

# Daily Life

## - The Struggles of Obesity

by Steve Klingensmith



America was not built with obesity in-mind; however, thankfully, obesity is at the forefront of today's manufacturers.

### FACT

The most recent National Center for Health Statistics (a division of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) report indicates that 69.2 percent of Americans are considered "overweight" or "obese" and that the adult obesity rate remains greater than 33.8 percent overall. The obesity epidemic is not something that is projected to impact the U.S. in five or 10 years. The obesity epidemic is here.

### John

Somewhere in America it is 4:55 am. The room is dark and the only light is the bluish-green glow from the alarm clock's face. In five minutes, the alarm clock will ring; however, it doesn't matter much because John has been up most the night tossing and turning, desperately trying to get comfortable with his CPAP (constant positive airway pressure) machine fixed to his head. Five minutes are up, alarm clock is ringing. The clock now reads 5:03 am and it is still ringing as he tries to reposition himself in order to reach the "off" button.

The thought of even hitting "snooze" is not an option now, as his heart is racing and blood pressure is rising. He is awake. It is "officially" time to get up. He gently rolls to his side and pushes his upper body upright, while rotating ever so slowly allowing his feet to touch the floor. He gently places more of his weight on his feet, just to make sure he does not have any knee pain, and to ensure he has the strength to stand and walk across the room in the glow of the alarm clock to turn the light on and begin his day.

It is now 6:20 am and John is getting ready to head out for the day. As usual, his shower was an adventure, as the shower hose does not reach far enough around his body

to wash himself. Compounding his frustration, his shirt is wrinkled as it spent the night lying on the closet floor because it continually falls off the hanger, due to the fact that the hanger is not large enough to hold the XXXL shirt.

Dressed for the day, John now reaches for his seatbelt extender as he pulls out of the garage. Backing out slowly, he looks in his side and rearview mirrors, being careful not to back into anything. Turning his neck to actually look backwards is no longer an option now that he has topped 380 pounds.

## Jane

A woman named Jane has anxiety as she pulls into a restaurant parking lot for another early morning meeting with clients. Jane hopes that all of the front row spaces have not already been taken, so that she does not have to walk very far. She knows her legs will have a hard time carrying her 300 pound body from her car to the doorway.

She thinks to herself, “I really don’t want to have to catch my breath again before I say hello to them.” That thought quickly fades as she scans the room looking for her tablemates. “I hope they didn’t get a booth again! I knew I should have gotten up earlier so I could be the first one here,” she thinks to herself, and then continues on, “Oh good, they got a table. I hope that chair is sturdier than the ones at the library last week. I don’t want to break another one.”

She only orders a glass of orange juice, as she knows she will be judged no matter what food she orders. She thinks, “I’ll just get something to eat later.” The meeting ends successfully, both professionally and personally. Personally, Jane is thankful that none of the juice spilled on her shirt by accident. It is her favorite shirt and only one of the few that she can find in her size. She exits the restaurant feeling every eye in the place scanning her from head to toe. She knows what they are thinking, “How did she get that big?” “I bet she ate a ton.” “I am shocked the chair didn’t break!” Jane’s heard it all before – this is nothing new.

John and Jane are affected by obesity. Clinically speaking, they are affected by severe obesity (body mass index, or BMI, of more than 40 or a BMI of 35 or greater with an existing obesity-related disease). Many Americans do not even realize they are affected by obesity until they are diagnosed with a related disease such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, etc. John and Jane are just two of the 72 million Americans battling the disease of obesity.

It is only 7 am and John and Jane have had more obesity-related thoughts and daily struggles than others will have in their entire day.

## Hope on the Horizon

Across America, people are waking up earlier than they would like every day because daily life is a struggle. Activities that “normal” weight people take for granted, such as putting on their socks, taking a shower or picking something up off the floor can, and do, take much longer to perform for an individual affected by obesity or severe obesity. With time, these daily activities become commonplace and are finally incorporated into daily life. Planning ahead becomes a sixth sense and a part of their identity, much like tall people always having to be on the lookout for low-hanging ceiling fans or door frames.

Help is out there. Every day, Americans affected by obesity are discovering some of the greatest products ever created that can help them with their daily struggles and challenges. Driven by a healthy mix of passion and innovation, large corporations and small companies alike are solving many of these problems.

Products such as the following are making everyday life a little bit easier:

- Obesity-friendly toilet seats
- Sock and stocking aids
- Safety grab bars for showers and tubs
- Wireless back-up cameras
- Oversized clothes hangers
- Bariatric chairs

There are many more out there, and these new obesity-friendly products are arriving on the market daily and will help to ensure that individuals affected by obesity have the same quality of living as anyone else.

## Weight Bias Hinders Development and Marketing

Unfortunately, there is a great deal of bias and stigma when it comes to marketing obesity-friendly products. Companies are often hesitant to develop products for those affected by obesity because there is a stigma within the disease itself. Will John or Jane carry an obesity-friendly product through a store to a checkout line, knowing all the while that they might be judged or stigmatized by others? Will a spouse feel embarrassed if an obesity-friendly company's name is listed on a credit card statement? These are all issues that face those affected by obesity and indirectly face manufacturers of obesity-friendly products.

## Conclusion

Battling weight bias is a daunting task. Obesity is truly the last acceptable form of discrimination in today's society. From pop culture to employment, weight bias is alive and well. Thankfully, organizations like the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) are fighting on behalf of those affected by obesity and eradicating weight bias and stigma through initiatives, such as the OAC's "Bias Busters." Moreover, companies and manufacturers are beginning to realize that individuals affected by obesity are a viable target market with unfulfilled basic daily needs.

As time goes on, daily struggles for all people will be minimized through new product innovations. Now the challenge becomes how best to consolidate all of these new products into an easily referenced index, allowing people of all shapes and sizes to find products that solve their daily challenges.

### ***About the Author:***

*Steve Klingensmith is the president of Adjustable Advantage – makers of the Adjustable Advantage Toilet Seat. He has more than 20 years of consumer product sales and brand marketing expertise and a passion for bringing new and innovative products to market. For more information on Adjustable Advantage and to see how their product is helping individuals affected by obesity, please turn to page 21 or visit [www.adjustableadvantage.com](http://www.adjustableadvantage.com).*

# Membership Application

## OAC Membership Categories

(select one)

- Individual Membership: \$20/year
- Institutional Membership: \$500/year
- Chairman's Council Membership: \$1,000+/year

## OAC Membership Add-ons

(optional, but only accessible by OAC members)

### Add-on 1: Educational Resources

To order bulk copies of OAC resources, members can purchase educational packages. If you'd like to order resources, select one of the below packages.

- Standard Package**  
10-50 pieces/quarter \$50
- Deluxe Package**  
51-100 pieces/quarter \$100
- Premium Package**  
101-250 pieces/quarter \$150

### Add-on 2: Make a General Donation

Make a tax-deductible donation to the OAC when joining as a member. Your donation helps the OAC's educational and advocacy efforts.

- \$5
- \$10
- \$25
- \$50
- \$100
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Membership/Add-on Totals:

Membership Category: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Add-on 1 (if applicable): + \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Add-on 2 (if applicable): + \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
**TOTAL MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Contact Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Payment Information

- Check (payable to the OAC) for \$ \_\_\_\_\_.
- Credit card for my TOTAL membership payment of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Discover®
  - Visa®
  - MasterCard®
  - Amex®

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Billing Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

### RETURN TO:

**Mail:** OAC  
4511 North Himes Ave., Ste. 250  
Tampa, FL 33614

**Fax:** (813) 873-7838

# OAC

## MEMBERSHIP



## Building a Coalition of those Affected

The OAC is the **ONLY** non-profit organization whose sole focus is helping those affected by obesity. The OAC is a great place to turn if you are looking for a way to get involved and give back to the cause of obesity.

There are a variety of ways that you can make a difference, but the first-step is to become an OAC Member. The great thing about OAC membership is that you can be as involved as you would like. Simply being a member contributes to the cause of obesity.

## Why YOU Should Become an OAC Member

Quite simply, because the voice of those affected needs to be built! The OAC not only provides valuable public education on obesity, but we also conduct a variety of advocacy efforts. With advocacy, our voice must be strong. And, membership is what gives the OAC its strong voice.

# Membership Benefits

## Benefits to Individual Membership

- Official welcome letter and membership card
- Annual subscription to the OAC's publication, *Your Weight Matters Magazine*
- Subscriptions to the *OAC Members Make a Difference* and *Obesity Action Alert* monthly e-newsletters
- "Bias Buster" Alerts, alerting specifically to issues of weight bias
- Immediate Advocacy Alerts on urgent advocacy issues and access to the OAC's expert advocacy team
- Ability to lend your voice to the cause

