

My Name is Cheri Gray and I'm Fat

I'm a size 16W (as I type with a whisper). Finally, I'm admitting (out loud) my size of 16W. I found it to be psychologically debilitating when the W was added onto my size 16. I've assigned so much importance and meaning to the W. What exactly does the W represent to me? The W means I'm a plus size, plus size is code for fat, and fat is something you just don't want to be in this culture. The W means that I have to admit that I'm fat. When I shop for clothes, I am relegated to the women's department (no longer will I find my size in the missy section of the clothing store). The W means that I conjure up thoughts of ugly pink polyester pants with an elastic waist band that is able to expand with my growing waist. Damn, I am a size 16.

Admitting that I'm a size 16 is like standing up at a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous and saying, "My name is Bill and I'm an alcoholic." How can I equate being fat and admitting that I'm fat to alcoholism? It's awful to think this way, but I can't seem to get the fat thoughts out of my head. In fact, I've always thought I was fat. Many years and four sizes ago, I was a slim size 8. Although, I didn't think I was a slim size 8, and, at that time, I didn't define myself by my size. I just thought I was fat. Now, to remind myself that I use to be this slender and trim size 8, I have saved one pair of size 8 jeans. On occasion, I take them out to remind myself I use to be this culturally acceptable image of a woman. Perhaps, I put myself through this tortuous ritual because in American culture, beauty can be used to humiliate women, and I am a willing participant in my own humiliation.

While I sit here having my undesirable thoughts of fatness and thinking of the twin stretch material that provides more comfort while I'm wearing my fat pants, I wonder how I could have possibly entertained the idea that I was fat when fit into a size 8 jeans. Of course one day, I may be able to stand up and say without guilt, without shame, without regret, without apologies: "my name is Cheri Gray and I'm fat."