

“Honors women who address the reality of their lives with
ferocious eloquence... Outstandingly potent.” – Wall Street Journal

ALL OF ME

a story of love, loss and last resorts



ITVS

SCREENING AND DISCUSSION **GUIDE**

ABOUT THE FILM



The “Girls” have been friends, and fat, for years. Their bond goes deep and wide, literally and figuratively. They are smart, intuitive, complex, warm, and compelling and speak openly about their inner lives. The “Girls” met via the Austin chapter of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance and partied together among Austin’s Big Beautiful Women community. Meanwhile they tried every diet and every pill. Now they’re going through the life-changing process of weight-loss surgery in an effort to lose hundreds of pounds. The experience presents a host of issues and consequences—some they knew they were in for, some they feared, and some they never could have imagined.

REVIEWS

“Fat people aren’t very visible on American television, and when they appear, it tends to be in one of a few approved roles: comic props in blue-collar reality series, cautionary figures in exploitative medical shows, huffing and puffing contestants in weight-loss competitions. All of Me is a welcome exception. Its examination of obesity is serious, intimate and not at all sensationalistic, despite some graphic images of weight-loss surgery and its consequences.” – New York Times

“The film does a wonderful job exploring how surgery changes more than just bodies – it changes relationships.” - Dr. Brian Sabowitz, MD, FACP, CCD, bariatric surgeon and WLS patient

“All of Me grapples with the (often fraught) conversations surrounding weight loss surgery with inexhaustible compassion.” - Kaye Toal www.bigfatfeminist.com

“All of Me is a powerful, poignant, and gripping documentary that takes viewers inside the everyday lives and struggles of large women in the United States today. Timely in its subject matter—All of Me provides an often missing and much needed perspective on the subject as we learn about obesity from women who are actually living it. A must-see film, All of Me debunks commonly held, superficial stereotypes about obesity and obese individuals.” - Abigail Brooks, PhD., Director of Women’s Studies, Assist. Professor of Sociology, Providence College

“Fat pride is a key theme for these women, as is fat shame, and more often than not these feelings seem inextricably connected. The audience is left to sympathize and cry as well as celebrate with the women in this film as their lives change (or not) in light of decisions they make. Their lives and emotions are rich, and they leave audiences with much to feel and discuss.” - Meika Loe, PhD., Director of Women’s Studies, Assoc. Professor of Sociology and Women’s Studies, Colgate University

“Emotions filled the room during the showing of All of Me, from laughter to tears to surprise. All of Me is the intriguing story of the elements of the weight-loss journey we don’t communally talk about but always linger in the shadows of our struggles with obesity. It is truly a story of love, loss and last resorts”

- John Archibeque, MSN, MBA, CBSGL, RN, Bariatric Surgery Program Coordinator, St. David’s North Austin Medical Center, Texas

“We were so excited to recently host Alexandra Lescaze and her movie “All of Me” in Shreveport. We used the screening as a support event for our patients and an opportunity to have a panel discussion about life after bariatric surgery. The movie was very well done and so frank. It showed the real struggles of those who suffer with obesity both before and after weight loss surgery. We were all moved by the lives of these women.” – Katy Merriman, Surgical Specialists, Shreveport, LA

USING THIS GUIDE



This guide is a tool for weight loss support group leaders, patients, activists, educators and any others who would like to screen All of Me in their groups or communities in order to deepen the conversation around obesity, health, and weight-loss. This guide will help you organize your screening while providing discussion questions for post-screening conversations.

You will order the DVD of the film on the Specialty Studios website. Other free publicity resources are also available for download. We would also like to draw your attention to Fat-is.com which asks people to consider their own relationships with food, with fat and with their bodies, as a way to draw attention to the fact that for many people—fat, thin, and in between—these relationships are often tense and complicated. By asking these questions, Fat Is sheds light on the struggles we all have in common and creates an open, honest space to approach health and body issues. Audience members can anonymously finish the sentences “food is _____”, “fat is _____” and “my body is _____” on the back of their postcards, on www.fat-is.com, or both.

PLANNING YOUR SCREENING

First, visit Specialty Studios to secure a DVD of All of Me and publicity materials for your audience. Then:

Identify your audience and objectives:

- Is this a support group meeting for post-op patients? For people considering surgery? For another kind of weight-loss support group?
- Will your audience members have in-depth knowledge of the surgery, or will they need additional information beyond what’s provided in the film?
- Are your audience members patients or health professionals in the weight-loss community, or are they lay people?
- Are you trying to bring together different communities around these issues, or are you creating a space for patients to share intimately with one another?

Draft a schedule of your event. We suggest:

- An introduction to the film and the goals for your discussion, plus distribution of postcards and/or pens and paper for people to jot down points they’d like to discuss (5-10 minutes)
- The film (53 minutes)
- Moderated discussion (30-45 minutes) (see the end of this guide for suggested discussion questions)
- Any announcements and wrap-up (5-10 minutes)

Book an appropriate venue. Things to consider:

- Audience size
- Convenient location for your target audience
- Technology (DVD player/quality sound/large screen)
- Make sure the venue has necessary accommodations—larger chairs or moveable armrests, wheelchair accessible for those with mobility issues, etc.

PLANNING YOUR SCREENING cont.

Outreach!

- Confirm the date of your event with us at info@allofmemovie.com if you'd like us to list it on our Screenings page. We may be able to help connect you with organizations and people in your area.
- Email invites/save the dates about a month in advance.
- Remind attendees via email the week of the screening and again the night before
- If this is an open/community screening, seek out local organizations to partner with for outreach and/or topical speakers (we have a speakers list if you inquire)
- If booking speakers/moderators/panelists, do so as far in advance as possible and ask them to share the event info with their contact lists if you're building an audience.

On the day of the event:

- Make sure you have your DVD and enough pens for your audience members.
- Do a test run of all your technology to make sure it works before the screening starts.
- Create a comfortable, safe atmosphere for your attendees—All of Me is emotionally charged, and discussion might get difficult. It may help to create "ground rules" for discussion with the group before the screening begins. For example, you might say that audience members must raise their hands and be acknowledged by the moderator before speaking, or create a rule that blanket negative statements such as "most fat people are just lazy" are not allowed.
- Before the film, briefly introduce any panelists or speakers. If you are the facilitator, introduce yourself as well.

After the film:

Lead the discussion! Whether you've booked a panel discussion or are hosting a more informal conversation, here are some overall big-picture ideas to consider (see the end of this guide for more):

- Obesity: what are its "causes" and "cures"?
- Weight stigma: Has seeing this program altered perceptions or attitudes you had about obesity or obese individuals? In what ways?
- What does "success" look like for losing lots of weight? Does it look different from the outside (i.e., "that person has been so successful!") than it does from the inside (i.e., "I have been successful")? Is "success" measured by the number on the scale, quality of life, improvements in health? Is "success" measured after one year, five years, or when?
- Why is psychological health care pre- and/or post-weight loss so important?

After discussion, explain the Fat Is project to your audience members (you can use the language from this guide) and ask them to finish the sentences on the backs of their postcards: food is _____, fat is _____, and my body is _____. They can turn these postcards in to you (and you can send them back to us), or they can keep them and visit www.fat-is.com on their own to submit their answers.

Follow up:

After the event, please fill out the brief questionnaire at the end of this guide and return it to us at: info@allofmemovie.com. This will help inform future updates and improvements to this Discussion Guide.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

All of Me touches on many important, complicated ideas surrounding fat, health, weight loss, weight loss surgery, relationships, self-image, and more. Below are some suggested questions for discussion. Not all questions will be appropriate for all audiences (for example, personal questions about success with surgery should be reserved for post-surgery patients) so be sure you know your audience before you proceed!

This discussion guide has been split into “topic areas” for ease of organization, but we suggest touching on multiple topics when possible and appropriate.

Weight Loss (for patients)

- In the film, the “Girls” experience some difficult changes after surgery, such as digestion problems and nutritional deficiencies. They also experience some unexpected changes, like those in their romantic and personal relationships. What changes did you expect before surgery? Have they happened? What has happened that you didn’t expect? What do you know now that you wish you’d known then?
- What does “success” look like for you? Do you measure other people’s successes differently than your own? How do you measure success (scale, clothing size, improved health, improved quality of life, etc.)? What are you most proud of? At what point after surgery do you determine your “success”?
- Have you experienced changes in your relationships? Which relationships? How have you handled the changes in these relationships? How has your relationship with yourself changed? How has your relationship with food changed?
- The “Girls” had tried to be OK with their size for much of their lives before deciding on surgery. Did you feel similarly? What motivated you to get the surgery?
- How have you dealt with your changes in eating—at holiday parties, at restaurants, in front of others or alone?
- What helped Judy be successful with her weight loss was having a support system. Is a support system important to you? How do you know when your support system is good? How do you handle people who are not supporting you?
- What is it like to look in the mirror and see a body that is wildly different than the one you had “before”? Or can you not tell the difference? Are there things about your “new” body that you are displeased with? Has your body image improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same?
- Do you think you were prepared mentally and emotionally for the changes you have experienced since surgery? If not, what sorts of things do you think would help prepare people?
- Have you remained focused on food in your life even after having surgery? Do you watch a lot of Food Network programming? Do you still “diet”? Do you pour over recipes? Do you find yourself talking a lot about food? Are food and weight still dominant thoughts in your mind? If so, does this bother you or you comfortable with that?
- What would you tell other people about having weight loss surgery and about what they need to know prior to making that choice themselves?

Weight-loss (for lay audiences):

- Has seeing this film changed any ideas you had about obesity or obese individuals? In what ways? Has the film altered any myths or perceptions you had about obesity? In what ways?
- After seeing this film, why do you think people get weight loss surgery?

DISCUSSION GUIDE cont.

Weight Stigma

- In one powerful scene, Zsalynn says through tears that “nobody likes being fat.” Do you think this is true? Do some people not mind, or even like, being fat?
- What role, if any, do you think fat stigma plays in people choosing to get weight loss surgery?
- Cathy mentions that she hasn’t been to the doctor in years, because for most of her life, every time she went to the doctor she was told that her problem was caused by her weight—even for things like a sore throat or a sprained ankle. Have you ever experienced anything like this? How did it feel? How might this affect people getting the healthcare support they need?
- Zsalynn says that when she was a kid, her mother “wouldn’t even let her lick a postage stamp because it had calories.” Others talk about being on diets for most of their lives. What are some other ways our families and culture encourage negative relationships with food? How do you think these attitudes and practices affect the way obese people see themselves and treat their bodies?
- In the film, the “Girls” attend a heavyweight yoga class and a water aerobics class. How do classes like these make exercising more accessible? Do you think that some people fear going to gyms or exercising in public? Why? Does that change after weight loss?

Body Image & Behavior

- At the beginning of the film, Judy says that if people think she’s “better” after surgery, it’s going to “really piss me off.” After surgery, she finds that she is treating people differently and being treated differently. How do you think changing our bodies affects changing our minds? Are these changes always positive?
 - How does it make you feel to learn (or maybe you already knew) that there are men who are attracted to very fat women?
 - Imagine suddenly being 50, 100, 200 pounds lighter and looking in the mirror. What opportunities might you have now that you didn’t before? How do you think it feels to live in a different body than the one you are accustomed to? How might it affect your body image? The way you think about yourself?
 - We often talk about “before” and “after” for weight loss. Do you think there really is a “before” and “after”? What’s the “after”? How is it different? How is it the same?
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FOLLOW UP

After your screening, please fill out this form and return it to us at info@allofmemovie.com. Thank you!

Screening organizer name/organization/date:

What was the audience for this screening (support group, community educational screening, etc.):

What was the most interesting/moving/enlightening part of the discussion?

Were there topics that came up with your audience that weren't included in this guide or that you wish this guide had touched on?

Would you provide us with a testimonial about the movie? Your opinion of it and the quality of your discussion?