



# The Power of Education, Connection and Action at OAC's *Your Weight Matters* Convention

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For over ten years, the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) has hosted the annual *Your Weight Matters* Convention for individuals to come together and learn about obesity. This year, the OAC brought two unique educational events to the Convention umbrella – **YWM-Virtual** (online) and **YWM-Engage** (in-person) – each designed to meet the diverse needs of the OAC's Community.

Passionate obesity advocates from across the world came together for these two inspirational events packed with top-notch education, hands-on tools and resources, and a community of unwavering support. At **YWM2022**, attendees had the opportunity to gain a further understanding of the complex, chronic disease and how to share their lived experiences to make meaningful change for people with obesity. **YWM2022** was the OAC's most immersive Convention experience yet, focusing on Education, Connection and Action!

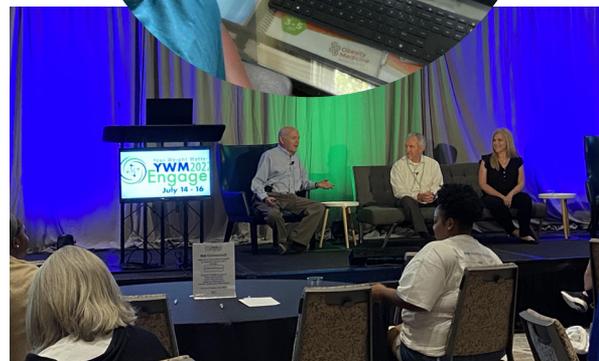


# Education

Both Convention events featured expert speakers with backgrounds ranging from obesity medicine to mental health. This year, **YWM2022** shifted its focus to prioritizing mental health by teaching attendees how to overcome shame and blame, challenge internalized weight bias and build a support system. Because negative self-talk often stems from weight stigma presented by the media, healthcare professionals and even family and friends, it is crucial to focus on our own mental health to reverse the internalized bias. Attendees learned that external weight stigma contributes to misunderstanding obesity and the science behind it, along with how vital it is to challenge weight bias in all its forms.

**YWM2022** also explained the genetics of obesity, clarified hunger and cravings, simplified sleep health and provided a new perspective on weight maintenance. Attendees gained a better understanding of what the future of obesity holds and how we can better define the disease rather than solely focus on body mass index (BMI). A key takeaway was that if we can overcome bias about obesity and ourselves, we can better understand the disease and open doors to new ways to treat it.

Attendees walked away feeling energized, motivated and inspired with new tools to apply to their everyday lives.



# Action

**YWM2022-Engage** brought advocacy to the forefront of the OAC's in-person training program. Attendees spent the first day learning about the many hurdles that people with obesity face and the second day learning how to be a leader for change. During the training, participants got in-depth knowledge of OAC's core advocacy issues, learned how to talk about obesity and practiced sharing their lived experiences. Most importantly, attendees learned how to use these skills in ways that can shift the balance of power to expand access to obesity care and stop weight bias. OAC's advocates are empowered to use their voices together to demand dignity, respect and a better world for people with obesity.

# Connection

**YWM2022-Virtual** and **YWM2022-Engage** aimed to change the narrative around obesity and advocate for a better world that respects people with the disease. People affected by obesity from around the world joined together to watch educational sessions, discuss weight and health topics and participate in social events. Many participants were first-time Convention attendees learning the value of science-based education and support systems.

The most profound moments of the events were the ones in which individuals shared their lived experiences. Speakers shared their stories and encouraged attendees to use the virtual chat feature and stand up to the microphone to share theirs. We saw brand-new and returning Convention attendees share their stories of health challenges and weight bias, what brought them to the event and how they will advocate for the cause in the future.

**YWM2022** became a space for attendees to be vulnerable, open and brave. Participants shared their struggles and heartache but found empathy and trust with one another. Attendees learned first-hand that having a network of support and compassion helps minimize feelings of shame. **YWM2022** became a safe space for a Community like none other – a place where everyone can be treated with dignity and respect, without fear of judgment, and knowing every person in the room understands their pain and challenges.





# ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

## LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

### Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
  - Community Discussion Forum
  - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



**JOIN TODAY: GO TO [OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN](http://OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN)**

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