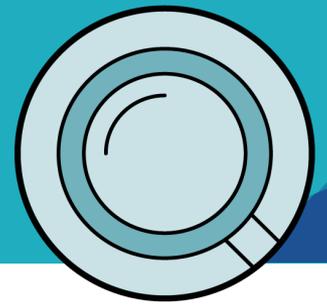


A New Narrative on Childhood Obesity

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What We've Learned



1

Don't focus on individual responsibility and blame (esp for parents) > **policy, systems and environmental change instead**

2

Don't point finger > **empower instead**
advocating for policies = shifting mindsets of decisionmakers



Words Matter



Kids link feelings of shame, sadness, embarrassment with terms like **“fat”** and **“weight problem”**

Epidemic and disease language have raised the profile of the health impacts of obesity AND ...

created harmful societal connections between obese bodies and diseased bodies

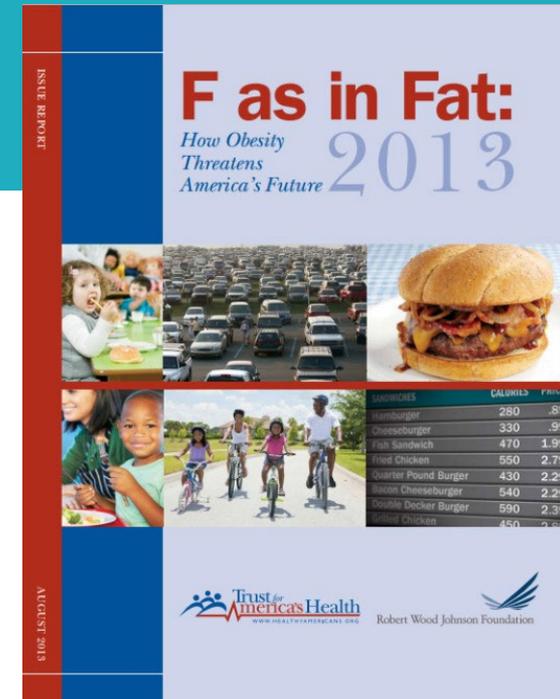
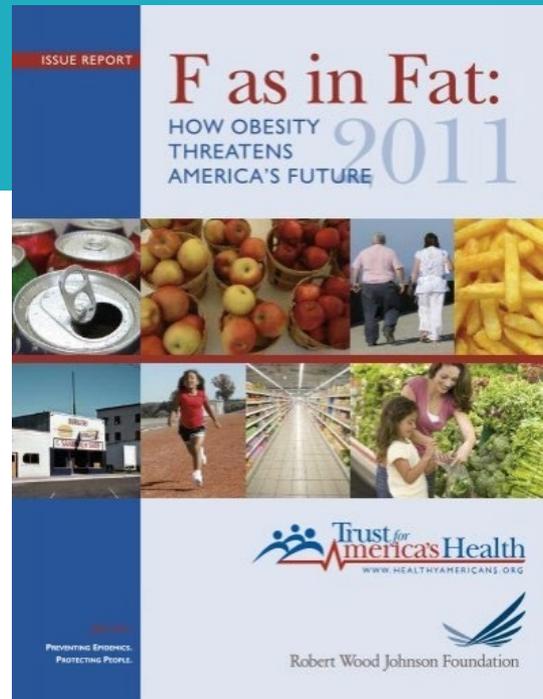


F as in Fat

Goals

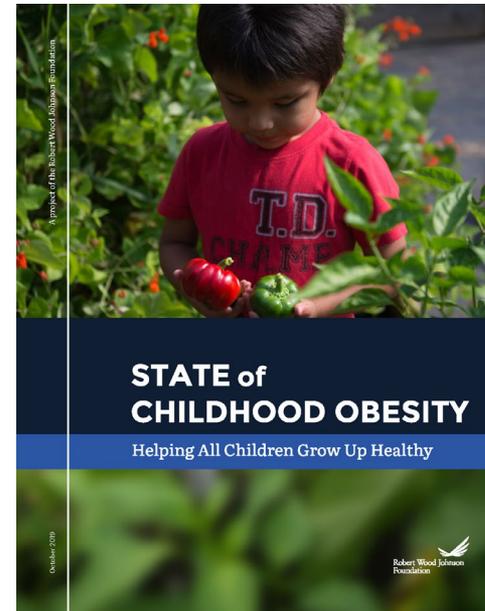
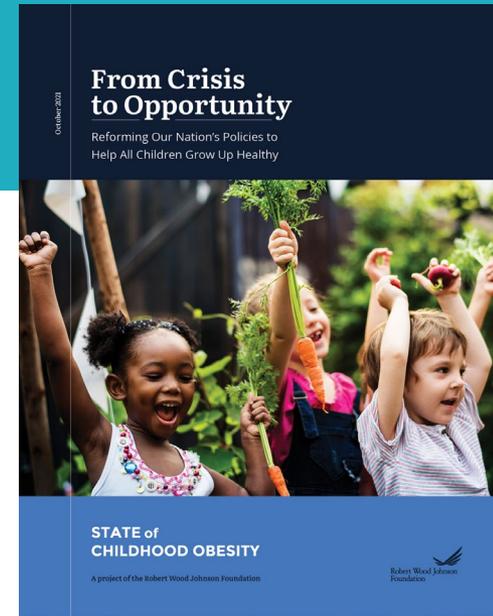
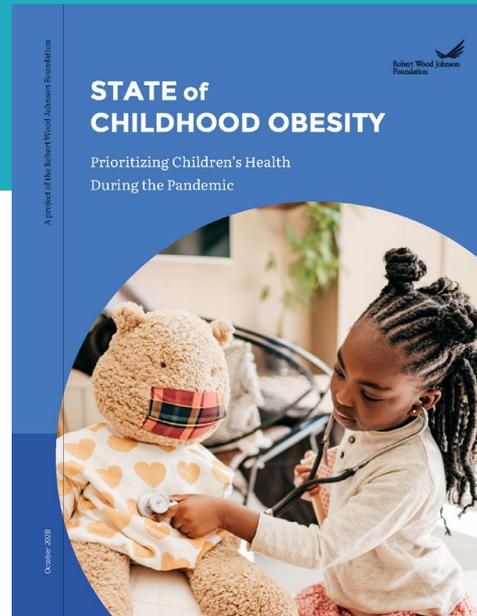
- leverage new data and disparities to attract media attention
- open the door for conversation around needed policy and systems changes

Result: We have likely contributed to the focus on systems that cause harm rather than individual responsibility and blame.

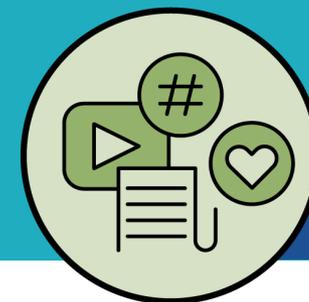


State of Childhood Obesity

- Obesity rate data is not the hook
- Perspectives of thought leaders
- Systems-level and policy solutions
- People-first language



Media + Social Media Analyses



1

Backsliding occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic

2

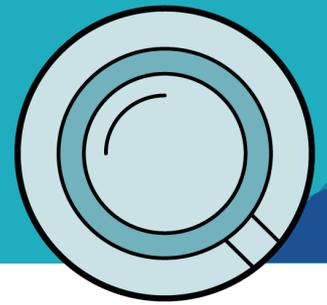
Mainstream media beginning to encourage a shift to more positive language—and emphasizing a need to shift cultural norms.

3

On social media, the most far-reaching content which uses the more traditional obesity language we've used, has high rates of engagement AND also promotes purposefully offensive, negative discussion of weight. This is driven largely by extremist accounts.



A New Approach to Narrative



Structural Racism and Health Message Research:

- Landscape analysis
- Literature review
- Focus groups
- Nationwide online survey
- Implicit bias testing



Structural Racism and Health Message Research



1

Start with the shared, values-based ideal statement.

2

**Move into the positive vision and problem statement.
Do not use disparities data.**

3

End with the call to action and unity statement.



Bridge to Health



New Narrative



- New narrative specific to language around childhood obesity
- Language that doesn't perpetuate stigma and harm
- Help RWJF & the field communicate about childhood obesity





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