

Julie: Say goodbye to the food police and hello to peace. Welcome to the Love Food podcast, hosted by dietitian and food behavior expert, Julie Duffy Dillon. This authentically engineered series is in the form of a love letter, welcoming you to reconnect with food. Now pour a cup of coffee or a margarita and let's begin.

Julie: Hi and welcome to episode 265 of the Love Food podcast. I'm Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. I am so glad you're here. Thank you for connecting today. This episode is for those of you who have tried to move away from diets, yet just have felt like you can't take that next step, and that next step may even be the first step. And while you're trying to take that step, maybe falling down, stumbling, and wondering how you're even going to get back up again. This week's episode features a letter from someone who says that they are ready but not ready. And it is actually a rebroadcast of an interview that I did with Barbara Birsinger. And this is an episode that so many of you have said that you learned so much from, you benefited from, and so I wanted to share it because it's no longer available in the last 100 episodes. You know, Apple podcasts only likes to show the last 100, and so, since we're over 265 episodes now, you can't get to this one. So, I wanted to share it with you in all its wisdom. But before we get to this episode's letter and to hear from our guest, Barbara Birsinger, a quick word from our sponsor.

Julie (ad break): Do you have PCOS, and you are ready to divorce that dumpster fire also known as PCOS diets? Check out my free PCOS roadmap. I include ways to start off rejecting diets while living with PCOS. I get down to some tools that I find that have helped so many people over the years, including really naming who's to blame, and how do you actually interact with these cravings? Are they useful? Should you ignore them? What should you do with them? This is what I explore in the road map and so much more. If you are interested, go to juliedillonrd.com/freebies and you'll get right to it. Again, my free PCOS roadmap is at juliedillonrd.com/freebies.

Julie: All right enough of all that. Let's get to this episode's letter.

Julie (as letter writer): Dear food, You are so complicated. We used to have a good relationship. It wasn't that long ago. At first, it wasn't even about you. Then I went through that period of incredible stress. I felt so lost and physically couldn't eat you. I think that's when the problem started. I lost some weight. That wasn't a plan. I don't know if it became a way to cope to feel or not feel, a way to control something, a way to become invisible. Now it's definitely intentional. I like the smallness. I'm so afraid to let go of that. I want health. I'm sure this is not full of health. My brain knows it's time to heal. So many days I go to bed and promise that I can heal, that I won't think about you and we'll just take care of my needs. But it doesn't last long. I get scared and can't eat you again. I know where to find all kinds of resources. I seek them out. I fill my head with all the reasons to heal. I want to be better. But I'm terrified. I'm terrified of admitting to anyone what's going on. I'm terrified of the body changes. I am terrified that some people will think I let myself go. I feel, at the same time, so ready for change and health, but not ready to take the hard steps. How can I convince myself that it is time? Yours, Ready Not Ready.

Julie: Hey there, Ready Not Ready. I am ready to really sort through what you bring up in your letter. I am so glad you wrote. I think what you are talking about, many other people are

struggling with too, so I'm so excited to call someone that I've trained under for a while now. Her name is Barbara Birsinger, and she is someone who is going to have insight. So let's go ahead and give Barbara a call.

Barbara: Hello?

Julie: Hey Barbara. It's Julie Duffy Dillon. How are you?

Barbara: I'm good.

Julie: So good to talk to you.

Barbara: I'm happy to be here.

Julie: Well I'm glad you're here, and I'm so glad to talk to you, and I'm excited to sort through this letter with you, and I'm wondering if you had a chance to read it?

Barbara: I did.

Julie: Good, good.

Barbara: Yes, I did.

Julie: So let's jump in. And what, what is your general impression about what this person is experiencing?

Barbara: Well, it's- it has to do with uh, like the end, like how can I convince myself that it's time? I'm ready but I'm not ready. And it's one of those things where lots of things in life, there is no perfect time. And it comes down to you know, what does she want, and what does she want in her life? So it has a lot to do with what her- her life goals are at this point for her health, for relationships, family, community work, contribution, whatever those things are, and how this might be holding her back from that. Um you know, really getting in touch with that, because the- the thing that pops out is that, is when she says "I'm terrified, I know what to do. I've got lots of resources." However, there's those feelings of "I don't want to admit to anyone, I'm terrified of my body changing. What are they going to think? Um, what's going to happen?" So there's a lot of unknowns, and she started this behavior completely different from a lot of people that end up having an eating disorder like this, you know, it came from stress, where you can't eat, didn't really have to do with her body. And I've had lots of clients, and even my own children having- as they're adults now, having gone through a very stressful breakup, have had the experience of losing weight not being able to eat. And then it's hard to get back to eating. Luckily, they didn't have the body issues around it, didn't want to stay, you know, at a lower weight and as soon as things got talked out and- and- and so on, they began to eat again. But once that eating disorder starvation metabolism comes in, it is really difficult, right? Like it hurts, it- there's all kinds of cascade of events, physically, biologically, you know, on survival mechanism, and both in psychological and physical, and the social aspects of our culture, love the podcast you did a couple weeks ago. Was that last week kind?

Julie: Yeah, kind of all go together. Yeah, yeah. That was a recent one. And you know, the thing that this person said that I really connected with was really like almost pleading. Like, give me the how, because- and- and don't give me another like book to read, you know, like I've already like, um, and I hear that from a lot of people is just like, but how do I do it? It seems like this leap that is so far. Um, and I have told the listeners before that I've trained under you and done some of your trainings and they've been really helpful with this part. So, when I read this letter, I did connect with the work that you do. And even some of the things that you even mentioned, I think helps bring that leap to a smaller space of like, what are, what's important in your life, you know, your life goals, you mentioned, and I can see how that even brings it in to a more narrow, like not as big of a leap, because when we connect with those things, I know it can make things feel...some people tell me it helps them to feel like things are easier to grasp onto in order to make this kind of transition. And I don't know if that's what you're- what you were even connecting to when you were talking about it, but that's what I was thinking about in my head. And um yeah, and I think that the kind of stumbling into an eating disorder, like this person describes, like it wasn't an intention, I feel like that's part of the complicated side of eating disorders, like everyone gets stressed at some point in their life, and goes through a time where it's harder to eat, or it's hard to stop eating, and so their body changes, but not everyone gets an eating disorder, because eating disorders are not just one thing, they're not just uh, genetic or just cultural or, you know, it's like, it's all these things wrapped together and this person unfortunately just all connected. And um, and it's so hard to get out of because it's not just one thing to change to like, heal, right? It's so messy.

Barbara: And when it feels like, when you can get in touch with what's, what's the intended positive outcome of what I'm doing, it's because, and that's this is true for all of us, um, it feels better than what came before it. So not eating feels better when you're, when she's stressed out, when someone is really stressed, or the thought of eating stresses them out. When it gets to that point, it upsets their stomach and all of that. So it feels better not to eat, you know, telling someone just to eat, you know, of course, doesn't do anything because they're- they're-

Julie: Like they didn't think of that.

Barbara: Like they didn't think of that. Like, how do I do that? That's what they hear.

Julie: I know. I know.

Barbara: But if they can get really get, and you've talked about this a lot, is having that compassion for the part of them that's trying to take care of themselves uh, in that way. So, of course it doesn't work in the long run. And she's in this, what I like to tell people, it's like you really fixed up a pickle there, where you want to do it, but you can't or, you know, you're in that- you're in that place, or with my clients will also say it's kind of like getting out of the bottle- a bottle, you have to go through the bottleneck. That really uncomfortable part. She doesn't want to feel the fear. She- I mean who does? You know, it's like going into recovery, and do we want to stay in the bottle?

Julie: That's such a great metaphor. Oh, I love that.

Barbara: You gotta squish yourself through, and that uncomfortable part can last for a few weeks, but you do get out. You know, you will get out if you just stick with it. Yeah. So being ready or not ready, she might not ever be ready, she's going to have to take some, like take a leap. And sometimes that's- I find it with my clients is having them see what the meta outcome is. Like what would you like and what would having that do for you? And then, what would having that do for you? So, for a lot of people it's "well I want to lose weight," or "I want to stay where I am" for, she wants to stay small, what would having that do for her? It would keep her from, you know, feeling what she doesn't want to feel and not getting comments about, oh if you- maybe somebody wouldn't comment about it. Hopefully not. But her fear of people feeling like she might be letting herself go and- and that's a great metaphor to look at for in her life as well. Um, but what would having all of that do for her? And when it gets down to- and you've talked about this too, Julie, about, you know, people just want to be accepted and respected and feel free around food and have peace with food and have permission to eat all those things. I'll go, let's start with that, you know, little by little. And start giving them a felt sense of- of recovery early on.

Julie: That's great. Like this felt sense. I like that too, because you can start to dip your toes in a sense, I don't know if that's the right word. Um, but just even, you can start to feel some of the benefit of the long term outcome by doing some of that work.

Barbara: Yeah. One of the tools that I use for that, I don't if this is a good time to share?

Julie: Yeah, let's jump to it. Yeah.

Barbara: Okay. Uh, I call "real time quick decoding process" and this is a, it's a super simple, super quick, basically three questions someone can ask themselves at a time when they have a thought, or a trigger for a behavior, you know, like you sort of think of what just happened, where'd my attention go, what am I thinking about right now, like, oh, I'm having those thoughts of I don't want to eat or what or whatever that might be. This can work for any disordered eating or weight related behavior. Probably for any unwanted behavior. And the first question is, they're pretty obvious, but you know, "what am I feeling right now?" What is the feeling that terrified- the fear? Um, the stress, the anxiety, whatever that might be. "What is that feeling that I'm having right now? And where do I feel that in my body?" If they can get in touch with where that is and kind of load it up a little bit, like what just happened? In real time, they're gonna know because they're in it. And then once you have that feeling identified, and maybe more than one, they can ask themselves, wait a minute, "what do I really, truly need right now?" When- when I'm feeling this, and those are going to be more intrinsic kinds of things. If someone says, and I usually when I give this to clients, um, I would do this before I do a longer decoding process with them around the behavior. So they get used to checking in with their feelings and needs. Um and I give them a list of feelings and needs as well, because sometimes people are like, I don't know, they can see, oh, it's not that, it's not that, oh, here it is.

Julie: You were mentioning that um, like, what do I really need right now? Like after they have identified what they're feeling and where they're feeling it. Um, well what do I really need?

Barbara: If they're- if they say, well, what I really need is uh is to go outside and get some fresh air, or what I really need is to talk to a friend, that that's kind of an activity. And then I would say, and what would having that do for you? That's always a great question. Uh, oh, then I- then I would feel relaxed. And when you feel relaxed, what does having that do for you? Well, then I feel more at peace. Oh, so, so what you really need is peace right now. So you kind of keep taking it down till it gets to more of an intrinsic need. So now they have the- they have the trigger feeling identified. They have some intrinsic needs identified. The next question is "if I could pick a feeling to have right now, instead of what I just was experiencing, how would I like to feel right now?" So that's often the reach for the behavior, because it does feel better. Again, that could be for any behavior. So that's a positive feeling that they want to have, and they're doing the behavior to get that and to try to get that need met. Problem with that is it's not- it's only temporary. Very temporary. However, by doing this process, they're putting a wedge, you know, the quote uh, "between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies my power to choose my response. In my response lies my growth and freedom." I love that quote. I put it in the front on a beautiful ocean scene of the notebook I give to my clients, because it's- this- doing this process is like putting a wedge. It's not intended to stop someone in the moment, because if it was people wouldn't do it all the time. Right?

Julie: Right.

Barbara: I don't want anybody to stop me right now. That's not the, the actual intent at the moment. But over time what happens is, once they get those feelings identified, they begin to- they just let themselves sit with it for a little bit longer, and they can sit with it for longer and longer and longer. All of a sudden, something else has come in to take the place of the behavior without actually working to get rid of the behavior or change the behavior.

Julie: I think that's important. Yeah, that's really important.

Barbara: It's bringing in things that they truly need that are truly going to nourish them and sustain them over time and give them those positive [inaudible] they can get another way. So I often have my clients when they do this to shift their body and imagine that they're getting that need met, and having that positive feeling, kind of like if they're standing up, sit down, you know, move around, do something. And I use a little NLP technique.

Julie: Can you say what NLP is? Because I don't know if everybody will know what that is.

Barbara: NLP is neural linguistic programming, and I was trained in something called transformational neural linguistic programming, and I can give you a reference for that. There's a wonderful book that came out recently, because there's lots of NLP out there, but a lot of it's very gimmicky-

Julie: And diety. I see some diety NLP too.

Barbara: Oh no, infiltrating everything!

Julie: It is in everything, everything. For sure.

Barbara: Yes, I am- I am doing a training for NLP coaches coming up on. yeah, HAES and what I do. But I have- this technique is, they don't really have to know about NLP to do this. Just have, if you were to draw like an X and Y axis, you've got four quadrants in in your vision, you go to the upper right with your eyes, and imagine seeing a future version of you that has those needs met and those positive feelings as much as they want them. Slightly future version. It could be a few weeks, a few months, and having that experience. And then imagine if you could just step into that future version of you just for a moment, looking out through her eyes, breathing with her lungs, as she experiences her desired feelings and having her needs met right now. I'm just using her as a positive- I mean, as that pronoun. [inaudible] see if you can hold that for a couple minutes, just being there and having had that, and then step back to right now, and then if I'm working with someone, I'll ask them, what was that like, because I'll do this with them before I give it to them to do for themselves. But this is on a, on a PDF that I can let people have as a gift that has this process in it.

Julie: That would be awesome.

Barbara: They can start making notes of other ways to get their needs met, because this happens right in the moment of a thought or a movement towards the behavior, so it just helps to give them a little bit of time to see that there is, there is something else, and if they still want the behavior, they may still do it, but they'll probably do it less, and then less and less in time.

Julie: The thing that I think is so great about this is it's- it's highlighting to me that it's not like, taking away a food or um, a binge or like, any kind of way that we scold eating, you know, that that's not really getting anywhere. And because- by having these experiences, these behaviors, it's connecting well, especially before people are doing this, it's not really feeling connected, but when you connect all these things together, the behavior helps bring people to an awareness of what they're wanting and needing and um, and that's- that's why I think this work is um, so great because it does help to connect all those dots and- and why like, just taking away the food or taking away whatever behavior is not really going to get to it. You know, it's only gonna be temporary because it's not helping you get really any information, and this person writing the letter, it's such a common experience to be like, but- but how about- how do I do it? And part of why the how hasn't been answered is because it's not this person, like, we're not in their body and don't know their lived experience and what their values and unmet needs are. Um, so I hope this helps, and I would love to put that download on our food peace syllabus. And if you're new to the Love Food podcast, the food peace syllabus is this resource that we've been putting together over the last 157 episodes now where, um, anything that we find that helps promote the food peace journey, whether it's other podcasts or books or resources, we've put a list together and you can get the most updated list at juliedillonrd.com. And I would love to put that on there. Is there anything else that you would find um, that you want to recommend to someone like this letter writer?

Barbara: Yeah. And can I just say one other thing about what we just did?

Julie: Yeah!

Barbara: Um, when I do this with my clients for the first time, um, most people say when they can step into the future version of themselves, having their needs met and having a positive feeling they want, and how they are experiencing that, when they are, when they're done with that and they come back to present time. Um, they say, wow, that was, they might say, well that was weird or that was interesting, and when I ask him what was weird or interesting about it, they say "it felt real." So they could feel, what I'm trying to say is that felt sense of recovery, it does feel real, and that starts to catapult their recovery because normally we can't, most people can't get a sense of that early on of what that feels like. So that's why that little step is really powerful.

Julie: Yeah.

Barbara: And I do have- uh yeah, I have on my website, and I can also get to a copy to post up, is the Intuitive Body Quick Start Guide. It's basically a five-step process of what I use with my clients. It's just a, a real quick intuitive eating health at every size-informed steps to get started.

Julie: Awesome. I will put that on there. And so, anyone listening, you can click on the show notes right now and you can get the links to these, and um, awesome. Thank you. Before we wrap up, was there anything else that you'd recommend this person, or anything else to- that you were, you were thinking about that? That we have, we might have glossed over or missed?

Barbara: Well I just, one of the things I was thinking of, and I use this with my clients, and I use this for myself with myself a lot of times when there's something I'm trying to, you know, start or do or you know, figure out, is a kind of cost benefit analysis, or pros and cons, and I use it with my clients because it helps them to see on a piece of paper, um you know, it's just like a chart with, again, like an xy axis in it of sort of all of the positive things that could come to someone for doing their recovery in the way that they see that happening. Um, this person said she wanted full health, um, she wanted to get her needs met and so on. And then on the negative side of that, or the con side is, well people might think I let myself go, and it's hard work, and I'm going to be conflicted or whatever. Then what's the positive things about staying where she is? Um, she likes to stay small, she can hide and be invisible. Um she's going to save herself all the hard work that she thinks it's going to take. But on the, on the con side of that is she'll worry about her health, she's still going to be terrified. It's still going to be hard staying where she is, and staying in control. So a lot of times just seeing that written out on paper, and I'll give you a, what I use is just a simple piece of paper, but it give somebody a place to go ahead and write their own stuff down.

Julie: That would be great. I find myself doing similar work with clients too, and it's nice to brain dump it you know, and go through that in the steps that you just described. So then um, a person can really see it, like you said, all in one piece of paper, and it's like seeing how um, living life change to I have to stay smaller or I can't be at peace with food, how they're really, it brings to light what they're giving up, you know, and how it's- or it's not aligning with their values. Yeah but they're not getting, um- and here's the thing, I feel like there's so many of us that are missing out and so- on life because they're so distracted by diets and diet culture and they're being oppressed by them that the rest of us are also missing out too on what they could be bringing to this world. I mean we have a lot of crazy things happening in our world that I think if more of us

were not distracted, we would have some solutions to, so the more the merrier, you know, to like move away from diets and um, break free from that kind of, chain to the scale and things like that. So um, this is all super helpful stuff and if someone wants to know more about you or maybe wants to um, find out more about your work or to work with you, where's a good place for people to find you?

Barbara: Yeah. My website, barbarabirsinger. And my last name is spelled like Bird Singer without the D. Easiest way to remember.

Julie: Yeah. So Bir Singer. Yeah. Um I will put that in the show notes too so somebody can just click on it if they're wanting to know more. And um, I really appreciate your time and your insight for this letter writer, and for anyone who can identify with what this person is experiencing. It's certainly a common experience. So I really appreciate it.

Barbara: Thank you. It was a pleasure.

Julie: So there you have it. Ready Not Ready, I hope that Barbara's conversation with me helped to provide some tools that will help you to make that leap. Um, give you some more behind the how - it's going to be really individual. You're the only one that knows some of this information. So I hope you can sit with it and decide for you what the next best step is going to be. And like Barbara said, imagine what she's experiencing at that next step, that future self.

Julie: So, I see that food is written back. But before we get to that, this episode was brought to you by my free PCOS road map. Get to it at juliedillonrd.com/freebies. If you enjoyed this episode of Love Food podcast, I am so glad. That is why I am doing this work. And if you would like to give back, I would so appreciate it if you could take just a few seconds out to leave a rating, a review, subscribed and or shared this episode. Doing any of those acts of kindness helps the show grow tremendously, and helps more people find us when they're searching in the podcast algorithms. And so again, doing any of those acts of kindness really helps the show grow. And I thank you in advance.

Julie: All right, so let's hear what food has to say. But until next time, take care.

Julie: Dear Ready Not Ready, We wonder how things got so hard, so out of hand, so complicated. We see your pain, your exhaustion, and your frustration. But we also see your fear. Pause in the discomfort to connect with your desires, values, and unmet needs. No diet or weight loss plan can meet these needs. Your future self will be grateful. She is experiencing the joy and peace you so long for. Love, food.

Julie: Thank you for listening. I am Julie Duffy Dillon, and this is the Love Food podcast. Do you want access to more food peace? Jump on over to my website and join my email list there. I share exclusive content that I don't share anywhere else. Get access to these tips and strategies by going to juliedillonrd.com/signup. And I look forward to seeing you here next week for another episode of the Love Food podcast. Take care.