

Ditching dieting is a campaign to expose the role of the diet industry in destabilising women and girls' appetites and desires. We believe that troubled eating and the so-called 'obesity epidemic' are merely more visible extremes of a much bigger, everyday phenomena: that we are accepting fear and hatred of our own bodies like gravity, that we are accepting 'I am not good enough' as a fact. We should note that we are using the word 'diet' today in the sense of restriction, denial and calculation, not in the sense of diet as simply the food we take in.

We are regularly swamped with headlines announcing an obesity crisis and we have seen news stories with the message that children may be taken away from their parents if the kids' BMIs are deemed offensive or threatening. This 'crisis' is benefitting industries such as the diet and pharmaceutical industries, who are claiming to help us in a 'crisis'.

The diet industry claims to offer solutions. However, you can see from these affiliations and numbers that things are a bit more complicated than that. Furthermore, there is overwhelming research stating that it is the process of restricting food that leads to a consequent weight gain, as the natural metabolism is slowly but surely destroyed, meaning that dieting ultimately makes you fat.

One of the reasons that the profits made by the weight-loss industry are so high is because this is a global industry that is constantly expanding. The notion that we must be constantly monitoring and worrying about our bodies and spend money and time improving them is one of the biggest Western exports, along with beauty and plastic surgery industries.

Diets are not a solution. They are a regime imposed externally on the body to beat it into submission with no regard for a responsive relationship with your own body. Diets are set up to fail us so we will return to them again and again. 95% of diets fail. (Barbara Cohen, Ph.D., "The Psychology of Ideal Body Image as an Oppressive Force in the Lives of Women," 1984)

That means a lot of things: frustration, financial cost, a diminished joy in so many parts of life.

We can't go into the details today, but on the flyers you will find some further reading and references if you are interested in the research that illuminates the flaws in the so-called truths proclaimed by the diet-industry.

If you are moving around, living your life, and listening to your own desires - eating when you are hungry, stopping when you are full, eating precisely what you need and want in that moment - then you should not feel scared or that your health is threatened by being in the 'obese' box on a flawed BMI chart.

However, this kind of intuitive eating becomes harder and harder under the onslaught of methods to make money from your body.

Today is about asking you all to join us in speaking out against the patronizing and life-diminishing influences of the diet industry as one of the most powerful

producers of misery in this country across all sectors of society.

This is about taking on a massive industry. Huge funding streams are generated and directed through the discourse that claims it is good for all of us to be on a diet. Statements are confusing and seep into everyday life in many different guises: media, doctors, family and friends, the price and availability of food.

The diet industry claims to offer comfort, support and solutions to make your world a happier, healthier place.

We want to make public how destructive the culture of default-dieting is to all of us.

Despite the fact that this has been highlighted by writers, activists and researchers for many years, the everyday reality of the misery caused is still silent, hidden, or worse: accepted as inevitable.

- We want to raise awareness of the false truths that are being spread, recently especially under the mantle of the 'obesity crisis', aiming to scare us all into submission.
- We want to challenge women to articulate how their lives are affected by diets and make legitimate the anger at this intervention into our most private identity: our lived body.
- Speaking out about how limited our lives actually are by the obligation to diet is the first step in truly owning your own body – controlling it through diets is not the same as ownership.
- Help us create a picture of the culture of misery and anxiety that alienates us from our bodies by making statements of the facts of life: the facts of how dieting affects your life.

Questions to ask participants to respond to during the Speakout:

What does the word 'diet' mean to you?

What did you hope would be happen as a result of your dieting?

What effect has dieting had on your life?

Do you feel guilty when you aren't dieting or restricting your food in some way?

Have you ever had a carefree time of eating?

Can you imagine making peace with your body?

We'll make a start to get us going, and from there open the floor to responses from you.

You might like to formulate your response in relation to one of these questions. In order to give as many people as possible the opportunity to speak, everyone gets 4 minutes, but feel free to hang around and chat afterwards!

Thank you all for being here, listening and joining in. Today has been fantastic – but of course it is only a step towards doing things differently.

What you can do:

- For yourself: you could start listening to your body's needs. You could try eating only when you are hungry, and stopping when you are full. You could dare to eat only and exactly what you want, what makes you *feel good*. Focus on being alive, on your desires, on your appetites. It is hard, and feels like swimming against the tide. But really, is it harder than living off Grapefruit?
- For all of us, with all of us: Join up with people in your neighbourhood and do things collectively.
Join with each other, support campaigns, challenge these industries.
Complain about false advertising.
Offer your daughters, sisters, friends, mothers, support and places to go that make dieting from a hunger for recognition, love and company UNNECESSARY.
- join our campaign: sign up for our campaign on your way out, so that you can join us for future events, support us through virtual speak-outs that will be launched in the coming weeks, and join us for a big event at the University of Westminster in 2012.

Finally

Ask people to congregate around their 'area': we need to be giving each other support. This way you can find out who is near you, and we'll be coming round with some books that can help with that. Now is the time to arrange to meet and see what you can do together.

And don't forget to sign up for the campaign on the way out!