

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](http://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 242 of the Love Food podcast. I'm Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. I'm so glad you're here. Thank you for connecting today. Those of you who are on your food peace journey for a while now, how is it going? How is the path right now? Does it feel like a really steep incline, or a plateau? I hope you're feeling like you're getting the fuel you need, and also, I wonder if you've ever been misguided on your food peace journey. I know that a lot of people are told as they start to investigate moving away from diets and things like intuitive eating that if they just stop dieting, well then their body weight won't go up anymore, or they will finally make peace with food and stop eating when they're hungry, and voila, they're in a small body and in a way that feels acceptable to them. Deep breath, because we know, we know now especially that what the food peace journey looks like is different for everyone. And there's no way to predict what your body is going to look like as you move along this food peace journey: one, because our bodies are always changing. And our genetic blueprint is ours, and no one else is going to know what that is.

Julie: So I have a letter from someone who's grappling with their own fatphobia. And I name it so directly like that because I also want to address that as a content warning. So, you know, this person is grappling with how their body is changing as they are recovering, and really scared of that, and that may not be something that you really want to hear right now if you are living in a fat body. So heads up, and I also know this is something that so many people struggle with. So it's an important conversation to have.

Julie: And I'm delighted to share with you that I was able to talk to two people to help us with this episode. We get to hear from Hannah Robinson and Ali Eberhardt who are the two dietitians that make up the Eat Cake podcast, which is a really fun podcast that I had the pleasure of being on not too long ago. So when I read this letter, and the person actually referenced cake in the letter, I knew I had to ask Hannah and Ali their insight. So I can't wait for you to learn from them, but before we get to that interview, and hearing this episode's letter, a quick word from our sponsor.

Julie (ad break): This episode of the Love Food podcast is brought to you by my PCOS and Food Peace course. If you have been diagnosed with PCOS, I know that you've been told you have to diet in order to manage the condition, and I don't want PCOS to be associated with that four letter word anymore. I know you've experienced these really intense carb cravings, you're always tired and pressured to eat less and move more. It's such a shit show what they expect you to do. There is another way. My PCOS and Food Peace course was created just for you. After working

with thousands of people with PCOS, I have put together a food peace framework just for people with PCOS to feel more at home in their body and also manage the symptoms in the way that you want without diets. Yes, there is a way. This course includes 12 self paced video modules. What does that mean? Well, you get access to this course right away, every single module, you can do it at your pace, and you have lifetime access to the course. That is something that's really important to me, because we know that diet culture, although we're working really hard to dismantle and remove it, it's not going anywhere right now. So I want you to be able to use these modules whenever you need them. The course also includes a workbook, lots of handouts, things to help you along your journey, and my favorite: we have live monthly group coaching calls. I'm also going to be increasing the amount of group coaching calls, and there's also going to be a private PCOS and Food Peace podcast as a part of the course now too. So grab all the details at [pcosandfoodpeace.com](http://pcosandfoodpeace.com).

Julie: Alright, enough of all that. Let's go ahead and hear this episode's letter.

Julie (as letter writer): Dear food, We've had quite the rocky relationship, haven't we? I used to loathe you, and even hate myself for needing you in order to survive. I wish that I could just take a pill with all of the nutrients and vitamins I needed to keep me alive and never have to eat any food whatsoever. Many years of therapy, nutrition counseling, outpatient eating disorder programs, multiple residential treatment stays, and most importantly, my own extremely hard work, have brought me to a completely different place. I no longer loathe you. I can now appreciate that you bring people together, that you help us celebrate different cultures and histories, and that you allow us to connect and make memories. But here's the thing: I'm still scared of you. Not in the same way I was before, though. I've conquered all of my old fear foods, and I've learned the difference between foods I feared and foods I generally don't enjoy. I don't avoid you, and I eat intuitively. I'm able to give my body what it needs, knowing that sometimes that's a little more and sometimes it's a little less. I eat kale and cake, as a former dietitian of mine used to say. Although I enjoy spinach much more than kale, and ice cream more than cake. But that's besides the point. It's taken many years of agonizingly painful work to get to this place, and I'm finally able to recognize that and give myself the credit I deserve. So why am I still scared of you? To be honest, I'm still not sure if I'm scared more of you or scared of what my body will do with you. I still don't trust my body to handle you correctly. My last treatment program two years ago allowed me to complete an ideal step down program, going from residential to full independence slowly and surely. I wish everyone had this privilege, and will forever be grateful for the opportunities it gave me. I left confident that I could return to my real life, and continue to eat intuitively, even when things got stressful. And that's exactly what I did. My weight remained stable and in the range my team had estimated for me through my last two months of treatment, and for some time after I discharged. I was doing well, and was finally experiencing freedom regarding food, and then the unthinkable happened: I gained weight. My and my eating disorder's worst nightmare came true. It wasn't an alarmingly unhealthy amount, but enough for my team to take notice and to necessitate buying new clothes. Shame enveloped every part of my being. I was and I'm still completely healthy, and not what others might perceive to be a large body, but it sure feels ginormous to me. It's the heaviest I've ever been, and it came right on the heels of finally feeling free to eat intuitively. My eating disorder screams at me, "see, intuitive eating leads to weight gain. You'll always want to eat sweets and junk food, and you'll never want to eat enough vegetables. You're fat and disgusting and should go back to

days without food.” I'm proud to say that I held strong and have remained stable in recovery to this day, but my confidence has taken a huge blow. Rationally, I know that it could have nothing to do with you. It could be due to new stressors from starting graduate school, medication changes, or a variety of other things, but I can't convince the rest of me of that. All I can see is the flashing neon sign in my head that says, eating intuitively equals weight gain. Losing weight is constantly on my mind. I don't want to go back to the unhealthy underweight body I had before, but I desperately long for the healthy yet smaller body I had immediately following treatment. Food, you have hurt me deeply. Both you and my body have betrayed me. I trusted you, and you let me down. Will I ever be able to trust you again? Will I ever be able to eat without second guessing myself and my body again? Will I ever live without fear of weight gain, and the desire to lose weight? I really don't know. Sincerely, Untrusting and betrayed.

Julie: Hey there, letter writer. My heart is going out to you right now, and I know that this is a really tough space. This is a space that many people are in right now, and have been there before you, and it is quite complicated. But I have some guests that are going to be sharing some insight with you. I'm going to be talking to Hannah Robinson and Ali Eberhardt from the Eat Cake podcast. It's a great podcast. It's lovely. Um, I had so much fun talking to them about PCOS. So I invited them on the Love Food podcast. So let's go ahead and hear what Hannah and Ali have to say.

Ali: Hello!

Julie: Hey, Ali and Hannah, how are you? This is Julie Duffy Dillon.

Ali: Hi Julie, we're really well, thanks for having us!

Julie: Yes, it's so great to talk to you again. I had so much fun chatting on your podcast. So, thanks for coming on mine and helping me sort through this letter. Did you get a chance to read it?

Ali: Yeah, we did.

Julie: Awesome. So, uh, this person, so much pain in this letter, oh my goodness. And when you were reading through it, what- what was your impression about what this person is experiencing?

Hannah: Well, definitely off the forefront, the first thing that actually came to my mind was how amazing they've done in their recovery journey. Like, when you see just, the progress they've made with rebuilding with intuitive eating and just being able to get back so much into their life with school and through relationships and being able to, to enjoy food again and have freedom with it. That's the first thing that, that stands out. And then obviously the second part of that is just also how much pain there is, and just how much grieving there is of, of that body that they desire so much. And so being able to hold both at once was, was the piece that really stood out to me.

Ali: Yeah, I feel like it's such a, I feel like I interact with this client so often and I just have so much empathy for this experience. Like, not only have you kind of done the work and facing

these fears around like, what nutrition will do for you and how it feels in your body and learning to kind of appreciate the energy that comes with, you know, nourishing your body, but also some of the, like, the feelings of fullness and some of those experiences that we know people go through as they travel through their journey around eating disorder recovery. But also that sidebar, that piece of, yeah, I'm open to doing this really difficult and painful, emotional, physical, you know, spiritual work, and I really don't want that to change my body. And just how when those two, when all of those conditions can't be met when there are changes to the body that don't feel like they align with what the person, you know, feels comfortable with, how, how destabilizing that can be. And I see this from my clients all the time, where they, you know, just have this experience of, I want to do all this work and I want this life, I just don't know how I can do it while being in a body that's changing or, or gaining weight. And you know, of course the bigger, the bigger like, message that I read in this letter is just again, the impact of diet culture and, and you know, another person who is suffering from the, you know, beliefs of weight stigma being kind of like, internalized upon them.

Julie: Mhm. Yeah, and even thinking about like holding all of that, like you all both were saying that like holding all these things at one time just can feel like too heavy for one person to hold, and you know, something that I really need to just own is like, when I first started working with eating disorders, I can remember reassuring people all the time that like moving towards recovery, doing intuitive eating work, that it wouldn't make them quote "get too big" or you know, their body would settle in a place where it'd feel okay, and um I was really into reassuring, like that was the tool that I was always reaching for and so, I would imagine I'm not the only one.

Hannah: No.

Julie: And I know people still are, and so much of the promise of recovery is that, yeah, you'll feel more at ease in your body and, and I do also see- I've connected with so many people who have a similar experience as this, this letter writer, in that like, while recovery is not what I pictured and kind of quote "what I feared", but like that's how recovery is for most people, is like, recovering into a body that is going to be needing to hold all those different things, like you all were saying, so um, so messy, but yet, like, I feel like it's probably the most common, you know, at the same time. Yeah.

Ali: Yeah. I feel like so often clients, you know, are so fearful of this kind of like, runaway train of weight change. Like, okay, I'm open to doing this as long as like the, the place where the train stops is a place that's acceptable to me, and like, you're absolutely right. I think as practitioners, we get into this like, place where it's uncomfortable to say, you know, we actually don't get a say in where that train stops, so to speak, but all these other things that we're working on are going to have such sustainable, long lasting ways of supporting your body and your mind, you know, without the eating disorder. But I think when you're in this, like, more vulnerable place, and especially like, you know, we always talk about like, you want to validate, it makes sense why you're fearful of weight gain, the world around you tells you all of these different messages about bodies, and also it is reflected in the stigma people experience that live in larger bodies. So, you know, I think the fear of this makes a lot of sense, and you know, you're absolutely right about

practitioners needing to not reassure through promises because it can be more comfortable in the moment.

Julie: Yeah, yeah, it's like, it's an easy tool to reach for, that kind of reassurance and um, and you know, again, I was someone who did that for years and years and relied on it, but you know, I had so much unexamined fatphobia, and that's what I was seeing in this letter too is like, this person is really needing to face that part of themselves that we all are holding onto, that's hard to do anyway, and recover at the same time. Holy shit, that's hard. So um, well, what I'm wondering, kind of like thinking about all these different parts in this person's experience um, and maybe not even just the letter writer, maybe someone who can relate to this, because again, it's a really common experience. What would you recommend um, as some first steps forward?

Hannah: Definitely this piece around body respect. Like thinking of that as a pillar of the intuitive eating journey. This, this person who's written in has done so much work in all these other areas, and it seems like the area that could really use some focus right now is the body respect. And, and I think we need to be careful to, to not say that body respect is body love, right? Like are we able to take care of this body? Are we able to treat this body with respect and dignity? Are we able to make this body comfortable? The process of getting to body love might take some time, and can we have some patients with that, but can we start with a place of, of acceptance and respect? So, I think that kind of starts with understanding our body's weight is like our genetic blueprint, right? Like, like this weight change that you're experiencing isn't actually a result of food betraying you, but really this, this change in weight as a sign that your body needs to be at a different way to function optimally in order for you to have this freedom with food, in order for you to return back to school, in order for you to, to do all this work, your body just needs to be at a, at a different size and, and that's tough, but understanding that that's the science of it, not the betrayal of food, I think is a really important first step.

Ali: Yeah, if you're, one of the clients I work with, her therapist just said something to her that was an aha moment, but kind of the same idea as what Hannah is speaking to, like maybe loving your body isn't going to be the next step, or, or maybe it's not even possible in this journey, like who, we can't predict how things will go, but can you treat your body lovingly? And I think that's like a really nice reframe when we're looking at this piece. I think one of the other things that Hannah and I have been talking about recently is kind of the idea of like, what it is you're observing around you. I know this came up for us on our podcast when we had Bri Campos on, and she was speaking to body image and kind of like, what are the, what are the social media accounts? What are the bodies you are in contact with? What are the bodies you see around you? Because if like what you're observing or what's in your kind of like, your social media feed is a certain type of body, that can almost like elevate your fear of any changes in your body. Whereas if you're observing all sorts of diversity and, and different shapes and sizes and people living happy, healthy, wonderful lives in all shapes and sizes and all bodies, it can start to at least like, turn the fear down a little bit and what my life will look like, because it's, it's less about like what my physical weight will be as much as like what that means for the life I get to live. And so if we're observing people who have all sorts of different lives in different bodies that can be, you know, can sort of even subliminally start to like make us start to, to see that maybe there are other options for what like, happiness and love and you know, success look like.

Julie: Yeah, I totally agree. There's something about um, just curating the feed that does on some subliminal level, whatever, it does something really cool to our brain to be able to just acknowledge that like, oh yeah, like beauty has more diversity to it. Um, and normalizing different types of bodies, and so I love that. And I love Bri, oh my gosh, such a gift to the world and the conversation on body image. So thank you for bringing up that episode too. So, if um, someone, okay, not actually, I want to go back, that's not actually the question I wanna ask you. What I want to ask you is if you would like to put anything in particular on the food peace syllabus, and if you're new to the Love Food podcast, the food peace syllabus is a collection of resources that help your food peace journey, and there are books, other podcasts, documentaries, anything under the sun that helps your food peace journey, and you can get to the most recent copy at [juliedillonrd.com/foodpeacesyllabus](http://juliedillonrd.com/foodpeacesyllabus). And Ali, Hannah, do you have anything that you'd like to add to it?

Hannah: Yeah, the first thing we'll definitely mention is our own podcast, that's the Let Us Eat Cake podcast. We're available on all platform streaming apps. You can also check us out on our Instagram as well. We host a daily or weekday virtual snack support for people who are looking for a bit of virtual connection and support around snack times, depending on your time zone. You might be eating a snack, you might be eating a meal, but we're there every day Monday through Friday at 3 PM PST. So.

Ali: And our instagram is @eatcakepod.

Julie: Fabulous. Fabulous. I love your podcast. And actually, when I read this letter, since the person like, even said something about kale and cake, I was like, yes, this needs to be going to Hannah and Ali. So awesome. I will put everything in the shownotes, and if someone wants to find out more about the two of you, the work you do, or wants to work with you, where's the best place for them to go?

Hannah: The best place again would probably be to go to our Instagram, @eatcakepod. You can find both of our personal accounts on there as well, and there's different ways to get in touch.

Ali: Yes. So our, again, our Instagram is @eatcakepod, and Hannah and I are both on Instagram so you can find us there.

Julie: Fabulous! Well, I'll put that in the show notes. It'll be super handy for you, listener, thank you so much to both of you for joining and helping me to sift through this letter, I appreciate your time and expertise.

Ali: Thank you for having us!

Hannah: Always a pleasure talking to you, Julie.

Julie: Thanks!

Julie: So there you have it. Letter writer, I hope my conversation with Hannah and Ali provided you with some new insight, some new things to consider as you're pausing on this space in your

food peace journey. I hope you get the support you need to move forward. It's a really tough space, but it's important, and as you recover into the body that your body needs you to recover into. just know as you're doing this work, other people are doing it with you. And as everyone is really coming to a place of examining their own internalized fatphobia, it benefits the whole world. It benefits your community, it benefits our fat friends, it benefits all of us. So it's really important work.

Julie (ad break): I see that food is written back, but before we get to food's letter, this episode of the Love Food podcast was brought to you by my PCOS and Food Peace Course. If you want to check out the details, go to [pcosandfoodpeace.com](https://pcosandfoodpeace.com).

Julie: If you enjoyed this episode of Love Food podcast, I would love it if you left a rating, a review, you subscribed, or shared an episode. Doing any of those acts of kindness really does help the show grow. It helps more people find the show with every kind of interaction that listeners take. So thank you in advance.

Julie: Alright, like I said, food has written back, but until next time, take care.

Julie (as food): Dear untrusting and betrayed, Hey there dear one. We know you're not on safe terms with us, yet please know we are supporting you, care for you, and giving you the nourishment you need to make these important, albeit tough steps, on your food peace journey. You may have gotten mixed messages about your recovery body, and diet culture constantly fucks with how these messages land. Your body needs to gain weight to heal, and cannot be prescribed a weight to stop. Examining diet culture's fatphobia and where it has taken root within you will be important now. Give yourself compassion as you acknowledge all of its parts. Respect what you and your body have been through, and keep it real. We are not here to preach about self love. That may feel out of touch and toxic. Rather, it's acknowledging your bravery and it's home within your current body. And you deserve to feel at home there. 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](https://juliedillonrd.com/signup). And I look forward to seeing you here next week for another episode of the Love Food podcast. Take care.