

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 245 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. I know there are many of you who are really tending to your food peace journey and finding some joy in that, and actually getting some respite from the intrusive thoughts that come with living in diet culture. But what do you do when you're not alone? You know, you live in a family, there's other people in your life maybe um, maybe it's not family, maybe it's friends, a partner, someone who is living with you, that you're concerned. I know many of you live with people in your life who have chronic conditions. One that's really common is prediabetes or diabetes. I know this is a stumbling block for so many people, and I have a letter from someone today who has been working through their own food peace journey, yet now is experiencing kind of a panic because what are they going to do as they are living with someone who's experiencing diabetes? I have so much to say. And I invited a guest. Her name is Rachael Hartley. She's the author of the book *Gentle Nutrition*. She has so much wisdom when it comes to how to incorporate intuitive eating tools with diabetes. But before we get to hear from Rachael and this episode's letter, a quick word from our sponsor.

Julie (ad break): This episode of a 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. 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 is a part of the course now too. So, grab all the details that pcosandfoodpeace.com.

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

Julie (as letter writer): Dearest food, I love you. You are delicious and I enjoy you. I also sometimes feel angry towards you and blame you for my problems. I've also felt scared of you

and felt you were going to hurt me. However, I've done a lot of work around this these days. I often feel neutral towards you. I feel we are getting into a groove and have a much better relationship. I am so grateful for this. I even ate a tuna on raisin bread sandwich to celebrate one of my newly discovered weird food combination loves. I'm so glad we can be playful together sometimes. Nevertheless, I still have hiccups in this journey that make me doubt all of it. Recently, a family member of mine, someone I love and cook for often, was diagnosed prediabetic. Honestly, I'm not sure what this means. I do know he has been told to be careful about carbs and sugars or he will become full on diabetic, and this will ruin the rest of his life. This is not what was actually said, of course, but this is the message that seems to underlie what was said. I am scared. Did my cooking do this by embracing food, stressing less, and ditching diets? Have I caused a health problem for someone I love so dearly? What about when I get pregnant and have my first child? What will I do then? How do I know that what I'm doing is best for those that will be dependent on me? Don't they deserve the best chance at a healthy life, and what does it actually mean? It feels as if I'm able to work out my individual relationship with you a bit, but when others are involved I begin to feel the creeping in of doubt. I even googled diets for diabetes today. I had a sinking feeling when I did that, as if maybe I would have to break up with you. Maybe all of our playful fun neutral times were over. Maybe we would have to go back to how things used to be. Maybe I was wrong all along. It's been hard to know what is right for me, and I still struggle to stand course when I start to feel my decisions may be impacting others. I love deeply, and the doubt becomes fiercer and I actually become afraid. I become afraid of you, food. Will you hurt my family? Love, sad and scared.

Julie: Thank you so much for this note, letter writer. I really appreciate it. I am connecting with the nuance that you're exploring. There's one thing to be said about mending your own relationship with food, but what about that process and how it affects other people in your life? Is that going to affect them for positive, negative? What if they have a health condition? Could it fuck it all up? While I am just going to go ahead and jump to one conclusion that it's not going to be quite that black and white, I still want to explore this, because I think it's an important space that many people can relate to. And I'm going to invite you right now to a conversation with Rachael Hartley. Rachael is a dietitian that I've known for a while now, and she's also the author of the book *Gentle Nutrition*, a non diet approach to healthy eating. She is someone that has been exploring the nuance of intuitive eating work while also living with different health conditions. So let's go ahead and give Rachael a call.

Rachael: Hello!

Julie: Hey Rachael, it's Julie Duffy Dillon, how are you?

Rachael: Great. How are you today?

Julie: I'm fabulous, excited to talk to you. I know it's been way too long since we've had a chance to chat, but thanks for coming on, and I am wondering if you had a chance to read through the letter I sent you?

Rachael: I did, I did. Thank you for sending, and yes, had a chance to read over it.

Julie: Awesome. When I read the letter, I was thinking about your book that you just released and I thought this is a really um, important letter. And again, it made me think of your book, because that's something I know that you explore in there is like, how to just continue on with working through intuitive eating while, you know, bringing up chronic conditions and health conditions. So, thank you for reading it and helping us kind of sift through it. But when you were, when you were reading through the letter, what was your general impression about what this person is experiencing?

Rachael: Oh my goodness! Yeah, no, um, I appreciate you saying that about the book because I, I know that one thing I was thinking about when I wrote it was how you know, this belief that health is simply an outcome of food and fitness. It puts so much pressure around how we feed ourselves and how we move our bodies and to the point where, you know, it really creates this environment and fuels behaviors that are actually harming our health and I just, I read this letter and I can see like, oh my goodness, this letter writer loves their family so so so so dearly, like, and they're actually supporting their health by having this like, caring and loving and strong relationship with their family member. And like, my goodness, how sad that um, you know, that that this cultural belief around nutrition and food and chronic health conditions is like, standing in the way of this, of this truly like, physically and mentally health promoting family relationship.

Julie: Yeah, I um, wanted to give this person a hug and let them know like, them mending their relationship with food and then also like, modeling that, like how in the long term you and I know, Rachael, that's something that's connected with like, lower blood sugar and things like that. And um, like everybody still like, deserves to have access to like recovery and to feel at home in their body and um, I hate how the current messaging with like, of diabetes, which I do think, I say this a lot on this podcast, but I really believe that diabetes is used as a weapon to um, make people like, comply with diet culture, to pursue weight loss, even if they're kind of not wanting to or feeling like it's harmful. I'm sure you've heard people talk about like, relapsing in their eating disorder recovery or in their intuitive eating process because of like, the threat of diabetes and- it does seem like, you know, trying to do intuitive eating work in a world that has this kind of mentality about diabetes can feel like, like you're just pursuing something intentionally that's gonna like, harm you and your family. Like it's just, it's such a hard heavy burden for this person to hold onto, you know? Yeah.

Rachael: Yeah because no, diabetes is so used as like a threat by many doctors, and I was just having this conversation with a client yesterday, and it's awful. And it's you know, really, and I don't think anything is like, with prediabetes in particular, I think that is especially um, you know, used as a threat to, you know, push people into as you said, like submitting to diet culture.

Julie: Yeah. And, and we know that recovering from eating disorders, we know that um, pursuing like intuitive eating type work is something again that like, promotes this, this wellness and and physical health, but also like emotional health. You know, it's something that we know can help like holistically. Um, and then again, it just feels like I could just feel this heavy burden this person's caring and like you said, this person definitely like, so loves their family, you know, and it just comes through in the letter and you know, considering all this, Rachael um, what

would you recommend to someone like this letter writer who is trying to like, hold onto all of this. What would you recommend as some steps forward?

Rachael: Yeah. So I think first it's **probably** really important to have just some facts about, you know, this diagnosis of prediabetes because like we said, um it is used as a as a weapon, it's used as a threat and um you know, certainly I there's a lot of controversy around this diagnosis and I think they're certainly, you know, a good thing in that it can help people identify if they're having um, metabolic stuff going on that maybe putting them at risk for diabetes, like it certainly can be this helpful warning sign, but it also like catches a lot of people who are never ever ever going to develop diabetes. Um and I'm not like, you know an epidemiologist or expert in like the numbers, but from what I understand um, you know, with the diagnosis of prediabetes, it's really just about 2% of people per year who have - and I believe it's untreated prediabetes - that will go on to develop diabetes. So that's you know, what, like 10% of people after- after five years? That's not everybody, you know, that's not like a “you have prediabetes and you will also um, and that means without a doubt that you are going to develop diabetes as a result of that.” Um on top of that, you know, I- I read in the letter how the writer said um, something along the lines of, you know, the doctor kind of saying, you know, you'll develop diabetes and this will- will ruin your family member's life. Even if your family member does develop diabetes eventually, that is not like, that is not a death sentence. That is, that does not ruin your life. Certainly for- for many people um, you know, they can have diabetes, maybe they have to take a medication, [coughs] excuse me, maybe they have to um, you know, maybe they're being a little bit more mindful and aware around food, but it doesn't always pose this massive, you know, create a massive change in one's life. For other people, sometimes the diabetes diagnosis like, you know, can be quite a bit to manage and can be challenging, but a diagnosis of diabetes, it is not this automatic um, you know, life altering awful thing to happen. There are many, many, many, many, many people out there who are living just incredibly happy and healthy and lovely lives who have this diagnosis.

Julie: Yeah, I think that's so important to point out, I'm glad you did. Um, there's something about um, the family histories that a lot of us have with diabetes, and you know, I think about my grandfather um, you know, it seems like everyone in my family eventually gets diabetes if they make it to 90, which is really funny, you know, like so, yeah. Um, and but one of my um, my, one of my grandfathers had it- I think he may have gotten in his forties or fifties, and it was something that um, he just took a pill. It was no big deal and, and I was glad to have that relationship with him and witness his diabetes because it was different than the things that I was hearing and seeing in my training and um, as a dietitian because I was taught about like, amputations and blindness and, and um, uh neuropathy, which we know those things happen, but also like, because of medical care, as long as someone has access to medical care and, and um, doctors are diagnosing it before blood sugars are 300, you know, like there's ways to manage it. It's not this like thing that's going to lead to this doom and gloom and um, yeah, there's like this all or nothing kind of mentality, and I mentioned that our family's history with it because I almost wonder how much of it is like we, some of us have it in our body just because of past family members who may have passed away from it, and so we're scared of it, you know? Because 100 years ago, you know, it was just something that would cause all these horrible things and be a way to die really um, a lot earlier. But yeah, now, like you said, it's not something that's this um, as quite as impactful. And we know there are some people who have um, some complications and uh, more trouble managing it, and especially people who don't have

access to health care or to medications or enough food, but um, you know, having that kind of free, I don't know, just access to care to be able to know if you even have it? Yeah, I just, I don't see it being as quite as scary. And um, there's something about that like panic response that I lead, um that I see leading to like behaviors that are not what people often want. You know, more hasty kind of jumping to um, to kind of like either fads or just like, all or nothing kind of experiences and um, so for you, for this letter writer, I'm like, I wish there was a way to like, help digest these facts that you're saying, Rachael, to then allow the person then to like, decide what they want to do, you know? Yeah, yeah.

Rachael: Yeah. No, absolutely, like these beliefs that we have about, you know, food and nutrition and also, and its role in diabetes, and also the, you know, this, this pressure that we put around diabetes, it doesn't actually help people take care of their bodies in a health promoting way. So yeah, you know, it's it's like, you know, regardless of how you feel about a diabetes diagnosis, like putting so much pressure around it, I don't know that it helps people actually feed their bodies more healthfully. Yeah.

Julie: Yes. This is where I'm like, amen. Yes, yeah.

Rachael: Yeah, and the stuff that you were saying too about your family and the genetics around diabetes, because it is something that there is this genetic link and certainly um, food and- and movement are aspects of- of, you know, things that can affect our blood sugar levels over time. Or for someone who does have that kind of genetic predisposition um, that can play a role, but it's not, you know, it is not solely an outcome of what you're eating and how you're moving. Um, we know that as you mentioned, having access to medical care, stress, so when someone has just a high stress lifestyle or they're in an oppressed group and they're, you know, experiencing that, that chronic stress of daily life, you know, environmental, [coughs]excuse me, my cold of course acting up now.

Julie: It's okay.

Rachael: The, you know, the COVID anxiety never goes away once you- even when you're fully vaccinated. Um but, but no, you know, the like- it- it does not, you know, there are other aspects of preventing diabetes that don't have to do with food, and um, don't have to do with exercise. Things like having these lovely social connections with your family members, um, things like having just like, you know, a great like, environment that you're in and having um, you know, and when it does come to food, just eating enough and eating a variety and you know, getting some fat and proteins and carbs and pleasure on your plate. Like, it doesn't have to be this restrictive thing.

Julie: Oh, yes, I'm so glad you mentioned that too, because there is this like, I don't know, pressure, belief, that um a person causes their diabetes. You know, I see this a lot with people I work with with PCOS that they think they caused it, um or ate too much sugar, or didn't exercise enough. And yeah, one thing that research has been really clear on is that genetics is like, the main part of a person experiencing diabetes, and then the other um, where- I'm like trying to figure out the research words, but like the other way, I know that's not the right word, but like, the other reason maybe um, that people have more of a chance of experiencing diabetes like you

said, is because of how much power they have in the world or not, you know? And then because then it's like behaviors and things. So there's all these sides to managing and preventing diabetes that is going to be about support and relationships and rest and trying to manage stress as much as a human can. But I also think about - I don't know what you think about this Rachael - but I think about how um, people doing their individual work to recover from diet culture, to reject diet culture, do doing things like intuitive eating and you know, as- as we really get into that as a normal way for ourselves, like that becomes the way that we're going to live our life, and so you know, I think about intuitive eating means that I'm not going to be judging a person based on how they look, um their body size, I'm not gonna call a food good or bad, um, that is something that like, contributes to like, a community being able to be um, supported more and um, providing more equitable kind of experiences in our community, and I'm like, that is something that actually may help our community's blood sugar, you know?

Rachael: Right! Oh my goodness.

Julie: Isn't that cool? I think that's a really neat part of it, you know?

Rachael: Paying it forward, but with healing.

Julie: Yeah!

Rachael: But with like, yes, absolutely. Because so much of um, you know part of our health is we have some say, you know, the choices we make certainly can make a difference, but so much more so than that, it's like the community that we live in, and when you're healing your relationship with food, when you're um, you know, when you are as you said like paying it forward, um that really does create this kind of ripple effect in our families and our friendships that supports the health of the people around us. And while it will be lovely, like you know, my goodness, the systems that affect our community health are so so so wide reaching and um, it is so complex and my goodness um, obviously like, getting involved with like, politics and you know paying attention to who you're voting for locally and just like, getting involved in community organizations. Like I don't know, I feel like those are ways that you can impact your loved ones and your community's help, like even more so than the food that you're that you're eating.

Julie: Yes, I agree 100%. And so for you, letter writer, when you're like feeling stressed about like, should I eat this sandwich with bread or lettuce, you know, like thinking about these bigger picture things in the end may be more worth your brain energy. Like this, the bandwidth may be better served in another space, and it's not necessarily going to come down to whether or not um, you choose to eat a certain amount of carbohydrates or serve a certain amount of sugar, and when you're cooking for your family and um, yeah, I hope that helps just to like, take that like immediate kind of burden off and to help um, just have a bigger picture, and help you to go in the direction you want to go that's like sustainable and long term. So I really appreciate your insight, Rachael, and we have something on the Love Food podcast called the food peace syllabus. If you're new to the show, it's a list of resources that we've been gathering over the last few years, and you can get the latest food peace syllabus at juliedillonrd.com/foodpeacesyllabus. And Rachael, would you like to add anything to it?

Rachael: Sure. So um, I guess I will do my shameless self plug of my book *Gentle Nutrition*. So it is a book that I really, you know, I wanted to write to help people conceptualize the role of nutrition and intuitive eating. And um, I hope that um, you know, in reading it it helps people understand like, how can we take nutrition off the pedestal and um, you know, engage with it in a way where it's actually you know, health promoting and flexible and, and intuitive. So, um, so I would say that um, the other thing I would add to it, I have a wonderful blog post on diabetes and intuitive eating written by um, Kate, the dietician who works for me, and it has lots of just like really helpful information, some really flexible um, information about nutrition for diabetes management. So I hope that reading that and um, just getting more of an idea of how nutrition for diabetes like, is not this super restrictive uh, you know, a rule book of, a voice of eating. I hope that that also helps kind of take a little bit of the pressure off this reader's shoulders.

Julie: Yeah, thank you. I will put links to both of those in the show notes for you, and if someone wants to know more about you, maybe work with you, just find out more about your work, where is the best place for them to go?

Rachael: Absolutely. So they can go to my website which is rachaelhartleynutrition.com, and my name is spelt with an ael. And then I'm also active on Instagram, although not this week because I'm taking a little mental health on Instagram break, but normally I'm quite active on Instagram and my handle is @rachaelhartleyrd.

Julie: Alright, thank you, thank you so much Rachael, I appreciate your time and your expertise.

Rachael: Thank you so so much for having me.

Julie: So there you have it. Letter writer, I hope my conversation with Rachael was helpful to you as you explore this nuance with pre diabetes in your family. Her book is so lovely. Something that I was telling Rachael after we stopped recording is that it is beautiful. I am someone who is not this like, voracious reader who just loves to read like words on a page. I love aesthetics and the way things look, and her book is beautiful, even just the way it feels in your hands. So I hope you can check it out. There's lots of really fabulous delicious-looking recipes that I actually am excited to try, and if you've listened to this podcast for a while, you know that I'm not the biggest fan of cooking, so they look really fun, and so check it out. I hope it helps you on your food peace journey. So, I see that food has written back, but before we get to food's letter.

Julie (ad break): This episode of a Love Food podcast was brought to you by my PCOS and Food Peace course. You can get to all the details at pcosandfoodpeace.com.

Julie: If you enjoyed this episode of the Love Food podcast, I would love it if you left a rating, a review, subscribed, or shared an episode. Doing any of those acts of kindness really helps the show grow, helps more people find the show so we can join together, lock arms, and say fuck off the diet culture together. There's power in numbers, right?

Julie: All right. So let's get to food's letter. But until next time, take care.

Julie (as food): Dear sad and scared, We know you love your family so much. Please know you loving and caring for yourself while tending to your food peace journey will be an asset, not a detriment. We know diabetes is used as a weapon to scare one into complying with diet culture, but consider the facts: food is not consumed in a vacuum. Diabetes is a complicated, chronic medical condition, more tied to genetics and oppression rather than your individual day by day, bite by bite food choices. Keep this perspective. Focusing on sustainable nourishment that includes pleasure and satiety will give you the energy you need to feed your family, physically and emotionally. 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.