

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 246 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 goes out to all of you who are putting on a happy face, acting like everything is just fine and glorious and joyful with food. But behind that happy face is a lot of fear, exhaustion, and overwhelm. I have a letter today from someone who is a mother, a caregiver to children, and really wants to make sure that the family enjoys this positive, or at least neutral, relationship with food, not wanting to pass on this complicated, tough relationship with food and body. And so whenever they are around food together, putting on this face like everything is just fine. I don't know if you can relate to this, but I know from talking to so many of you that having a complicated relationship with food and raising children or just taking care of other people can be really uncomfortable, and oftentimes feeling like you just have to have a smile on your face even when you're crumbling inside. And what happens though, when you are feeling exhausted? When you don't know how to keep going, but needing to keep going. This letter writer is someone who is hoping to kind of just put a pin in it, and just hopefully then help their kids enough to not have this disordered way of relating to food. But is it enough? That is the question: is that enough? I am so excited to also share with you a special guest. Her name is Unyime Oguta. I got to know her on her podcast, the Thriving Mum podcast. She invited me on her podcast to talk about PCOS, and that podcast episode is going to be released in June of 2021, in case you're listening to this in real time. I really wanted to speak with Unyime about this letter in particular, because I know that she specializes in helping busy moms transform their relationship with food. Um, so they can gain that freedom and not pass on the disordered eating habits that they were raised on. That they can kind of break the cycle. So, when I read this letter, I knew Unyime would be the person to talk to. But before we get to hear from Unyime and this 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): Dear food, The worst question my children can ask me is what's for dinner. It's a daily assault on my desire to avoid thinking about you all together. For me to answer my children's question, I need to have thought about you, what would be tasty, what my children would like, and what will nourish them. And then when I have thought about you, then I have to prepare you. I find this utterly overwhelming and exhausting down to my bones. Did you notice I didn't ask myself, what would I like to eat? I don't know the answer to that question. I'm so divorced from you that I don't know what I want when I feel hungry. And food, so you know, I have felt hungry for as long as I can remember. Here's what I do know about you, food. I know that it's not my fault I am fat, and it's not your fault either. I just feel like we got off on the wrong foot. My mom was scared of you, food, and did the things women do to keep you at bay. She did the best she could with what she had. But it left its mark. I watched, and I felt constrained and angry. So, I very angrily and defiantly ate what I wanted. But eating because you're angry doesn't lead to food peace either. I talk about you so positively with my kids and I put on such a cheerful food neutral voice at dinner and lunch and breakfast and snacks and all the times we seem to talk about food. My children will never ever know that you and I don't really get on. That is a promise. But truthfully, I want to not think about you. You make me feel so anxious and demoralized. Do you think you and I might be able to make peace? Sincerely, overwhelmed and exhausted.

Julie: Oh letter writer, you must be exhausted. I want to help thank you for writing this letter, and I'm going to give a call to Unyime Oguta. She is someone who I met on the place where we meet people these days, on Instagram. And when I met her on Instagram, we got to talking, and I went on her podcast called the Thriving Mom podcast and dove deep into PCOS. And as I got to know Unyime's work, I was really impressed with all the work she's doing, helping moms and caregivers with like, helping the culture at home to reject diets and to heal the relationship with food and really help the family connect with intuitive eating principles. So, reading your letter, I knew that she is the one that I wanted to ask to help me answer it. So, let's go ahead and give Unyime a call.

Unyime: Hello there.

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

Unyime: I'm doing well, Julie. How are you?

Julie: I'm doing just fine. Thank you so much for agreeing to chat with me today. Did you get a chance to look at that letter?

Unyime: Yes. And I'm really excited to dive right in.

Julie: Well, me too. And this letter, when I read it like the first line, you know how it was like, what's for dinner? I have to tell you that I, I have a feeling my experience with food, my lived experience is different because we all have our different experiences, but reading that, that like line, and I was like, oh, that grates on my nerves. And it's, you know, food is fun and um, nourishing, and also a chore at times at my house. So, there were a lot of things that this person was writing about that I could totally relate to, and I know this is like, your wheelhouse, like this is the part of your work that you are spending a lot of time with. So, when I read it, I know- I just knew I had to um, have you answer this letter. So, when you were reading through it, what was your bird's eye view? What was your general impression about what this person was experiencing?

Unyime: Absolutely. That's a great question. And it's funny that you talk about just feeling grated when it comes to that question, what's for dinner? But from reading this story, it sounds like the writer is just echoing the stories that a lot of us are struggling with, which is that question of what's for dinner? And it's not sometimes so much about the question. It's that we're also in this space where we're all figuring out our relationship with food. So, while this writer is recognizing that they need to change things in their relationship with food, they recognize the struggles that they've had. They're unable to find a way back to find a good rhythm for connecting with food because of years of experience and probably anger and disappointment. They also know they don't want to repeat the cycle with their kids. And you know, I wish I could tell them that there's a quick solution to this, but it's only a matter of time before their pretense runs out. So, the writer uses things like speaking with a food neutral voice at dinner time. Uh, you know, they're putting on a cheerful face, and they're trying to keep their children from knowing that, you know, that they have a struggle with food. But the truth is, we repeat the cycles that we haven't dealt with. And for this writer, it would be interesting to just get that knowledge to know that, yes, they might be doing what works in the meantime. But over time, that troublesome relationship is going to show up. It might not show up in the way they talk about food. It might not- it might show up in other ways, like how they talk to their children about their bodies, about things that they're doing, all of that ties back to food. Sometimes it's not just about what's physically on the plate.

Julie: Oh, that's so important to acknowledge. And um, whenever I read through letters, um, something that I appreciate is that sometimes I will read through a letter and- and want to go in a certain direction. But then when I talk to someone else, they pick up on things that I just did not have on my radar. And that's what I'm appreciating hearing what you're talking about. Like, there's so much of the relationship with food that goes beyond like, the cheerful face, like wearing the mask. You know, you can't just scoot it under the rug, it would be great. But I think for generations, at least in my family, trying to put it under the rug didn't work. Like, that stuff still came out. You know? Whether we name it or do the work or not, it's going to be there. And um, oh, that's such a heavy thing to hold onto. But I also think it's just really wonderful that this person, this letter writer, like, they may be the first person in their family to even acknowledge that it wasn't okay to relate to food in this way. And so, that's a really big deal, an important thing, and I'm giving them a high five, and anyone listening who can relate to what this person is experiencing, super high five. And um, when you were reading through this letter, and like

maybe for someone who um, either the letter writer or someone who can relate to this letter, what would you recommend as some first few steps forward?

Unyime: That's a great question. And I just want to say, first off, like you said, this is a heavy burden to carry. So I commend this writer for recognizing that something needs to change. Wight? Because depending on their experience, like from this story, they've talked about their mom's experience and how that has transferred to them. But they recognize that that's a problem. So now they're trying to get some help, they're trying to figure this thing out, and it's a lot. So I want them to commend themselves and know that they can absolutely make peace with food. First, they could start with just recognizing what has happened, because when we recognize what has happened, we name what has happened. And that really brings it full front. Then they need to move on to forgiving themselves for feeling this way, because sometimes when we have feelings like this, we tend to want to hide them, we tend to want to feel ashamed about them because we feel we shouldn't be feeling that way, but you absolutely have a reason to feel that way, because something happened. So, I would invite them to forgive themselves, know that your feelings are valid. They're not about who you are as a person, they're a response to what has happened to you. So once you forgive yourself, it gives you an opportunity to explore possible ways that you can reconnect to food. And that could start with just starting to look at the media that you're consuming, what is out there, what are the things, the resources that are available that you could start with to just give you that space, that environment where you can immerse yourself to see what's out there for trying to figure out how to connect to food. I in my program teach from a trust based model, so the two I highly recommend our intuitive eating and Ellyn Satter's competency eating model because they really focus not on the food itself. They focus on other factors that impact how you relate to food, and in this case, I think that this writer would really benefit from that because there's so many emotions going on. There's so many things that would impact how they respond to their children's feeding over time. So, starting there, they might not be ready to dive into the work with getting the support which I highly recommend, but that might not be accessible at this point. So, just starting with things that are free: listening to podcasts, just like this one, attending workshops, reading books, trying to get that support. And then when they're ready to be vulnerable and talk to somebody about it, then they can jump in and get that support, because this is hard work. And when you start exploring that relationship, it takes a lot of effort. It takes a lot of vulnerability, which is something that a lot of us run away from. So, the writer needs to take their time and know that this is a journey. It'll feel uncomfortable. There are times when they'll want to run away, but when you think about where you're coming from and the future that you're trying to create, then it's really helpful for you to know that this is the work that you need to do to support your children, because like I said, that pretense will run out, and you need to be ready to know that you're not just coming from this place where you're playing to people, that your wholly invested in supporting your children. Then one last thing I wanted to talk about in the meantime, when it comes to that question of "what's for dinner", I know it seems to be a trigger for a lot of moms.

Julie: Yes it does. [Laughs]

Unyime: [Laughs] Yeah, it's funny because I don't know for you Julie, but for me, that used to be a trigger because I had a mindset about what that meant about me as a mom. So, I would invite them to explore that. Why does that trigger you? What are the emotions behind it? Yes. You

have a tumultuous relationship with food, but the words that this writer is using like food makes them anxious and feel demoralized. So that might play into how they respond when their kids ask what's for dinner. So, when they think about that, they need to remember that "what's for dinner" doesn't have to be the mother's job or the caregiver's job. "What's for dinner?" can be everyone in the family's job. We're all invested. When you think about Ellyn Satter and her division of responsibility when it comes to children and feeding kids, we can bring our kids into the food relationship. How can they support us? We can ask them what kinds of foods do you like? And for my clients, I always start with, how about you make a list of all the foods that your family enjoys? That's a good place to start, and just keep that. So, when you come into your week planning your meals, you can go to that list and start picking. Your kids can suggest, well, we would like this food, we would like this food. And that's how you create some form of a meal plan. And then once you get your kids involved, they can help out with some of the work, whether it be with the grocery planning, whether it be with the meal planning, whether it be with the meal prep. These are some of the ways that that takes that stress and tension off of just the mom and puts it on everyone. So then it's a "we" activity, not just her or them activity.

Julie: I love that. You know, because I think about what this person is describing and their relationship with food and I'm picturing almost like, them wanting to put a pin in it, and just not wanting to like, let anything come out for fear of like, how uncomfortable it's going to be. So it's just like slam shut, and so then having this neutral face, I wonder how they're really interacting with food with their family, you know? And is it "mom is just going to go and make the food and then voila it's on the table" and there's no interaction with the food and prep with the kids? Um, no real discussion about it, like it's kind of kept in the dark um, I would I think about like how some families will talk about money in that same way, like it's like not really talked about, just hush hush. So kids never really learn how to have a healthy relationship with money, and um, I think with food it can be a similar way when someone hasn't really like explored their relationship with food to be able to um, I don't- just have different like hands on experiences and- because that's what I think about with kids, how they have so much fun just playing with it, and going to the grocery store and picking something different out, and yeah, just having a playful kind of attitude with it and um, I know for me um, I know I've told you this before but like, one thing that I really connect with, like bringing up Ellyn Satter is that um, I had been talking to people for years and years about intuitive eating and Ellen Satter's division of responsibility, but then once I actually became a parent, like once I was holding a kid of mine in my arms, I was like I need to re-read her books. Because I don't enjoy cooking, I don't- I don't enjoy a lot of like, I don't know, making things like crafts and- and cooking to me kind of feels similar, um, I enjoy eating but just not the cooking part and um, my partner loves cooking, and he, that's one of- one of the many things that I was like, oh he's someone for me because he really enjoyed cooking. Um, but then his job kept him at work pretty late, so I had to cook in order for us to be able to have family meals together. And one of the things that I loved about Ellyn Satter's book *Feeding a Healthy Family* was how it had a whole section on like, how to get yourself in the kitchen cooking, and you know that book also has like, a- you know, a third of it's like your own relationship with food as well. And um, the- you know, someone who has a complicated relationship with food and needing to take care of these kids, like that's another part of the letter that I really related to was like, it's hard to have to like, think about all the things with food with like, being a parent. Like, what food do they need to have, let's make a grocery list, let's plan the menu, what haven't they had in a while? Um, I think as a dietitian it's

something, I don't know if you experience this too but like, it's something like, oh my gosh, it's all I do all day long is talk and think about food, and then I need to go and eat myself. Like I have to go and like feed myself too like, it's just like, why couldn't I have been like, I don't know like a lawyer or a furniture maker. I don't know, something that didn't have to do with like, something we have to do all the- all the time. But um, having all of that like, having to think about food and then already if you have a brain that's already stressed about food, that's just a lot to hold onto, and Ellyn Satter, what may- I remember like, when my adrenaline just came down, I felt so relaxed, how she gave permission um, to like, use foods that were convenient. Like shelf stable foods that were easy, like she was like, if you have like a slow cooker, just here's something you can make with all canned foods. Do it.

Unyime: Yeah.

Julie: And get this at the fast food and one thing you make. And not from scratch, but just like heated up, you know, just like get used to being in the kitchen, and to me that was something I know like, logistically was really helpful um, and the trust based model that- that Ellyn Satter has and then also intuitive eating. Um, I hope that letter writer connects with that as like something that they can do on their own terms. Like you said, like I was so glad to hear you say like, you don't have to like just jump right in if you're not ready to work with like, an individual clinician on this, like you can just like, start in a way that feels more accessible in the moment, like listening to something or reading about something. I would even imagine too um, you know going to a seminar like you said, like that would be really wonderful to just hear other people experiencing the same thing, and not feel so weird, you know, like, there are a lot of people who feel stressed in this, especially when there's a complicated relationship with food going on at the same time. So, um that was a lot to say about what you said, but I just really appreciate um, the work you're doing with families and um, I know someone listening is going to get a lot from all the tips that you just shared. And um, one thing I wanted to mention too, is we have something on this podcast called the food peace syllabus, and that is a collection of resources that we've been gathering over the last five years or so, and you can get to the latest copy of the food peace syllabus at juliedillonrd.com/freebies. And this is actually um, the first update in a really long time to the food peace syllabus. So if you have an older one, you can get to the newest one at juliedillonrd.com/freebies. So, would you like to add anything to it?

Unyime: Absolutely. We're talking about gaining food freedom. So, I would love to add my food freedom guide. It just gives simple steps that anyone who is looking to start, you know, those beginning stages of healing their relationship with food can do today. And I would love for listeners to be able to grab that.

Julie: Awesome. I will put a link to it in the show notes that that works for you.

Unyime: Yeah.

Julie: I would also love to add your podcast, the Thriving Mum podcast. Anyone who is a caregiver I know can get a lot from it, especially someone who can relate to this letter. So, is it okay with you if I put that on there too?

Unyime: Absolutely.

Julie: Awesome. So if someone wants to know more about your work, where is the best way for people to find out more about you?

Unyime: Thank you. I think you started with the podcast. So the Thriving Mom podcast we air every Sunday. It's available on most podcast platforms. You can also listen to it on my website. The best place to reach me would be on social media. I'm active on Instagram, and it's @oliveandblisswellness. As well, if they want to know more about my programs or how they can work with me or listen to the podcast without a podcast app, that's at oliveandbliss.ca.

Julie: Awesome, thank you so much! I appreciate it. I'll put all of these links in the show notes for someone to easily just click and go and find your work in your podcast. Thank you so much for your time and your compassion and expertise.

Unyime: Thank you Julie. This was so much fun for me.

Julie: So there you have it. Letter writer, I hope that my conversation with Unyime Oguta helped you as you explore your relationship with food while taking care of your family. Like we said, we think what you're doing is so, so important, and we hope you have the space and access to explore a bit deeper, because like Unyime said, the pretense will eventually run out, and we know you want to do something different for your family. So, I see that food has written back, but before we get to foods 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, you subscribed or shared an episode. Doing any of these four acts of kindness may seem really small, but they're actually huge when it comes to podcasting, especially in Apple Podcasts. So thank you in advance for your support.

Julie: All right. So like I said, food has written back, but until next time. Take care.

Julie (as food): Dear overwhelmed and exhausted, We see your pain. You're carrying such a heavy, uncomfortable burden. What if you could break it up into smaller pieces? Taking time to acknowledge, care for, and repair your complicated relationship with food and body that has been passed on to you for many generations. How would that impact that daily question, what's for dinner, mom? You don't have to pretend. You can connect with different levels of support on your terms. Tending to this deeper relationship will help you take off that mask, be real, and help your family connect with lifelong food peace. 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.