

Julie: Let's divorce the dumpster fire that are from the PCOS diets. Are you living with polycystic ovarian syndrome and tired of all the diets that are not giving you the relief that they have promised they will deliver? This episode of the Love Food podcast is in partnership with my PCOS and Food Peace course. Finally, for 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. Through the month of September, you will get 30% off using the coupon code TRUTH at checkout. Get to all the details at pcosandfoodpeace.com.

Julie: Say goodbye to the food police and hello to peace. 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 261 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. If you are new to rejecting diets, you may be wondering, "how long am I going to be in this fucking mess?" If you're not new to it, you may be wondering the same thing, like when am I just going to have this kind of quote "normal" relationship with food? When I'm hungry, I eat, and then when I'm full, I stop, and food is fine, but it's not everything, and it's not scary, but just enjoyable. Honestly, that's the million dollar question, right? And I say it like that because that is a really important spot to be in, and it's so important because it is typical as you're moving forward, but there's a big but here. The big but is, so many people feel ashamed that their movement away from diet culture, whether you're recovering from an eating disorder, whether you just don't want to diet anymore, because you don't know what else to do. So many people feel like they must be doing it wrong because it's taking so long. So, this episode is for you. It is for you if you're wondering, "when the hell is this messy shit going to finally be organized and tidy?" I have a letter from someone who says they're in this like, space of constantly feeling like eating is this like tug of war, and they're looking for that coveted middle ground. So, if you can relate to that again, this episode is for you.

Julie (ad break): We are welcoming back Ovo Folic as a sponsor of the Love Food podcast, and we want to ask you a question: what is your PCOS truth? If you are living with PCOS, you may or may not know that September is PCOS awareness month. How many people are not even aware of what PCOS actually is? But so many people experience this syndrome, and it is something that can make life really complicated, especially because so much of what you experience, so many of the symptoms are invisible. We know that you often don't feel heard or are just dismissed by your doctor, and told to just lose weight, and try another stupid diet that we know is not going to work and actually can provoke a lot of harm. Well, the folks at Ovo Folic at Elan Healthcare, they are teaming up with me to really shine a light on how the stigma is so harmful. And so we are encouraging people with PCOS just like you to share your PCOS truth using the hashtag #mypcostruth anywhere that you use social media. You know, I love Ovo Folic. It's a great inositol supplement that is third party tested has the 40 to 1 ratio. And the company who makes it, Elan Health Care, is a women owned and led company. We are giving away a six month supply of Ovo Folic to two lucky winners. Do you want to enter? I think you should, someone has to win. So go to juliedillonrd.com/ovofolic and you'll get a link to sign up.

Again, it's juliedillonrd.com/ovofolic and Ovo Folic is spelled O V O F O L I C. You can also grab the link in the shootouts.

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

Julie (as letter writer): Dear food, Since I was a little girl, everyone in my life told me not to eat too much of you, not at the wrong time, not the “unhealthy” versions of you, which according to my mom was almost everything, and definitely don't ask for seconds. I was told that my family didn't like fat people. I was asked if that version of you fit into my diet. I was asked if I was TRYING to gain weight. I don't have any memory at all of having peace with you. When I was 35, I was diagnosed with PCOS. The doctor told me to cut out a lot of versions of you and put me on medication that made me sick. I found a great diet and lost a lot of weight, but I was starving. I felt hungry all the time. I was craving you but denying you. Then the dam broke, and all I did was eat you, but in secret. Then you became another problem: an eating disorder. At 48 I was diagnosed with OCD. I suffered so long before I knew. Then I started to heal. I gave up the diets and gained some weight. It hurt. I was scared. But I wasn't hungry. Food, now I eat way too much of you. And I eat foods that don't make my body feel good. When I think of eating something healthy, the alarm bell goes off. It says...hungry! Restriction! And don't tell me what to do! I would like a middle ground with you, food. To feel some peace and to help my body feel great. Can we make a compromise? And how? Thanks, Struggling for too long.

Julie: Hey there letter writer, thank you so much for this note. This is such an important part of the food peace journey. I don't want you to feel stuck and like you're doing it wrong. What you're describing is a really important part. Super typical. And as we go through some steps forward, I hope it helps you to feel a little bit more at peace with where you are so you can keep moving in the direction that you want to go to start. I want you to think about doing something a little different this podcast episode. Do you have your charger, your phone charger handy or any other kind of plug? And hold up the plug so the plug is closest to the ground, and you're holding it up so it's falling straight into a line, and make it into a pendulum. I've actually done this demonstration using my iPhone charger at conferences, because I feel like there's something about the iPhone charger that just makes the perfect pendulum on the spot. So, as you're listening right now, if you have that or anything, any kind of plug really handy. And what I want you to do is just hold it up so that the actual like, prongs part of the plug is toward the ground and just try to hold your arm, or hands steady I guess, and then slowly pull the plug toward the right and just let it fall and notice what it's doing. You may notice that uh, initially when you pull it back and you let it swing in the other direction, it goes pretty much in the opposite direction, exactly the same amount as- as far back as you pull it to the right, it goes to the left, and then it goes to the right but just not quite as far as you had started, and then same thing back toward the left, and slowly starts it to make its way toward the middle. It doesn't really ever stop. Always so important to notice that part. What I want you to do now is to pull it again and then pull it again. I keep pulling it toward the right over and over again. Do you notice anything different this time? You know the first time that you were pulled it to the right and just let it swing back and forth, gradually it started to swing with less um, oh gosh, what is the name? It didn't, it didn't pull as much apart to the right and left. It slowly just started to swing with less energy, I guess. So we just started going towards the middle, but when you keep pulling it to the right, each swing it keeps violently swinging back towards the left, even like the playing of the swing is not straight,

it'll bounce and be a lot more volatile, a lot more chaotic, a lot faster, lot more exhausting to keep up with as you keep trying to pull it back towards the right. Are you noticing this with your iPhone plug? This is obviously a pendulum that we're recreating, and I hope you can see, letter writer, how this connects to your relationship with food.

Julie: Like I mentioned a few minutes ago, this is like so normal, and I hope this feels okay when I say this, but a really textbook experience for the food peace journey. Anyone who is moving away from dieting, diet culture, restriction, eating, this sort of behaviour, anyone is going to experience a pendulum that does- doesn't float to the middle gradually over time. It's going to have a violent kind of swing back and forth, and I don't have an exact formula for how long, but it's not going to be this like straight kind of movement towards the middle. Like, we're hoping, everybody hopes it would just go to the middle. That is the number one thing that people ask me, "when am I just going to have a normal relationship with food?" I hear you, letter writer, and anyone who is affected by a chronic illness like polycystic ovarian syndrome, like this letter writer, you're going to experience this, and also if you're someone who has other kind of complicated parts to your food peace journey, maybe you're living with food insecurity or maybe you don't have a safe place to go to get food that helps you feel like you get enough food.

Julie: These are all things that will create a pendulum with more energy back and forth. So I have names for the different sides of the pendulum in the middle that I want to share with you. When we pull the cord or the pendulum to the right, that is the should-ing parent. I love almost saying shitting, but should-ing parent. So, you know, I should be eating this, I should be doing that, I should be in the middle right now, I shouldn't care so much about food, I should be eating healthier, I should be exercising more. All those shoulds, every time that there's a should, it's pulling that pendulum to the right, and just in the- like we did in the beginning of this podcast episode, in the beginning when we first pulled the pendulum to the right and let it drop, it didn't just drop to the middle. It needed to carry out that energy to the other side.

Julie: That other side is the rebellious teen. I know you can remember being a rebellious teen, doing the one thing that you weren't supposed to do, it's a normal part of being a teenager. Our relationship with food is going to have its own developmental milestones when we're a teen. And if you're not allowed to have those normal developmental mile- milestones, rather, as a teen, as you're healing your relationship with food, your body is like, all right, let's do these developmental milestones that we've been waiting for the last few decades to cover. You know, developmental milestones that teens often go through are experimenting with food, experimenting with fun food, and finding out which foods feel the most pleasurable, and getting all the pleasure that they can with that food. Probably getting obsessed with certain foods, and just wanting to eat that certain food. And then eventually being like nah, I don't like Doritos anymore, my new thing are Funyuns, and then just being consumed with Funyuns. I don't know why those are the random ones I just chose out of my head. But you may notice you're going-yourself going through something similar, where your brain is just fixated on one food that probably is not labelled as the "healthiest" food choice. Just know that the word healthiest, I did try to put air quotes around. You may notice that you're gravitating towards the foods that are not a part of diet culture's yes list. And as you go through one food, as it kind of starts to wane, you may find yourself like I said just going to another, from Doritos, to Funyuns, and it's just a

part of these developmental milestones that we go through as we experiment with what foods feel good to us.

Julie: And part of feeling good, I don't mean in the moral sense, I mean in pleasure, I mean in energy, I mean in short term and long term satisfaction. If you didn't get a chance to explore that because your family told you that food has to be restricted, that we don't like people who are fat, so that is wrong. Do you hear all the "should"s in there, and all the "should"s, you know what those points to, don't you? Shoulds just point to shame, and we don't want to be near shame. So we go back to the shoulding parent to help avoid shame, and the more that we do that, there's going to be that opposite reaction. As a rebellious teen, we're doing the work we need to do. And as you're doing this work, as in someone who's not a teenager, this is called healing, this is recovering. There is no timeline on this. I've really, I've tried to guess for so long. There's some estimates that if someone has never experienced an eating disorder and grew up in a place that had permission to eat, and they're doing intuitive eating work, it usually takes about a year, but who do you know that grew up in that way? That's a real rarity at this point. So keep in mind that this is going to take time.

Julie: There is an author who has a way of describing this pendulum that I have found to be so helpful. The author's name is Jes Baker, and she's written a number of books, but there's a book in particular that has a whole chapter on this, and it's in her book called *Land Whale*, I believe it's the latest book that Jes Baker has written, and I believe it's in chapter three or four, and in *Land Whale*, she talks about Diet World and Donut World. Jes talks about being stuck in Diet world for so long and all those should, and then as she was moving away from this diet world, all she wanted to do was spend time in Donut world, which Donut world is the place where probably Funyuns and Doritos also are living, where that experimental time that we all need to have with food really throughout our life, but also super condensed, and um, increased time spent in our teen years. Donut world is an important part of the process. And Jes talks a lot about how she felt so frustrated because she just couldn't get the fuck out of Donut world and she didn't want to be in Diet world. But the more that she got frustrated with being in donut world, the more she found herself in Diet world. In this chapter she, um, interviews someone that is really important to this conversation and that is Deb Burgard. Deb Burgard is a psychologist out of California who's one of the founders of the health at every size movement, um, as Black queer liberators were, um, starting this movement back in the 60s and 70s, into the 80s and 90s, Deb Burgard a number of other people started to collect stories and to name processes. And so when you um, read about health at every size, Deb is one of those people that really helped to formulate in- that into a movement. And Deb was interviewed in this process and she talked so much about how we all want to be in the middle. We want to be in that middle ground, but it's not something we can force, and that's what I want you to know too, letter writer, and anyone else in this space, as much as you want to be in the middle and not swinging so violently in every direction, back and forth. You just want it to be normal and calm, what you experience is the norm as we are moving away from diets while living in diet culture.

Julie: The more practice you have the calmer it'll feel because it'll be more expected. The way to kind of like add in another layer to help you heal is to add another voice, because remember you have the shoulding parent that is just double downing on the shame, and then you have the rebellious teen that is doing the work that it needs to do to promote the healing process. So what

I would invite you to add to that conversation, I know it's already getting pretty loud, but to add your affirming voice. What is it that the rebellious teen needs to hear? As he she or they are doing the healing work that they need to do? What does the shoulding parent need to hear as he she or they are healing? I encourage you to think about that right now. You may hear yourself wanting to say something like “I need time to heal” when the shoulding parent is frustrated with all your time and Donut land, or as the rebellious teen is quickly going towards this fun food, reminding this rebellious teen, “you're doing the important work. Take all the time you need, no one's going to take this away from you.” Reaffirm what you need to hear, I said reaffirm but it may be new. So maybe affirm, and practice what you need to hear, and maybe even before you're in the space of um, hearing the shoulds and hearing the rebellion, writing down before they even happen, what you would like your affirming voice to acknowledge in those moments. Maybe what did you need to hear back when you were young, maybe something like “hey, all bodies are important. All bodies have value. Your body will gain as much weight or as little weight as it needs, your body has all the information it needs to get the food that it needs.” Or maybe “you deserve pleasure. Pleasure is an important part of eating.”

Julie: I encourage you as you are listening to this podcast episode and moving on to your next kind of thing that you're gonna be doing today, what would you like your affirming voice to say? Maybe give yourself some space to let that affirming voice be heard, and percolate to the top, and jot it down for what you need it. This is not something that will force that pendulum to the middle. This is something that helps the healing process. Remember, in the beginning of this podcast episode, we had this moment of pulling that plug, our, you know, quickly built pendulum, pulling it to the right and then just letting it do its work. Even after a minute of holding that pendulum without pulling it anymore, it doesn't stay exactly in the middle, there's always going to be a swing to it. So another part of this, letter writer, is be sure to not expect this perfection. That's when doing things like intuitive eating or any other kind of food peace tool can really keep you stuck, when you're looking for perfection. No one is like, in that middle all the time, because look around life, right, life has complications, and diet culture is still walking around unchecked, so expect that movement, and give yourself that affirming acknowledgement that you need as you feel the momentum, no matter how much it's being pulled in either direction. It's really messy, it's exhausting, and it's healing. So I hope this helps, letter writer. This is a really important part of the food peace journey, again, it is a really common spot to be in, and the more you can build up what you want your affirming voice to say, the more quickly it will like announce its presence naturally, and the more you will feel that connection to healing.

Julie: So I see food has written back, but before we get to food's letter...

Julie (ad break): Julie: This episode of the Love Food podcast was brought to you by my PCOS and Food Peace course. Remember, it is 30% off through the month of September, so you have a few more days left. You can use the coupon code TRUTH at checkout. Go to pcosandfoodpeace.com.

Julie: If you enjoyed this episode of the Love Food podcast, I would love it if you left a rating or review, subscribed, or shared an episode with someone that you think would appreciate hearing more about ways of moving away from dieting. Doing any of those small acts of kindness really, really helps the show grow. It's amazing how powerful they really are. So doing any of these

things for me or for any other independent podcaster, just know we really appreciate it. All right, enough of all that. Let's get to food's letter back to us, and until next time, take care.

Julie: Dear struggling for too long, We know you've been working at healing your whole life, and are frustrated with how complicated it is. We wish you didn't blame yourself for this messy process. You're doing brave work, you're doing the work that all of us need to do to recover, heal, and learn how to feed ourselves. There's no timeline. How do you keep going, feed your affirming voice love, attention, and compassion, so it can give the same to your rebellious teen and you're shoulding parent? 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.