

Nobody likes a 'fat-talker,' study shows

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(Medical Xpress)—Women who engage in "fat talk"—the self-disparaging remarks girls and women make in relation to eating, exercise or their bodies—are less liked by their peers, a new study from the University of Notre Dame finds.

Led by Alexandra Corning, research associate professor of psychology and director of Notre Dame's [Body Image](#) and Eating Disorder Lab, the study was presented recently at the Midwestern Psychological Association annual conference.

In the study, college-age women were presented with a series of photos of either noticeably thin or noticeably [overweight women](#) engaging in either "fat talk" or positive body talk; they were then asked to rate the women on various dimensions, including how likeable they were.

The women in the photos were rated significantly less likeable when they made "fat talk" statements about their bodies, whether or not they were overweight. The women rated most likeable were the overweight women who made positive statements about their bodies.

"Though it has become a regular part of everyday conversation, 'fat talk' is far from innocuous," according to Corning.

"It is strongly associated with, and can even cause, [body dissatisfaction](#), which is a known risk factor for the development of eating disorders."

Although fat talk has been thought of by psychologists as a way women may attempt to initiate and strengthen their [social bonds](#), Corning's research finds that fat-talkers are liked less than women who make positive statements about their bodies.

"These findings are important because they raise awareness about how women actually are being perceived when they engage in this self-abasing kind of talk," Corning says.

"This knowledge can be used to help national efforts to reduce 'fat talking' on college campuses."

Provided by University of Notre Dame

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