Wellness In the Rockies (WIN the Rockies) is a community-based research, intervention and outreach project that seeks to improve people’s health. The philosophy of the project states that people have responsibility for their own health, but communities have responsibility for helping create environments that foster good health and provide healthy options.

The qualitative research phase of the project included the collection of narratives or life stories from 103 adult men and women. The research team conducted 56 one-on-one interviews and six focus groups. The purpose in gathering these narratives was to elicit experiences that illustrate the challenges people have faced, the successes they have experienced, and the insights they have gained related to physical activity, food and eating and body image.

The selected body image quotes are from men. The quotes can be used to promote the A New You: Health for Every Body program to adult males and/or to spark class discussions. For more information, see “Reaching Adult Males” in the Getting Started section.

Selected Quotes on Body Image

Dissatisfaction

“I think all of us have a kind of an ideal of what we think that perfect body should look like, and we can mirror that on what we currently look like and feel bad about it. I think that in every case, you feel bad about it. . . . I don’t think anybody believes they look like what they should.”  Male in his 50’s

“I feel more conscious . . . today than I did ten years ago. I hate being overweight. Absolutely hate it. I don’t like it when my pants are tight. . . . My pants get too tight because I’ll be d----- if I’m going to go to the next size pants. . . . I think about it every day. I think about [my body size] constantly. And my wife says ‘Don’t worry about it.’ [But] I do worry about it.”  Male, 30’s to 40’s

“I never liked my body. . . . Never been able to get it to where I was happy with it, even when I was young . . . and in really good shape. . . . Always felt it was too big. . . . I started dieting when I weighed 250, and I dieted myself up to 350.”  Male, in his 60’s

“Nobody’s happy with their body. . . . ‘I should be shorter. I should be thinner. I should be broader in the shoulders. I should have more hair or less hair. I shouldn’t have to shave so often.’ Nobody’s happy with their body 100 percent. That’s disgusting. Why can’t people be people?”  Male, late 50’s
Struggles

“For myself, I know that if there is going to be any change in this body, it’s going to be done by me and me alone. My wife can harp and gripe all she wants . . . ‘honey you’re getting a little belly.’ Nothing is going to change this body except me. . . . I stand before the mirror and say ‘this is ridiculous, you look like a walrus.’ . . . But on the other hand, I’m [over 70 years] old, who gives a d---. [Friends are] going to be my friend no matter what I look like. So I don’t worry about body image.” Male in his 70’s

Perception of Appearance

“When I was really thin, I was too thin. . . . Then between the ages of fifteen and forty-five or so, I felt pretty good about the way I looked. I was in pretty dang good shape. And now I don’t have any real qualms, except that I’m a little bit bigger in the stomach than what I’d like to be, but I think it dropped from the top down.” Male, 60ish

“I don’t like] my stomach, my little belly hanging over. I’ve always been too short. But that’s who you are, so I don’t worry about it too much. I can’t change it.” Male, almost 50

How viewed by others

“I always claim that when you become heavy, you become invisible. You go in a room and you want to be social with people, [but] . . . you can’t because of [your] size. . . . You totally become invisible. People don’t recognize you. They don’t know who you are . . . . There’s a lot of people that even if they do know you, [they] don’t want to know you because . . . it’s not sociably accepted to hang out with people that are . . . obese.” Male in his 40’s

“[While I was furniture shopping, I was helped by an employee who I went to high school with, and he] happened to throw something in about how much weight I’d gained. And that’s probably the first time in my life . . . I became aware of this trouble.” Male, early 30’s

“Sometimes I feel that I’m the recipient of that look. That’s all it ever is. It’s just a look. People are far too polite to say ‘Hey, can you go drop some pounds, fatso? . . . That is a pretty painful look to get . . . especially having dealt it out.” Male, mid 30’s

Comparison to Others

“If you watch TV, . . . you see certain fashions that look good on those people, but boy, when you go try it on, you look like . . . the Pillsbury Dough Boy. . . . Well, that’s not very flattering. . . . Also, I’ve played a lot of basketball against [this bigger, stronger guy] and he beat me up my share. . . . I’d like to have that kind of strength, that kind of height, but . . . that’s not what I’d like to have all the time because I can get into a Volkswagen a lot easier than he can.” Male in his 50’s
“It’s very important to me the way I look. . . . I see the shapes and sizes [of other people] and I think, ‘I don’t want to look like that.’ ” Male, early 50’s

“I think I know that everybody is different and no matter what you do you can never look like somebody else because everyone is unique in their own way. . . . [You have to] try to get to a point where you can be happy with yourself.” Male, early 30’s

“Somebody that’s skinnier seems more attractive than somebody that’s heavier. Even when you’re heavy, you realize [those] things.” Male in his 40’s

Acceptance

“I was blessed with good parents [who] taught me the fundamentals of how to treat people and how not to treat people. . . . You learn at an early age when you play games whether someone was fair . . . or they were a bully, or they mistreated the girls, or . . . whatever. I don’t think it really mattered physically what they looked like because I have [known] people that were absolutely beautiful that I really didn’t want to associate with . . . and other people, a little on the heavy side, [who were] genuinely true sincere people. So, I mean the quality of their character meant more to me than their physical appearance.” Male in his 50’s

How others present self

“I admire people that are real overweight [and active]. Just like today, I had a mechanic . . . that I know. H---, he’s huge, but . . . he’s a mechanic, holds down a full-time job, . . . and he did a good job. . . . So I admire people that [are overweight] and still [do] not let that be a deterrent for them to be a productive citizen and live a good life.” Male, 40’s to 50’s

Stereotypes

“I’ve worked with . . . kids who all through their life were teased about being the fat kid and the impact that’s had on them . . . is amazing. . . . So I hope I try to be more sensitive, . . . but there’s still opinions and judgments and assumptions that people make. I think if somebody is overweight, [people] just assume automatically they’re lazy or they don’t care. . . . Maybe it’s arthritis or maybe it’s genetics or maybe it’s a lot of different things. So I try to be sensitive. . . . But I’ll be honest with you, sometimes in certain groups of people . . . comments are made about somebody’s weight, . . . and I try to be sensitive, but I don’t know that I always am. . . . So, I think I try to be sensitive to it, but there’s still maybe a stereotype to a degree.” Male, 30ish

Weight/Size/Shape

“I try to monitor myself . . . . I keep the scales close at hand there so you kind of, ‘Hey I’ve put on five, I’d better get rid of it.’ . . . I’m not one who really puts [weight] on fast and if I take it off, I have to work it off.” Male, early 40’s
“I’d like to be thinner than what I am. I’m packing a little extra fat than I probably should be . . . . I think if I could just get back down to where [I was in high school], it would be my ideal.”  
*Male, early 30’s*

“I think I always feel better about myself if I got my weight down.”  
*Male, 40’s to 50’s*

“I’m not over weight. I’m just twelve inches too short.”  
*Male, 70ish*

“I wish I weighed a little less so my poor pony didn’t have to be scared [of me].”  
*Male, 70ish*

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**Teasing/Criticism**

“Isn’t it amazing how there are times in your life as well as everybody else’s that someone will make what is called a flippant remark, and it will stick with you forever, as long as you’re alive? . . . ‘You’re too fat.’”  
*Male, late 50’s*

“I was picked on a lot. I still have a rude brother who likes to harp on me about my weight. He thinks it will get me going to lose it, but it doesn’t . . . . You’ll be walking through the store and you’ll hear a little kid say, ‘Now that guy is pretty fat.’ . . . And that can affect your self-esteem . . . . I mean, they’re not meaning to do harm, they’re just little kids. . . . But being teased about it would force me to go home and have some ice-cream or something. Kind of kill the pain with food. Being teased is not a good thing for me.”  
*Male, early 20’s*

“There were all these short jokes, even with people I ran around with. . . . I always ran around with people that were bigger than I was. . . . But even from them I always got the short jokes . . . . I always felt it would be nice to be bigger, just from the standpoint of not being picked on.”  
*Male in his 30’s*

“I’ve had . . . people say ‘man you’ve got yourself quite a gut there,’ and that irritates me. Okay, you don’t have to call attention to it. I know I’ve got it.”  
*Male in his 70’s*

“When I was growing up, one kid on the bus was pretty overweight. And they used to make fun of him and that kind of a thing. So I always kind of felt bad. . . . I guess I always was sensitive to that . . . because I was picked on for being short.”  
*Male in his 30’s*

“I never got involved in weightlifting . . . because of my size. I’m not very big, so it doesn’t take too many jokes [to make me quit].”  
*Male in his 30’s*

“When I was in junior high, . . . a lot of people made fun of [this one kid]. And probably in the last 15 to 20 years, I’ve thought of him quite often because I hurt him quite bad as a kid. Somebody dared me to go up and step on his toe and I did . . . . Being one of the group, or trying to be popular, I hurt this young man. I always wonder where is he? How’s he doing? What’s he doing? Would I have the courage to say I’m sorry for what I did when I was a kid? I think of things like that and that helps me to also teach my children to think of others.”  
*Male, early 50’s*
“My wife’s trying to get me to lose a little weight because . . . she wants me to stick around a little longer, . . . and sometimes . . . [she’s] a little obnoxious. Like telling me I look like I’m pregnant, . . . and [it] just gets to the point where it’s just an incessant type of situation.”  

_Praise/Verbal support_  

“If you perceive yourself as having a bad body type, that can be hard on your self-image. So, I think that’s something that I will pass onto my kids. To make sure that they’re confident in who they are, no matter what their body type is.”  

_Peers/Friends_  

“I had a friend in high school that was a football want-a-be. . . . He knew about [our annual hunting trip], and he heard the stories and wanted to go. It really hurt me to tell him, ‘no, you can’t go because physically, you can’t do it.’. . . The next year, . . . I was gone for a year, and during that year he lost a 100 pounds and went on the hunt in my place. . . . I guess I really admire him for that.”  

_Age_  

“When I married my wife, . . . I weighed 175 and I was thin and trim, looked good. And then I guess you slide into that deal where you think well, [I] don’t have to worry about being competitive anymore, and you kind of let yourself get complacent about things. Pretty soon, your complacency is formed around the middle of your pants.”  

“If you’re a man that thinks that your spouse. . . [is] always going to have this real perfect body . . . you’re going to have a rude awakening. . . . Your wife[’s] body is going to change. . . . You need to understand that.”  

“I notice . . . as I get older, d---, my hair grows in more places than it’s supposed to. I think that would be one of my complaints. . . . Just wake up one morning and go, ‘Where the h--- did that come from?’”  

“[Hair] grows everywhere but where you want it.”  

“Yeah, it’s a sad day when your wife pulls a gray hair out of your ear.”
Gender

“Well, I think you are finding the normal psychological profile of males. You know, at [age] sixty-two, with a forty-two [inch] waist and thirty-eight [inch] chest, a guy can walk down the street with his bald head and think he’s looking good. You ask any woman if she gets just a half a pound past a size six, ‘Oh I’m fat, I’m fat!’ I’ve lived with that . . . [and] that’s why I’m single again.”    Male, 70ish

“I’m probably more critical of [overweight] men than I am of [overweight] women. I’m a man myself and I think, ‘well do something about it.’ . . . I can excuse women. . . . They have to go through things which we don’t have to deal with. If I’d borne children, . . . what kind of effects would that have on my body? . . . Women have to go through some changes we don’t. I can excuse . . . [extra weight] in women more than I can men. I’m pretty critical of men.”    Male, early 40’s

“You . . . tell a woman she’s small, . . . that’s a good thing for them. They try to say that to me. Well, I don’t take it as . . . a . . . compliment.”    Male in his 30’s

“I would be more attracted to . . . a female who had a little bit . . . more fat on her. I wouldn’t be one to be attracted to someone extremely skinny. . . . I first don’t think it’s attractive, and second of all, I don’t think it’s healthy.”    Male, early 30’s

“I think what society taught me was that it is a far sadder state for a lady to be looking [heavy] than a man.”    Male, mid 30’s

“I would bet nine times out of ten people would say, ‘Well, yeah that’s a big guy and that’s a really fat gal.’ ”    Male, 30’s to 40’s

“Boys are supposed to get bigger and stronger. And if you have an overweight boy, he’s a lineman. Yeah, he’s going to be a great football player. You have an overweight girl, it’s like, . . . what’s she [going to] do when she gets older?”    Male, 30’s to 40’s

“And as far as society comparing men and women, it’s the same as with gray hair. A man with gray hair is distinguished. A woman with gray hair is an old lady.”    Male, 30’s to 40’s
Genetics

“My dad was one of those who ate anything he wanted at any time he wanted and was very healthy. . . . Dad talked about that he’d sit down and eat a dozen boiled eggs. . . . I am a firm believer that so much of whether we are thin or fat is a genetic thing. I follow somewhat in his footsteps. I’ve always been able to eat anything that I’ve wanted and never had any weight trouble.”  Male, almost 60

 “[I have a relative who] looks like that pencil. She always . . . eats as much as I do, and never bashful about it. . . . Yeah, her metabolism burns it off. Some of us, we gain five pounds by looking at a recipe.”  Male, 40’s to 50’s

Media/Society

“On TV, they’re always talking about . . . you have to be physically beautiful. You can be as dumb as a post, but you have to be physically beautiful. But it doesn’t bother me. I’m just more amused by it, because I know that’s superficial.”  Male, late 30’s

“They project images in magazines and . . . on TV that show a guy that’s got wash-board abs and pecs to die [for], and a woman that’s a size . . . three with ample breasts and a beautiful body and a beautiful face, and everything is perfect, and so you think ‘Well, this is the way I’m supposed to be. Why do I look the way I do?’ I really think that generates a lot of mental unrest in a lot of people trying to get to that level of perfection when they don’t realize there’s maybe one in ten thousand that look like that. . . . We can’t all be models and we can’t all be beautiful people. . . . I think you need to appreciate yourself for what you are and for the talents you have. . . . I guess we all aspire to be Hulk Holgan or . . . the Rock or somebody. . . . We all want to be perfect, but it’s not going to be obtainable for some of us common folk.”  Male, mid 50’s

Changes in Perception

“I can tell that I am getting a little bit heavier, not drastic, but just enough that [I notice]. It’s funny how we as humans kind of go at this thing, ‘Well, [my extra weight] is not that bad yet. Maybe I don’t have to worry about it yet.’ It’s funny how we do that. I do that sometimes . . . . I’m a little self-conscious about gaining weight. If [you’re] going to put on a swimsuit and jump in the pool, you don’t want to have your sides hanging over your swimsuit. But I was in the swimming pool this winter with my daughter, and I really didn’t think much about it. . . . When I was in high school, I know that it was very important to be in good shape. You wanted to be muscular. . . . But as far as now, I think I probably worry a lot less [about how I look] than I did when I was in high school.”  Male in his 30’s
Search for Mate

“If you’re a short guy it’s a little odd trying to find women to date sometimes. Most women generally want somebody tall, dark, and handsome . . . . I think that’s an evolutionary thing too. . . . Women are, from a reproductive standpoint, attracted to power resources, security, somebody [that] can protect them [and their] offspring. . . . I hear the same things from women that are really tall. Obviously, most men aren’t comfortable with that. They run into the same problems. . . . Having a woman that is bigger than you could be threatening.”  Male in his 30’s

“I’m probably in the best shape I’ve been . . . since I was a teenager. . . . I’m getting old, and I’m not married. It’s one of those deals where you try to stay in the best shape you can because opportunities are dwindling.”  Male in his 30’s

“As I looked for a mate, . . . body shape and composition was very important to me. And that’s just brutally honest.”  Male, almost 50

Health/Wellness

“When you get on the scales [and] you see what you weigh, . . . you know you shouldn’t be that heavy. You can see me, I’m quite a bit overweight. I know I need to do something. I want to be around to see my grandkids.”  Male in his 40’s


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