

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 248 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 want to start with, what was the message that you were given about how your body would look as you got older? Were you told that it would stay the same? Were you told that you should make sure it stays the same? Or were you told you must fight tooth and nail and do everything you can to make sure that your body doesn't get wrinkly, fat, gray? I know that's the message I got, and I have a feeling I'm not alone. I have a letter today from someone who is going through the process of intuitive eating and mending their relationship with food, and while they're on their food peace journey there, also noticing that the aging process is adding another level, or rather another layer of complication, and wondering how to make sense of it. I feel really lucky that I got to talk to Kimberly Dark. I have known about Kimberly's work for a number of years now, and never have actually been able to talk to her. So, it was a gift to be able to spend a few minutes talking with her about this letter. I think you're going to really appreciate her insight and wisdom on this topic, and also get to learn about the new book that she's going to be releasing really soon. But before we get to this episode's letter in here from Kimberly Dark, a quick word from our sponsor.

Julie (ad break): This episode of a Love Food podcast is brought to you by Ovo Folic. What is Ovo Folic? Well, I had that question too, but Ovo Folic is a new to me inositol supplement. If you have PCOS and you have listened to podcasts on PCOS that I've been interviewed on, or you have done my course, you know that I talk all the time about inositol supplementation. We know that people with PCOS probably have a defect or deficiency with certain inositols, and that's what leads to insulin resistance, issues with ovulation, and higher androgen levels. Adding an inositol supplement to your PCOS regimen is something that for many people, helps to improve ovulation, lower androgens, and lower insulin blood sugars, and even improve symptoms of anxiety. Recently I jumped on the phone with Dr. Pari, one of the founders of the small company called Elan Healthcare that makes Ovo Folic. She also sent me samples to try. I was so impressed with all that Elan Healthcare is doing. It's a small women owned and led company, not a big corporation. They love providing a personal touch. Dr. Pari responds to all customer emails herself. She also oversees every aspect of the manufacturing and the ingredients of of Ovo Folic. So I know not all in inositol ingredients are the same. I really like knowing there's a choice in good quality inositol supplements with the recommended 40:1 ratio. Ovo Folic has no taste or smell. I can totally vouch for that, because I tried it myself, and of course has these really high quality ingredients. Ovo Folic comes in easy to carry single dose packets with, again, that 40 to 1 ratio so you can feel rest assured that you're getting the recommended amount for the maximum therapeutic effect. So, Ovo Folic has a special offer for Love Food listeners. Use the coupon

code foodpeace at checkout for 15% off. Go to [Elanhealthcare.ca](http://Elanhealthcare.ca) and click on their product, Ovo Folic. It's spelled O V O F O L I C, to learn more. Use code foodpeace, all one word, to get 15% off.

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

Julie (as letter writer): Dear Food, Over the years, I have grown to love you, cooking and baking, you, experimenting with ways to put you together in a meal or dessert, and of course, eating you. The problem is that I've also struggled with body image and guilt about you, especially now that I've reached midlife. I was one of those kids and teens who was naturally thin. It was probably a mix of my genetics, my pickiness, and my anxiety, which often shut down my appetite. People commented on my small appetite and my thinness this a lot from a fairly young age. The comments ranged from admiration to mild concern, but the general message I got was that being thin was a big part of my identity. At the same time, I grew up in a strict food household in which there were definite good and bad foods. And I was told that although I didn't have to worry about my weight as a growing child, some day I would have to be more careful about food to stay thin. When I reached my twenties, I gained weight naturally as my body became more womanly. I was still at a "healthy weight," but for the first time I stopped getting comments about how thin I was. I will admit that I had a hard time with this, with the loss of this part of my identity, and I began to question at times whether I was eating too much, or too much of the wrong things. I began to scrutinize my body and dislike parts of it intensely, comparing it to bodies that were thinner. I also got married, and my in laws had even more intense and overt judgments about weight and fatness. My fear of their judgment only added to my body image concerns. After I had my two children, I secretly went on a diet for the first time, learning to track what I ate and maintain a certain calorie limit each day. This quote "worked," but I noticed that food and tracking food became close to an obsession, and that scared me. My sister had struggled with an eating disorder, and I knew I didn't want to go down that path, so, I pulled myself out of the diet. Even so, I found myself every year or two secretly dieting again to get my weight down to a quote "acceptable level," and then pulling myself back out of it for fear of developing an eating disorder. I also railed against society's obsession with thinness, and beat myself up for giving into that superficial, even cruel, mentality. This push and pull was confusing, and still is. Now that I've entered midlife, my body has felt out of control at times. I weigh more than I ever have, and when I try to diet, it's much harder to lose the weight. In fact, I've noticed that when I tried to reign in my weight by restricting calories, my body rebels by gaining- gaining weight at first, and then losing very slowly and sporadically. I've also noticed that I need to diet more often to keep my weight down, and that the weight fluctuations are greater. All of this terrifies me. So, I'm trying to make a commitment to stop dieting altogether, accept my higher weight and trust my body to know what it needs, even if sometimes it needs to satisfy my strong sweet tooth. But it's not easy. And I often find myself feeling confused, wondering if I'm doing things right, balancing what I crave with what my body actually needs. I also fret about the future. What happens when I hit menopause and my body changes again? I'm scared about how that will feel and how I will handle it. How do I move beyond what I now realize has been disordered eating and distorted body image? How do I move beyond my fear of fat and learn to love my body rather than poke and prod at all the bits I hate? How do I know the difference, food, between what is a healthy embrace of my enjoyment of you, and what may be an unhealthy reaction against past restriction or guilt about you? How do I do this intuitive eating

thing right, and make it stick through whatever changes are in store for my body? Sincerely, trying to age gracefully.

Julie: Hey there, letter writer. Thank you so much for your note. I know there's many people listening right now who can relate to all the things you said, and are concerned about aging, and what that means in living in their body. We're going to give Kimberly Dark a call. Kimberly has a book out called *Fat, Pretty, and Soon to be Old*, a collection of essays that helped me to appreciate reading your letter, that she is going to be a great fit to help us sift through what you can do to move forward. So let's go ahead and give Kimberly a call.

Kimberly: Hello?

Julie: Hey Kimberly, it's Julie Duffy Dillon. How are you?

Kimberly: I'm good. How are you?

Julie: I'm great. Thanks for helping me out with this letter. Did you get a chance to read over yet?

Kimberly: I did.

Julie: Awesome. Well, I really appreciate you, um you know, taking some time with it and um, sifting through it. I know what this person is bringing up is something that a lot of people listening can connect with. Um, you know, there's one thing that's certain, right, our bodies change over time. So, um I know there's gonna be a lot of people wondering what kind of things you have to say and when, when you read through this letter, what was your general impression about what this person is going through?

Kimberly: Well, you know, I think the main thing that I felt was compassion for the fact that our bodies change, and I think nobody really prepares us for that, and nobody prepares us with regard to expectation, that this is perfectly normal, not that you've done something, uh, you know, somehow mismanaged the merchandise, that there's, there's going to be uh, there's not going to be changes. So, you know, that was my, my first sense was compassion about that.

Julie: Yeah. You know the thing that I was thinking about when you said that is, I know for me growing up, there was discussions about bodies changing, but there was not the normalizing of it, it was that we better fight it um, or whatever we're doing now, like the letter writer talks about, it's whatever you're doing now is going to catch up with you. Um, like it's this evil thing, and what you're talking about is like that you said "mismanaged." Like that doesn't mean you're mismanaging it. Like, it's just part of how our bodies change, and that's normal. So, um yeah, thank you for saying that.

Kimberly: Yeah, yeah.

Julie: So, reading through this person's experience and keeping those things in mind, anybody who's in the space of like, oh my body is changing, or I'm afraid of that. What would you recommend as some, some steps forward?

Kimberly: Well, so, you know, look, it's it seems completely um, obvious and maybe elementary, but but- literally to keep reminding ourselves that there is one world in which um, you know, women are supposed to look a certain way in order to receive social rewards, in order to be lovable, in order to uh, you know, be able to smile in photographs, that that is- that is one world that is advertising driven, and people profit off of trying to keep us in that world. But then there is a broader world in which um, bodies are all imperfect and um, in fact, in fact perfection is not even a thing, right? And that we expect bodies to change over time. We expect them to change because of time, and also because of life experiences, right? Like, like if we are lucky enough to live long full lives, our bodies and our identities are going to change many many times. And that broader world is also a place like, first of all, it is the more spacious place in which to live, but it is also a place where we can find support for those views. And so, some of what that means is that we have to stop looking to the advertising driven world for um, you know, support for our lives for interesting ideas, for recreation. You know, we have to stop looking over there and start paying attention to who else is out here, right? Like podcasts like this, books like I write, things that people talk about, you know, when they're out having a camping trip in the summer, it's like, it's like there is a bigger world out there with regard to um, what- what is the meaning of my body? And so uh you know, connecting with that bigger world, which really just means reminding ourselves again and again, whenever the thoughts come up, oh, that's not the world I want to live in. I want to live in this other world.

Julie: When you were talking about the advertising, it made me think about um, advertising campaigns that, I mean, I kind of see it as like slick marketing, but they're trying to be more quote "inclusive," but really it's still selling, it's still this profit- profit driven kind of industry um, that's really meant to chip away at us so we'll buy their stuff, you know? And yeah, so like, stop looking to that to like, give us some kind of warm fuzzies, like we need to start looking for other-looking in other places.

Kimberly: And it's a sneaky thing too, because I think that's some that advertising um, now is focusing on um, they're focusing on broadening their market. Um, and we often call that body positivity, right? Like, and it's- it's still setting up a hierarchy though, where you're supposed to feel good about your body because at least it isn't that one over there. It's like, we're widening the, you know, widening the group of people who can be in the club and, think this through, it has been super important for advertisers to widen the view because the population is aging, right?

Julie: Mm, good point.

Kimberly: And so. here's this, you know, the person who wrote in um, is saying, you know, now that I've entered midlife, it feels out of control. The body feels out of control sometimes. Well, that's- that's according to script. And um, you know, a lot of these ads will help you to believe that okay, well, you know, you're not 80 yet, so it's okay. But look, when you're 80 you're going to be okay too. [Laughs]

Julie: Right? Yeah. Like you said, if we're lucky enough to be able to be alive that long, it's, yeah, we're not broken then either.

Kimberly: Yeah.

Julie: That's such a great point. Well, with um, thinking about like looking outward, um, something I'm thinking about my own life and then also other people um, I've worked with or other letters I've read, how there's like a part of like our brain that's on board with this, but it doesn't feel integrated. So, as we're like looking outward, is there anything that you would recommend to kind of help facilitate this becoming more and more of the norm, I guess?

Kimberly: Yeah, Well, part of it is practice, which I've already mentioned, but the other part, which I think is really important not just to us but to everyone else, is finding community with others who have similar views and values, and actually mobilize around those views and values, because look, so, you know, I'm a sociologist by training and this is how I think about um, the ways in which we create culture, is that each of us is born with a script, a social script that is time stamped for the year we were born and also location stamped for, you know, where we came in. And we have those cultural default settings in us. So, I think that part of- part of what this writer is struggling with is the fact that right, as things change, as time goes on, um, like the body and life are dynamic, but the script stays the same. The script is always there, it stays the same. And so the idea that um, we can throw away that script I think is incorrect, but we can edit it. We can choose which things I'm going to speak from that script and which things I'm going to just ignore. And so, I think that, you know, having some compassion for ourselves when suddenly we don't like the way we look one day, or you know, because we've all had this experience, right? We're like, one day I think I look really hot and then some other day I think look like trash, but I'm actually in the same body. [Laughs]

Julie: Right? Yeah. That is like totally a typical experience. Yeah.

Kimberly: Yeah. That those, those can literally happen two days apart. [Laughs]

Julie: And like, nothing magical happened to the body at that time. It was the same hotness the whole time. Yeah.

Kimberly: Exactly. So, um, so realizing that those feelings are going to come and go is so important. Um, but staying connected to a broader community that is not just interested in appearance but interested in actual body liberation, in respect and dignity for all people. That's the thing that's going to start to move the culture. And so, you know, I think part of this is like, we don't exist, humans don't exist separate from culture, we are social animals. And um, so to think that somehow we can improve our own view of ourselves in isolation from others is just not, it's not possible, right?

Julie: Right, yeah.

Kimberly: So just like advertising has tried to make a community for us, a world, we have to find the other world that also exists.

Julie: So sneaky. Yeah, it reminds me that, you know, this is not an individual's burden or problem, this is- this is something that's outside of the individual level. And that just further emphasizes to me, yeah, like that's why we need a rally with people doing the same thing. So important. And well, something I want to ask you about is um, a part of the show is called the food peace syllabus. And if you're new to the Love Food podcast, the food peace syllabus is a collection of resources that we've been gathering that further helps your journey towards body liberation. Like we were just talking about. And if you want the most recent copy you can get to it at [juliedillonrd.com/freebies](http://juliedillonrd.com/freebies). And um Kimberly, tell me, what would you like to add to it?

Kimberly: Well, I have a new book out this month, actually, uh called *Damaged Like Me*.

Julie: Yay!

Kimberly: Thanks. It's exciting. This is also uh, an essay collection. Much like my last book called *Fat, Pretty, and Soon to be Old*. Well, that would be me. *Damaged Like Me* is still looking at social inequalities and um, issues that affect women's lives in particular. I mean, all of us, of course, but- but women's lives in particular um, but in addition to appearance privilege I've also added um, trauma into the mix. And the idea that even if we are seen as damaged, that those experiences become a source of wisdom that no sane culture should keep from using, you know? And so, yeah, I'm- I guess in a way, reclaiming the word damage but also saying, yeah, so what? I mean, you can be damaged like me, you can also be damaged like- like any- anybody is damaged in their own particular ways.

Julie: Yeah. Yeah. And there, is there an opportunity to preorder if someone's listening to this before it actually goes on sale?

Kimberly: Yes, there is. Um, this- this book is coming out on AK Press, [akpress.org](http://akpress.org) has the book available right now for 25% off for preorders.

Julie: Awesome. Okay, well I'll put a link to that in the show notes, so, in case somebody wants to go ahead and just pre order it so that it gets to them when it comes out and check that box off. That I know it's going in my shopping cart. We're just talking about advertising, but I like, that sounds like something I really want to read. So, um, thank you. And um, again, I'll put all the links to that into the show notes and I think uh, fellow listeners are also gonna be really interested in what you have to say about all that. And before I let you go, if someone wants to find out more about you, um, where can they find you?

Kimberly: [kimberlydark.com](http://kimberlydark.com) is great. I'm also on social media on Instagram and just recently on Tiktok, which is uh, yeah, I know, super interesting. Um, so, and Facebook you can find me on all of those, all of those things, but the website is a great place because you know, I have free events, you can look through the website calendar and uh, join me for something in the next month or two.

Julie: I love it. I saw the hope desk that you have on there. Um, could you tell us a little bit about that? Yeah, the hope desk is a free monthly event, it's the first Tuesday of each month at three p.m. pacific. And the link for that is at the bottom of the homepage of the website. But I handle

two social inequalities per month, and the idea is that it's hopeful when people know enough about a topic to at least be able to enter into civil public discourse about it. Because you know, I was getting a lot of requests from folks especially after the demonstrations of last summer um, trying to make sense of certain social inequalities because conversations were coming up and I find it um, it's a lost opportunity when we don't speak up when something comes up because we feel like we might be wrong or we don't know. Um, so yeah, so I've handled topics in the past such as uh Black wealth suppression in the US, the gender pay gap, what that means, um diet culture, the existence of billionaires, what does that mean? You know, different- different things and ideas come from, you know, emails and messages people send me on social media.

Julie: What a fabulous resource. Thank you. Oh my goodness. That sounds like really important and actually something that could help people move the needle in their like action in you know, talking about social justice. So like that's, that's incredible.

Kimberly: I hope it's true. I hope it's true and you know, we actually talk about it. Um, some of the past ones are on Youtube, so you can look those up. But I think of it as a live event because you know, that's really where the interesting stuff happens is when we can talk about, okay, where are you going to discuss these things next?

Julie: Oh, you may be seeing me on one of these. So, it sounds really, really um interesting and yeah, like it sounds like a really great way to integrate and feel like- there's been definitely topics like some of the ones you mentioned, like I wish I had some more um, language just like, to be able to like stand on a little bit more, and just be able to incorporate what I'm discussing it with the random person, like the neighbor or something. And um, yeah, so thank you, well, I need to let you go, but thank you so much for all of that and filling us in on that resource. But I look forward to reading your book and I appreciate your time and compassion going through this letter.

Kimberly: Thank you so much. Thanks for the work you do as well.

Julie: Well, thank you.

Julie: So there you have it. Letter writer, I hoped my interview with Kimberly Dark helped you in your space on the food peace journey. I know I got a lot out of talking to Kimberly. I'm so excited to read her new book and look into this hope desk. I told her like, you may be seeing me at one of these calls soon. Um, it sounds like a wonderful, wonderful resource. But anyway, I see that food has written back.

Julie (ad break): Before we hear food's letter, this episode of the Love Food podcast was brought to you by Ovo Folic. Ovo Folic is a new way to get inositol supplementation for those of you with polycystic ovarian syndrome. Would you like 15% off? Just for Love Food listeners, go to [elanhealthcare.ca/discount/foodpeace](http://elanhealthcare.ca/discount/foodpeace). There's also a link in the show notes. Remember, Elan is spelled E L A N, and it's [elanhealthcare.ca/discount/foodpeace](http://elanhealthcare.ca/discount/foodpeace).

Julie: Did you enjoy this episode of the Love Food podcast? I would love it if you took a screenshot right now and shared it on Insta stories and tagged me. I love knowing other people

listening to the show, and other ways you can support the show include leaving rating, a review, subscribing, sharing an episode, and also supporting advertisers for the Love Food podcast. Doing all of those acts of kindness, really helps the show grow. So thank you in advance.

Julie: All right. Like I said, food has written back, but until next time, take care.

Julie (as food): Dear trying to age gracefully, We see you stuck in the muck of distrusting your aging changing body and want a way out. What if the way out isn't where you've been led? What if the way towards lifelong intuitive eating isn't contained? We know body liberation happens in community rallying together with others doing the same. It happens by locking arms with others with different levels of access and privilege so no one is left behind. Go back and edit your script, add a whole lot of compassion, and unite with other food peace travelers doing the same. 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](http://juliedillonrd.com/signup). And, I look forward to seeing you here next week for another episode of the Love Food podcast. Take care.