a lifetime project.

Years later, I experienced the opportunity to present new messages to my own young children. In our house, we encouraged eating until one feels satisfied, expressing curiosity about cravings, and believing that each body is unique and beautiful. Pants tight? Let's buy clothes that fit. Celebrating? Savor the food intentionally. Belly protruding? The digestive system is amazing! Body not "x" enough? See how you can run and play! I recall a shining moment at our kitchen table: Younger child asked older one, "What's a diet?" Older child replied, "It's when instead of eating dessert every night, you have it three times a week, and you eat lots of different colored fruits and vegetables." I prayed their outlook would never change.

As a physician, I vigilantly patrol for patients' negative food and body talk. I share the same messages as I conveyed to my children. Whole foods are wonderful! Your body is beautiful! Tragically, patients' own experiences with body and food shaming threaten to drown out my attempts to give permission rather than restrict. Patients feel hopeless, depressed, and inadequate when they "fail" to conform to societal expectations.

My family is currently watching *The Good Place* on Netflix. A quote piqued my attention: "Humans take something good [ice cream] and change it into something that is not as good so they can eat more of it [frozen yogurt]."

I ask myself now: How can we humans take something good and simply enjoy it?

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