

# Weight Discrimination

*Berenice Guadalupe Aguirre*

**BEFORE YOU READ:** What is discrimination? Have you ever experienced it on the job or in the hiring process?

## Job Search

I graduated from the program in International Business and Customs in Mexico in 2015 with honors. I have always considered myself to be a dedicated person, a go-getter. So, when I graduated, I thought that it was going to be easy to get a job and that my working life was going to be perfect, just like my student life. But reality was different and it took me by surprise.

Getting a job is not as easy as you might think. You have to go to a lot of interviews, and for some companies you have to pass multiple rounds of interviews. Then, when you make it to the last stage of interviewing, and you think that you got the job, but they never call you back. You console yourself thinking that the job was not for you, but it can feel discouraging.

## Finally, A Temporary Job

It took me a year to get a job. During that time, I had to work at my parents' business. I was frustrated because I didn't enjoy the job. Luckily, at the end of that year I got an opportunity in a company. It was a temporary position, but I was very excited and I took it.

There I was on my first day in the office, thinking that it would be the best job ever because

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I was finally working in my area of expertise. And indeed, it was a great job. I did well, and after three months, my boss offered me a permanent position. Of course, I immediately said yes! I went to Human Resources to fill out all the necessary documents.



*What do you think about the message in this picture? Does U.S. popular culture affirm all body types? What evidence do you have to back up your claim? Image by MissLunaRose12 from [wikimedia.org](https://www.wikimedia.org/).*

One of the requirements was a physical exam. I went to see the company doctor and filled out a questionnaire about my health history.

## Dealing with Discrimination

I thought everything was OK. But then my boss called me into her office. I took one look at her face, and I knew something was not OK. I sat down ready to listen to what she had to say, and I will always remember her words: "Bere,

the doctor said that you are not able to get the job because you are overweight. We can give

### **That day after work, I went home and cried a lot.**

you the job for three more months, but you have to lose weight if you want the job." I remember that I was in shock. I thought, "This is not real." But it was. In addition, my boss

said, "We don't want to lose you because your work is perfect."

That day after work, I went home and cried a lot. I have never felt so discriminated against in my life. I told my parents what happened, and my dad was really mad and frustrated. I remember that he told me, "Bere, please don't let anybody in your life discriminate against you due to your weight. Tomorrow go and show them that it is the quality of your work that is the only thing that matters." And so I did! I talked to the doctor, and I asked him how my weight interfered with my job. I told my boss that it would be wrong to fire me because of my physical condition. That is discrimination.

After many long discussions, I got the job. For six years, I demonstrated that I was good at my job. Now, my company transferred me to the United States, and so I can keep growing and developing my skills.

When I first graduated from college, I thought I would find the perfect job. But things did not work out perfectly. There were many challenges. When I finally found a job, I had to fight to keep

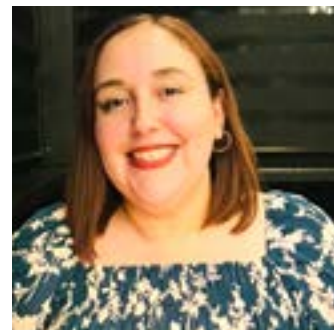
it. Now I know that if I hadn't gone through all those things, I would never be where I am now, working as a supervisor in my area of expertise here in the United States. Always remember, your body size does not matter. You can do whatever you put your mind to.

### **Things did not work out perfectly... I had to fight to keep my job.**

#### **AFTER YOU READ:**

1. Describe the *twists and turns* in Berenice's career path. Be specific.
2. How does she know she is being discriminated against because of her weight? What does she do about it?
3. To practice reading a more academic text, click on this article, [Obesity Discrimination in the Recruitment Process: "You're Not Hired."](#) What do you notice about academic writing? What strategies can you try to read and understand a more complex text like this one? What is the main point of the article?

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## **What Can You Do About Discrimination?**

Have you ever experienced discrimination on the job? If so, what did you do about it? Do some research to find out what kinds of discrimination are illegal in the U.S. What options are available to employees who experience discrimination? (Is weight discrimination illegal? Conduct research to find out!) Make a presentation (on paper, poster board, or digital slideshow) to share what you find.