

### *Choosing a topic*

The body

### *Coming up with a title*

My 600 Pound Life

### *Big picture questions to ponder*

- How can someone maintain a weight of 600 pounds?
- What does that much weight do to the body?
- What sort of plan would be necessary to help this person get to a more healthy weight?

### *Executive summary*

Obesity is a problem in the United States. Nearly 40% of Americans, or 93 million adults, are considered to be obese. Obesity is determined by a person's body mass index or BMI. BMI is figured by taking the weight of a person divided by his/her height. A person becomes obese when they have a 30 BMI or higher. Obesity itself is divided into three categories, and if you have a BMI of 40 or higher you are considered severely obese.

This amount of weight can have a serious effect on the human body with obesity-related conditions including stroke, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain kinds of cancer. The estimated medical cost of obesity is \$147 billion dollars (Defining, 2017).

### *What or who is your case study about (telling the story)*

There is a show on The Learning Channel (TLC) called My 600 Pound Life. Full episodes can be accessed on YouTube so the class or individual groups could pick a specific episode and use that as their case study. For the purposes of this case example we will use Amber Rachdi who is from the first episode of season 3. Amber is a 23 year-old who weighs 657 pounds. She lives at home with her mother and father and has difficulty even making it up a flight of steps. She has become

dependent on her family and boyfriend because she is unable to drive anymore because she is too big to fit behind the wheel. She has much anxiety about being a disappointment to her family and this anxiety compels her to eat excessively. She is so big that she is unable to wear shoes because none are wide enough to fit her feet, she cannot stand for more than thirty minutes, and she hurts all of the time from having to support that much weight. Amber knows that if she continues on this path she will probably die, but she does not seem to have the supports in place that will allow her to stop her habit of eating anything that is put in front of her.

### *Problems that were faced*

Part of the problem is that Amber's family enables her eating habits by having meals with very large portions that are tempting for her. She eats five large meals a day, not including any snacks or desserts. When her boyfriend takes her grocery shopping, she puts in unhealthy items that will cause her to gain more weight, and he says nothing as she fills her motorized cart with everything she can reach that makes her hungry. Amber has struggled with being overweight her entire life, weighing 160 pounds as a five year-old. Her anxiety and fear about being a disappointment causes her to have a sense of hopelessness. This just makes her want to eat more to quell the anxiety and thus she gains more weight. She has been offered gastric by-pass surgery, a surgery that takes a stomach that is about the size of a basketball, and shrinks it to the size of a baseball. Amber though cannot qualify for the surgery unless she can show a willingness to lose weight. It is difficult for her to get exercise though because even walking a short distance can be very taxing on her body. Even after having the surgery, three days later she was rushed to the hospital because she was experiencing severe chest pains.

### *Constraints of the case*

- Must develop a realistic plan for how the weight will be lost including exercise and nutrition and a timeline for what this should look like
- Will take place over the course of a single year
- Cannot rely on diet pills or other unnatural methods of losing weight
- Can investigate the effects of gastric bypass surgery

### *Research that supports or refutes the case*

For this case, students will mostly be getting research from video examples rather than print.

There are over 75 episodes of My 600 Pound Life to choose a case from. They can be accessed at The Learning Channel website by:

<https://www.tlc.com/tv-shows/my-600-lb-life/>

There are some full-length episodes of My 600 Pound Life for students to find a case on YouTube as well:

Christina's Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6wxPDLV5Zg>

Benji's and David's Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFT1PFpt9JQ>

Renee's Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdCfLjriD3g&t=4468s>

Christina's Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6wxPDLV5Zg&t=8s>

Diana's Story

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvfwPFw\\_b1Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvfwPFw_b1Y)

Harvard Medical School provides this seminar on how to help fight the obesity problem

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5v\\_KwZarVM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5v_KwZarVM)

This is a video on methods for developing a plan to stop obesity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTmA9U55Z4c>

Dr. Susan Bagby from OSHU gives a presentation on the epigenetics of obesity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBq1MGxolv8>

Here is a Khan Academy video on what BMI is and how to calculate it

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RXXRr8PKunk>

Stanford Health Care has various ways to go about treatment for obesity

<https://stanfordhealthcare.org/medical-conditions/healthy-living/obesity/treatments.html>

Harvard School of Public Health also has an Obesity Prevention Source

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/obesity-prevention-source/>

The World Health Organization has a report on the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity

[https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/204176/9789241510066\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=6E75DF6B549F849757BAD1353A5F2A63?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/204176/9789241510066_eng.pdf;jsessionid=6E75DF6B549F849757BAD1353A5F2A63?sequence=1)

*Outcome of the actual case for discussion*

In the television program, Amber was beginning to show progress in becoming healthier. She had to lose 20 pounds in three months to prove to her doctor that gastric bypass surgery was a good idea. She managed to lose 17 pounds, and they went ahead with the surgery. After just a year, she had dropped 267 pounds.

Years later, Amber's circumstances have turned out pretty good. Since her episode was filmed in 2015, she has lost over 400 pounds. She did this with a combination of the gastric bypass surgery, a major change in eating habits, and getting more exercise. This exercise had to start slowly at first due to her massive size but not she goes to the gym three times a week. Students can check out Amber's continual progress by accessing her Facebook and Instagram pages.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AmberRachdi/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/amberrachdi/?hl=en>

For some other patients on My 600 Pound Life, things have not been as positive.

- Lisa Fleming from season three died of health issues not necessarily related to her obesity but certainly not helped by it.

- One of the participants from season four, Sean Mililiken died from an infection at age 29.
- Season six participant Robert Buchel, died of a heart attack while they were filming his episode.
- James Bonner, also from season six, could not deal with the depression that accompanies many of the patients who are morbidly obese, and shot himself.