

Julie: The Love Food podcast is brought to you in partnership with my PCOS and Food Peace course. Finally free yourself from endless PCOS, fatigue, frustration, shame, and guilt. For PCOS sufferers who are tired of ineffective diets and unhelpful advice, join me on a PCOS and food peace journey that will change your life forever. Grab all the details at pcosandfoodpeace.com. Say goodbye to the food police and hello to peace.

Julie: 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 241 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 any of you who have been diagnosed with diabetes, or maybe are scared of getting diagnosed with diabetes, or you have someone in your family that has it. Are you wondering if you can reject diets? Can you use things like intuitive eating? Is health at every size really for you? If you have diabetes, or are scared of getting it, these are all questions that I hope I help educate you on. You know, it cannot replace any kind of care that you get with an individual provider, yet I hope it helps give you some information that you can sift through with that provider to find ways for you to sustainably be able to take care of yourself, and also incorporates not only your like blood sugar numbers, but also like, all the different parts of you. Your emotional health, your spiritual health, your relationships. Those are all things that are really important. I know for me that's like, also a part of how I decide if I'm healthy or not, is like how those things are going. And I wonder if you incorporate them as well. Well, before we get to this episode's letter, a word from our sponsor.

Julie (ad break): Early on as a dietitian, I learned that PCOS carb cravings were not like anything else when it comes to cravings. Cravings already can be complicated, but when you have PCOS, they can be so much more intense, with every cell in your body screaming to eat that plate of brownies. But yet, you're also told you have to cut out the very foods you crave. It's really complicated. And I know you're told that you're supposed to just ignore them or trick them, but I have something different for you. What if you said hello to the cravings and goodbye to the shame? If you're puzzled on how this even can work, or you want to know more, check out my pop up PCOS podcast. It's going to have a limited run, the end of April 2021, you can get to it at juliedillonrd.com/popup. What's a pop up podcast? Well, it's a podcast that's still free, and you can get to it on the same app that you're listening to right now. But you just need to sign up for it first and get a very special link so just you can subscribe to it. So, if you want to get to it, and I hope you will, go to juliedillonrd.com/popup. There, you will get access to the link, and you will get five special um, private episodes, just for your ears and everybody else who signs up, delivered right to your app when they are live. They are going to be just around for the week of April 24th, so as they come up in your feed, make sure you listen to them. They will be quick, informative podcasts. But you need to listen to them that week in order to get to them. So again, if you want to check it out and get access to this podcast, go to juliedillonrd.com/popup.

Julie (as letter writer): Dear food, we've never been friends, you and I. You lurked in the center of a labyrinth of rules, the monster, but also the prize. The rules were supposed to guarantee good health, as evidenced by a good body, and for good, read thin. But I didn't have a thin body.

I had a big body, a fat body, a wrong body, a must be unhealthy body, a body that required regulation according to external rules, since I was obviously incapable of regulating myself. The only thing about my body that mattered was my weight, and my weight was always too much. You are rarely flavor, but always components. Sugar, protein, fat, carbs. You came only at meals, and meals happened only at assigned times. Hunger that happened outside of those times wasn't real. My body lies because I'm fat. I enjoyed swimming and bicycling and roller skating, but movement for fun was worthless. Movement meant losing weight. Movement was punishment for being fat, and punishment had to hurt. I quit all the activities I liked, and convinced myself they were never fun to begin with. You were my enemy, food. You were the cause of everything that went wrong. Unless I got smaller, I was going to die, and soon. If only I could get my food right, then my body would become right, become thin, and then I could start my life. Instead of living, I spent a lifetime avoiding you. My list of acceptable foods grew shorter and shorter. The amounts I allowed grew smaller and smaller. Meanwhile, my body got bigger and bigger. Eventually, I discovered health at every size and intuitive eating, and tried to repair my damaged relationship with you and my body. I ditched the constant analysis. It never made me feel good. I tried to think of you in terms of taste and flavor. If I ate enough of you overall, listen to and honor my body, everything would sort out. I felt better, physically and mentally. I'm still fat, and working on being okay with that, because health at every size, right? But...there's always a but isn't there? Barely a year after finding what felt like salvation, I developed diabetes. I'm devastated. I'm angry. I feel betrayed. No more health at every size. I don't have health. Goodbye, intuitive eating. My fat body lies. No more thinking about you in terms of flavors and tastes and what sounds good. Back to the rules. You are components, not flavors. Exercise and movement aren't for fun. It's to use up blood sugars. I was wrong about my body, and everyone else was right. I must accept reality and impose rules to discipline my body and make it good, and by good, they mean thin. They replace numbers on the scale and clothes sizes with a 1C and fasting blood glucose. If my numbers aren't good enough, I will die, for real this time. I'm afraid to buy a glucose meter. I would use it as a scourge. Not as a tool. Hungry? No eating unless the meter says so. Blood sugar rises? Never eat that again. I know where this story ends. Surviving on black coffee and cabbage while still being the object lesson for eating too much cake. I've been there before. I don't want to live there again. I'm back to obsessing about you and trying to make our relationship Stepford wives perfect. I'm miserable. Engaging the topics of diet and exercise at all feels like grabbing a live wire with both hands. Yet I'm told I must grab and hold tightly or I will die. I want to let go, but I want to take care of my body too. How do I balance the requirement to dissect everything I eat into its component parts and assemble them into perfect plates without ending up back where I started? I hear the siren call, and it is hard to resist, especially with doctors rowing my boat that direction. Please help me find a better way. Signed, frenemies.

Julie: Hey there letter writer. Thank you so much for your note and reading your words. I hear you're hurt, and I get the sense that you're feeling betrayed. Betrayed by the medical field, betrayed by the promises of healthiness and happiness and thinness, and also betrayed by body liberation and health at every size. You were promised to have finally this freedom in all these different paths and oh, you have got to be exhausted. It sounds like a whiplash experience. And here's the thing that I've started to appreciate: many people are walking this path. You know, have experienced decades of dieting and hating their body and then finally connect with tools that help them recover from diet culture, only then to be diagnosed with diabetes. So, I hope this,

this episode today provides some education, some information for you to maybe process with your therapist if you have one, or a dietitian if you have one, or health care provider, to help you decide next steps and um again, just know you definitely are not alone.

Julie: Something that I read in your letter, and listener, I wonder if you connected with this too, is that the fear tactics that the medical community relies so heavily on at the diagnosis of a chronic condition promotes the experiences of panic, anxiety, and fear. I see this a lot with any new diagnosis, especially chronic ones, and especially ones that have a lot of stigma connected to them. Diabetes is used as a weapon for so many people to conform and to diet. I know for you, letter writer, it was used as well, and then when people get the diagnosis it's used as proof that they're not doing it right. And there's some things we need to talk about with diabetes. There's some things we all need to kind of get on the same page about. And I, I wish that I was really talking to healthcare providers. Um, I used to be a healthcare provider that specialized in diabetes. So, I was trained in the same way, and I appreciate why they lean on them, yet what I also appreciate is that promoting that fear, like pushing that button, all it does is promote that panic and that anxiety that does not lead to behavior changes that are health promoting, sustainable, um, and it also is confusing and hard and shaming. Those are not things that I connect with that, that promote like long term health. So, there are other things, but like I said, this is a really typical experience when someone is diagnosed with a chronic condition, especially one that's so loaded with stigma like diabetes, and to get on the same page, we need to name that although you're blamed for having diabetes, or you're told that you gained too much weight and that's why you have diabetes, or if you are told you ate the wrong thing and that caused the diabetes, we need to really appreciate that diabetes is still mostly a genetic condition. For you, letter writer, if you have access to your biological family tree, I wonder how many people have diabetes on it, or that you suspect had- had diabetes. That's something that for you, the listener, I also would encourage you to connect with, if you have diabetes or if diabetes is used as a weapon, how many people in your family experience it? And you know, when we really peel back the like, layers of how diabetes is experienced, so much of it is still genetic.

Julie: Here's another part that is a, is a part of the pathology of diabetes, is our social determinants of health, which includes really basically how much power you have in the world. So if you are living on this earth in a body that is marginalized, that oppression is a more, is more, rather, part of your diabetes diagnosis than what you had for lunch today. So combining genetics and the amount of oppression that you experience, that's the majority of like, how it even happens in the body. Now, those are things that we cannot control as an individual. I say that kind of as like a, well as an individual, because you know, we can come together and dismantle these systemic oppressions, but that's of course gonna take a while, and it's not you, letter writer, it's not your individual burden. It's something that we're all in this together with. So, I appreciated, letter writer, how you described your diagnosis, and you know, the path that you were taking, mending your relationship with food, rejecting diet culture, working towards feeling at home in your body. And that's when you were diagnosed with diabetes. And, and just because you were diagnosed in that moment in time does not mean that intuitive eating or any of those tools that we use to help reject diet culture, that doesn't mean that they caused the diabetes.

Julie: And I say this because besides genetics and oppression, there are two behaviors in particular that have been studied in its connection to people experiencing diabetes or not. And

those two behaviors are chronic dieting and weight cycling. So those two behaviors are connected to higher blood sugar and research. So, for you, letter writer, and anyone listening who has diabetes, has a family history of diabetes, or again, diabetes is used as a weapon to make you eat less and pursue weight loss, you know, keep in mind two behaviors that you can be in charge of, because genetics and cultural oppression are not individual behaviors you can be in control of, but two that you can control, modify, is, or are rather, chronic dieting and weight cycling.

Julie: So what does that mean? Well, I would encourage you to connect with as many tools as you can to help you avoid weight cycling. What can you do to avoid the trigger to diet? What can you do to avoid the things that make your brain go down that path that lead to the experiences connected to weight cycling, which is chronic dieting. And I hear you, letter writer, I know that you're in the throes of all the panic and fear that is pushing you towards chronic dieting, and pushing you towards the behaviors that are going to promote weight cycling. I know that with time, that intensity of this new diagnosis will start to ease, it will become more familiar. It won't be so new. And I say that because that's often when I see people moving away from that urgency that comes with a diabetes diagnosis, it helps them to be more in their like affirming, like, mind, their adult mind of okay, these are the options I have, and these are the things I'm willing to do. I hope you come to a place where you can connect with that part of you, because that's the part of you that's going to lead you where you need to go, where you want to go. And yes, you may need support along the way. We're going to talk about that in a second. But helping your, your, your brain and your body get your feet on the ground again, instead of feeling so connected to this intensity is something that is going to lead you again where you're going to want to go to promote long term health.

Julie: Here's the tricky part, of course: we know that initially dieting, restricting, anything that you're doing to manipulate those blood sugar numbers is going to show a, an, an immediate kind of improvement with blood sugar. We know that restriction for six weeks does show some improvement with blood sugar and um, Insulin levels, and inflammation, things that we often are monitoring with diabetes. But again, long term when we're looking twelve weeks, one year, two years out, it only seems to make it worse over time. So, it's a long game. It for sure is a long game.

Julie: So, as you are sifting through different options, I want to throw some, some possibilities in the ring, you know, some things to consider to use to help you to have some firm footing that's going to be sustainable, that's going to be rooted in liberation, and not so much on the panic and fear that is being pushed on you. And first and foremost, it's to be sure you are eating enough. Be sure you are eating enough food. Are you? Are you, letter writer, or are you, listener? Are you eating enough? And that may be really hard to be able to know as someone who's being pushed to restrict, someone who's living in a higher weight body, um, but you know, eating three meals a day, eating when you're hungry, outside of that too, and also appreciating that you may need to eat sometimes when you're not hungry because of how diet culture has numbed so much of those communication pathways. So, are you eating enough? And do what you need to do to get to that point. That blood sugar meter could get in the way of all that too, because keep in mind, those of us who don't have diabetes or are not checking our blood sugar on glucometer, we don't know what's happening every second with our blood sugar. We don't know how high it's getting the

first few minutes after eating a meal. Everybody's blood sugar goes high after they're done eating. It's the ability to bring it back down within an hour or two that I know for a lot of people who are trying to manage their blood sugars are really focusing on, and finding someone to help you to do this blood sugar management in a way that is sustainable and is not becoming just another kind of uh, scale, basically. And I know for some people they need to have a support person to help them manage it so they don't get to the point where it's becoming an obsession, and it's not becoming something that is a tool for anorexia, because you need to eat, even when your blood sugars are high, you need to eat. I, I wish the endocrinology field was more open and with less stigma about medication use and diabetes, but you know, you need to eat enough, and if you need medication in order to eat enough, then I wish you had permission to use that medication.

Julie: So the second thing that I would encourage you, letter writer, and anyone listening who can relate to this letter, is if you have access, find ways and support to be sustainable and consistent with your food intake. However it, food feels good to you, um, and that's what I mean by sustainable, like something that is going to be nourishing, energizing, pleasurable. Those are all things that make our eating behaviors last long, you know, and be sustainable, and then also consistent. Making sure, again, that you're eating enough every day or at least most days. I know sometimes shit happens, but most days eating enough, and what that support could look like. Well, it could be working with a support group that um, for people who have diabetes, it may be working with a therapist and it may be working with a dietitian.

Julie: There's one dietitian in particular who I know very well, her name is Lauren Newman, and Lauren has been on the, a guest on the podcast at least once, I think actually more than once. And Lauren specializes in helping people with diabetes to also um, incorporate intuitive eating and health at every size types of um, concepts into their life. Because here's the thing: you deserve to recover from diet culture. You deserve body liberation while living with diabetes. And even more so, incorporating tools to help you reject diet culture, incorporating tools for you to feel at home in your body will help your diabetes. It's actually something in the long term that will help you to experience um, better blood sugar numbers, and incorporate your whole self. So much of diabetes care is on those numbers and discounts your emotional health, your spiritual health, your relationships, and reading your letter, I got the sense that those are strained. Those are not in a place that many people would want them to be, and those are just as important as your blood sugar numbers. Some people would maybe even say they're more important. But even just looking at the numbers, we know that tools like intuitive eating, rejecting diet culture, finding ways to avoid weight cycling and chronic dieting. Those are all things that will help your blood sugar. You deserve to access food peace as well, letter writer, and anyone listening who can relate to this letter, you deserve these tools, and they also are important tools to help you promote health.

Julie: So it is time to wrap up, because I see that food has written back. But letter writer, I am sending you so much love and support. Check out Lauren Newman's resources at laurennewmanrd.com. She has dietitians that work with her who are doing this work, and they have support groups that are offered many times throughout the year. So, I hope they can help you or you can find something similar close to you.

Julie: Before we get to food's letter, this episode of the Love Food podcast was brought to you by my pop up PCOS podcast that is happening right now. This is the last chance to get your link to listen to this private podcast. Go to juliedillonrd.com/popup to get to all the details and grab the link. You will be able to access this podcast just until Friday April 30th, so get to it now if you're wanting to get more insight on PCOS cravings.

Julie: If you enjoyed this episode of the Love Food podcast, I would love it if you left a rating, a review, you subscribed or shared the episode. I know I talk about this all the time, but it really does help the show grow. It helps more people be able to connect with tools that help them with their food peace journey. So, thank you in advance.

Julie: Alright, so enough of all that, food has written back like I said, so until next time, take care.

Julie (as food): Dear frenemies, We were just starting to rekindle our mutual sustainable love when the rug was pulled out from under us. We hate how this diabetes diagnosis has promoted restriction, punishment, trauma, and shame. You still deserve nourishment and pleasure. Recovery didn't cause the diabetes. What if the rules did? What if the perfectionism, the good/bad binary, are the things increasing blood sugar more? Consider adding support, an extra embrace that aids your diet recovery. Connecting to others to help you just may be what you need to connect with freedom. 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.