

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 250 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, and as I announce today's episode, I am struck with the number. 250. That's like a really wonderful, I don't know, it should feel like a milestone. Right? So thank you to those of you who have been with me along this wild ride of doing a podcast. I can't even remember how long ago this- this show started, I think it was five years ago now and this has been such a wonderful way to connect with you. Um, I love just talking instead of writing down things in a blog post and so thank you for your support. It's something that I think about often, and I feel really grateful to have you along the way. If you're new to the love food podcast, welcome. And since this is my 250th episode, you just need to know that I'm going to have at least 250 more, so sit down, relax, and we are going to talk about ways to help your relationship with food. And the way that I structure the episodes is, I have a listener just like you send me a letter, and the letter is written out to food, and they outline and go through a dialogue about their complicated relationship and ask questions. I like to sift through it, sometimes by myself like today, and sometimes with a guest, and at the end of the episode, be sure to stick around for it, at the end of the episode, Food writes back with some solutions.

Julie: People who listen to this show have a complicated relationship with food because they are in the process of rejecting diet culture. Maybe they're recovering from an eating disorder or they're at diet rock bottom, they have dieted for way too long and no, it's not an answer, but they just don't know what else to do. I hope this show is a companion for those of you on this food peace journey. It's a journey that at times can feel isolating, but something that I always want you to know is you're not alone. That's why I created this show. I was working with people individually and I would see, I don't know, 6-8 clients a day, five days a week. And while everyone had their own individual experience, their own lived experience, their own story, there were these themes that kept popping up and one of them was this feeling of isolation. And so I used to joke to my clients and say, wow, I wish you could be a fly on the wall and just hang out with me all day and hear what everyone else has to say, because everyone else is saying the same thing, how you feel so alone and that no one can understand this and again, everyone has their own lived experience and story, but we also have this kind of common humanity that if we only knew how sneaky diet culture is, diet culture makes it seem like you're doing it wrong, and that you're the only one. It's keeping us from rallying together to really flip it.

Julie: So, this 250th episode, the nice round number that it is, is an episode where we are going to focus on how to deal, I don't know, I can't think of a better word, how to deal, how to live alongside other people who haven't even acknowledged how the world is broken, how they still

are so immersed and blinded by diet culture. This episode's letter is from someone who has had a long, complicated journey with food, and has worked really hard to um explore eating disorder recovery, but keeps coming up against their family's relationship with food. I am so looking forward to exploring this episode's letter. But before we do that, 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 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.

Letter: Dear Food, As a child, I ate anything I wanted whenever I wanted. There were no rules, restrictions, shoulds or shouldn'ts about you. Small comments would be made here and there about eating too much of you, and say several family members around me would make comments about restricting you, or their unhappiness with parts of their body. At this time, I didn't think anything of them. But as I got older, the small comments piled up and became a belief that my size equalled my worth. As a young teenage girl, I became unhappy with my own body. I would constantly compare myself to other women's bodies, and those I was around, those in a magazine, and those on T. V. I felt so uncomfortable in my own skin, and I felt that if people knew what I look like under my baggy clothes, I wouldn't be accepted anymore. I wore t shirts and shorts swimming. I never got undressed in front of anyone, and used multiple layers to cover up what I thought was undesirable. It wasn't until my first major heartbreak after high school that I started restricting you, food, and compulsively exercising. During that time I thought if I quote, got into shape, I would be worthy of love again. I was following what I thought was a healthy lifestyle, tracking every calorie I ate of you, using what an app said, could help me lose X pounds a week, then eventually eating below what they recommended, exercising more and more each day, using the weight loss meal plans and advice from magazines, not eating after X time,

weighing myself multiple times a day, cutting out certain food groups deemed quote bad, and so on. I fell deep into the hole of diet culture and emerged myself in what was called “health”. But what I saw as healthy soon became a wicked cycle of anorexia, bingeing, and over exercising. I lost a significant amount of weight in a short period of time, and actually got praised for it, which obviously made my relationship with you, food, much worse, I lost all enjoyment in eating because I grew extremely fearful of gaining any weight, lost touch with my body's hunger cues, and it started to protect itself. I lost my period, started to lose my hair, was constantly fatigued and more. Even after all the signs, I had no awareness of the damaging behaviors I was doing, what I look like or that my health was declining fast. My body dysmorphia was telling me one thing, the magazines were telling me other information, and I was too entrenched in diet culture to make sense of it all. Eventually, my mother saw the destruction I was causing myself and, along with a doctor, convinced me I needed to help- the help of an eating disorder recovery program. I willingly went because once my eyes were opened, I could see it all. The program helped me gain weight. But that's really all. I thought all I needed to do was eat more and I was healed. That had me step on a scale every morning. And I remember still equating that number to my worthiness of love and acceptance. I never really dealt with the deeper issues that were the root causes of why I began the behaviors in the first place. The anti-diet approach, health at every size, or a food peace journey were not discussed or even known where I was. So, once I hit a certain weight, I was better in their eyes and I left the program. However, my negative, addicted coping mechanisms were still ever present. For a short year after that, I began to eat all of you, food, all that I wanted. I moved to a new town for college and still had the deep need to be accepted. But instead of turning to you, food, to help with those uncomfortable feelings, I started using alcohol as a way to numb, and to seemingly fit into the college crowd. That brought its own damaging behaviors and consequences. Then again, I found myself in a relationship that harbored trust issues and insecurities which triggered those weight equals unworthiness of love thoughts. I thought to myself, if I just lose weight and get my health under control, the what- the right way this time, all our problems will disappear. So, I dove headfirst into what is now known as orthorexia. Being aware of my eating disorder past, I was being cautious and trying to do it in the right way this time and well, it went sour. I lost weight and was outwardly healthy, and even my blood labs showed I was pretty healthy inside too. But I still didn't feel like myself, my period had not returned. I was constantly thinking about what I was eating. I wasn't counting calories on an app, but I was doing estimates in my head. I was always choosing the healthiest option of you, food, and never letting myself eat what I really wanted: sweets, burgers, fries, et cetera. I was making healthy, unsatisfying versions of the foods that I really enjoyed and wanted, and still use movement as a way to manipulate my body. This went on for a couple of years, and I honestly got used to the stress of constantly trying to control my body. The mental battle with myself and my body's true needs became just a part of my daily life. I never felt happy or comfortable in my own skin, and I thought it was just normal after a while. And then I found intuitive eating, health at every size, food peace, body acceptance, etcetera. It genuinely has changed my life, and I immediately wanted to know all I could about it. For the past year, I've been obsessively reading, listening and researching these topics, surrounding myself with all the knowledge to help myself heal and fight my diet culture programming. I now feel like I can finally see the other side in my personal journey. I have found the deep roots in which my insecurities and feelings of unworthiness come from. I am aware of all the different ways that culture seems to sneak up on me, and I can now recognize negative messaging all around. I'm still on the journey to loving my body completely, but I don't see my physical appearance as a

form of my worth anymore. I have come to realize my husband and others in my life don't love me for my body shape or size. They love me for who I am. I am learning to listen to my body signs now, and constantly assessing my behaviors, asking myself if they are what my body wants, or if it's diet culture trying to sneak in. I let myself eat what I want of you, food, without rules or restrictions. I move in an intuitive way using movement as a release and not forcing myself into anything I don't like to do for the sake of an arbitrary goal. And I finally got my period back recently, a day that was miraculous and emotional. I get emotional in the moments I feel I'm at peace with my body because I have put it through so much. It feels good to take care of my body and give it what it truly wants and needs, rather than what diet culture says I should or should not do to it. Even though I feel like I'm in a good place in my personal journey and with you, food, the constant chatter of diet, culture and society's messaging can throw some heavy punches. Sometimes I'm still learning how to combat them, and I would be lying if I said they didn't bruise me or even knock me down from time to time. The most prevalent challenges are my family's incessant yet unaware comments about their diet, weight, and bodies. For reference, my mother is always dieting in some way and has always hated her stomach. She's constantly body checking it. My grandmother is consumed with healthy eating and her body size, and when I lost weight to lost weight due to anorexia, she praised me for how good I looked. My younger sister is counting calories and talking about cosmetic surgery to remove the parts of her that she deems ugly or undesirable. My father is perpetually trying to lose weight, restricting certain groups of you, and currently only eating one meal a day to try to lose weight, then binging you later when he realizes his body wants you food. Every time without fail when I am with my family, at least one thing is said about you, food, diet or weight, and I am with them quite often, and this is just my intermediate family. The negative beliefs I grew up with constantly are being thrown at me, and sometimes I feel like I'm in that push pull battle that won't end, and I get tired of it all. I don't know how to open their eyes to what I know. I want to sit them all down and spell it out all out for them, help them discover what I have and heal or more selfishly, let me fully heal. It's all becoming painfully obvious to me, the damaging behaviors of my family. But realistically, I feel they won't see the writing on the wall. I stay hopeful that as I continue along my own personal journey to food peace and body acceptance, eventually it will cease to bother me. I have done so much work with my internal battles, and now I just need the strength to combat others. And so my story ends here for now. I know have a I have a long road ahead of me because I still live within a society that values diet culture. I am grateful I am aware of it all now. I am confident that my future will only bring more growth, knowledge, and love. Thank you for reading and listening, and for your time. All the love and gratitude.

Julie: Hey there, letter writer. Thanks for this note, and reading through it, you have an experience that sounds really, really complicated and hard, yet also a scenario that many listeners are going to be able to relate to. I wonder if you, listener, can relate to it. A complicated relationship with food where you've done work to uncover really where it all comes from. Only to go back to a family that hasn't recovered from its own eating disorder, and won't even recognize things like diet culture, big pervasive systems that are really keeping them blind to what really matters. I appreciate how hard this is, and I hope over the next few minutes I can give you some concrete steps forward. And to start, I encourage you listener to go back to where it all started. Go back to where that complicated relationship with food really began. For you, letter writer, you mentioned being a young teenage girl and you became unhappy with your

body, uncomfortable in your own skin, and at the same time, your family and our culture taught you that being comfortable really runs skin deep, to not search outside of things like vanity and how we look. Focus on yourself and don't look outside of that. I would like to consider the big picture in this moment. In this moment when you're feeling uncomfortable in your skin for the first time, and paralyzed on what to do next. And maybe in that moment if someone could have offered you a suggestion that, hey, there's nothing wrong with your body. Look at, look at how fucked up this world is. You don't need to be fixed, but the world needs to be fixed. But no one did that. No one said that. In that moment, in that unhappy and uncomfortable moment, what did you really need? I would gather that when we are feeling unhappy and uncomfortable, what we're really needing is something like acceptance, comfort, peace, maybe even connection. But to get to that point where we actually can gather those reinforcements, we would have to really know in that moment that it wasn't about us doing something wrong. To look outside of ourselves to meet these needs. But we are taught that this kind of discomfort is a surface issue, your surface issue, and yours alone, like don't question it, there's nothing to see here. We simply just do what we're told.

Julie: Consider looking around you at this time, and who's there. So, at that time where you're feeling uncomfortable and unhappy in your body, who is around? Family, friends, teachers, faith leaders, all of humanity? Well, we're all taught the same thing - that this discomfort is a personal issue, and to not look outside of yourself. Like, this is an individual job. This is something an individual fixes. It reminds me of being in second grade. And my second-grade teacher made us put folders, opened up folders into like an L shape around our paper during tests and she would say keep your eyes on your own paper. She did not want us to cheat by looking at our neighbor, so much so that she made us build these like individual Fort Knox around our desks so we weren't even tempted. Or even if we were tempted, we couldn't look at other people's papers. When we're feeling uncomfortable in our body, I think diet culture tells us to keep our eyes on our own paper, on our own body. But here's the thing, letter writer, you disobeyed that order. You didn't keep your eyes on your own paper, and you saw it. I think you saw the answer. You saw the truth. And I tell you all of this for an important reason - because even though I really want your family, and my family, to get how pervasive diet culture is, and how it has roots within white supremacy, they've been doing what they've been told to do. They've been following the rules, they've been complying and keeping their eyes on their own paper for fear of breaking that role.

Julie: If there is space, letter writer, and anyone who's listening to this, who can relate to this letter and this lived experience, if there is space for compassion, I encourage you to sit with that. I know this feels personal, and yes, I know that your family structure and their inability to stop talking about bodies and their own bodies in this way is keeping you from full recovery. And I hear you honoring this as an individual burden, that this is your job to do. And I think that's a continuation of diet culture and white supremacy, that we have this individual burden, that we are the ones that must change it. It's our problem. And while we all need to contribute to change, we all need to name these systems, it's not something that we individually are going to be able to change. We're going to have to do this together, because something like white supremacy is a huge, heavy burden that's going to take us rallying together to change it. That's why this is so hard. That's why having conversations with your family members will feel like it just keeps falling flat on your face. It's gonna take more than just your voice.

Julie: One of my very first therapist I ever had, she would talk about these silver platter moments, whenever I would want to talk to someone about some important things in my life, she would say, you know, sometimes the universe delivers on a silver platter, an opportunity to intervene, and I wonder for you, letter writer, if those are going to happen. They may be one on one and it may be for, I'm thinking about like a cousin or a family friend is going to say something or ask you something, and it's gonna be a moment where you're going to have an in and be able to have a conversation. I appreciate these silver platter moments though are not often enough to tip the burden, to move people out of that cognitive dissonance that a person needs to sit with and resolve in order to really take their eyes off their own paper. It's going to take a number of conversations. And again, this is where it takes a whole group of people to help remove the burden on the individual. So, this is where you may need to incorporate a lot of boundaries. You may find that while you're with your family often, that there's a certain duration that feels best for you, or there's a certain um, person that may you may want to have a boundary with while not having a boundary with someone else. And while I even talk about boundaries, I know, I don't know anything about your family, your family structure. So having a therapist to really help you sift through what actually is an option, um, with what you're wanting to do, letter writer, and what, I'm thinking about even just your family culture and boundaries, what's an option and what's not an option.

Julie: While you're sifting through those boundaries, of course, connect with those who really get it as much as you can to help fuel you to keep you looking like over the folders in the test period time. Like looking at other people's papers to making sure you're not just holding onto this burden as your individual thing that you need to fix. We're going to need to come together on this as much as we can. We need to like push down those folders, oh my gosh, I can't move past the second-grade metaphor. But um, we need to keep looking outside of ourselves and at the same time using our voice, how we can. Something that I also think it's important to name, something you can do, and even though there may never be a conscious level in your family, to connect the dots, you can- can provide the unconditional love and support outside of how their body looks to people in your family. Even though we've been trained to acknowledge when people look different, maybe they've had some work done, maybe they've lost weight or they've been doing something, we are trained to acknowledge it and maybe even feel bad, feel guilty if we don't acknowledge things like weight change. But what would it be like to not go through with those kinds of comments? I wonder, letter writer, if you've done that, saying things instead, like, I'm so happy to see you, instead of wow, you've lost weight. It can be really hard in those moments for you, the listener, if you've never experimented with it, but it can be really powerful. You know, letting people know in our life that we love them unconditionally and we're not going to fall for that diet culture crap.

Julie: So, I see that food is written back. something that I want you to hold on to is that this is not your individual burden, letter writer. And for listeners who can identify with this experience, this isn't yours alone. All of us together need to rally to help everyone acknowledge that diet culture is the biggest asshole in the room, and it is founded in white supremacy. And the only way we are going to help us collectively heal and continue on this food peace journey is to name it and not consider it our own individual burden. Sending you lots of love and compassion, letter writer, and I hope this helps you have some few steps forward on your food peace journey.

Julie (ad break): Before we hear food's letter, this episode of a 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. There's also a link in the show notes. Remember, Elan is spelled E L A N, and it's elanhealthcare.ca/discount/foodpeace.

Julie: Did you enjoy this episode of a 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, enough of all that. Until next time, take care.

Food: Dear Love and Gratitude, you have got to be exhausted. You have been carrying this burden for so long. Your family's generational diet culture trauma stops with you, and we see you watching your family to be free too. We also see that your freedom hinges on them looking outward to call out diet culture. With compassion for yourself and them, remember they're doing what they've been trained to do. You, though, can show them unconditional permission to be, exist, connect. They may not know all of the truth, but they will know the true you. 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.