

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 are promised they will deliver? This episode of a love food podcast is 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. 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. 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 263 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. Let's start today's episode with a question: what have you done to try to fit in? I know I tried smoking Virginia Slims cigarettes with my friend Valerie, and I know I also tried Peach Schnapps with her at some point when we were in high school, and I don't blame Valerie. Hi Valerie. You are amazing as always. But I think we were just trying to do something because it felt cool, and we also just wanted to fit in so desperately. I know there's different things that people will do, myself included, to try to feel like we belong and that we're included, because being included, it feels like we are also actually valuable. I also appreciate that some things that people do to fit in, maybe even you, have led to a really complicated relationship with food. It may even be something that is deadly. Fitting in can feel so powerful and important and today's episode features a letter from someone who has tried to fit in. They are someone that's in the performing arts, and they don't see themselves represented, and they really want to do their craft, but yet they don't see themselves represented. And we get to hear from someone who is so fabulous. I have followed this person's work for years and years, so much so that I feel like I already know this person. But this episode today was actually the first time I got to speak with her, her name is Lindley Ashline, she is a photographer and activist and also a writer who brings so much to the conversation along the food peace journey. But before we get to hear this episode's letter and hear all the wisdom from Lindley, a quick word from our sponsor.

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](https://twitter.com/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, We have had a complicated relationship. This was always destined for us based on my family history. My grandmother was a dancer desperate to be thin, and so she constantly bullied and criticized my mother and aunts about their weight. In response to this, my mother vowed never to mention diets to me. The first time I even heard the word "diet," she got suddenly serious and told me to ignore it. In fact she never really talked about you. I didn't do a lot of learning to cook, or eating adventurously, or balancing my meals. I learned a lot about comfort eating, especially when my parents broke up. But I do have some wonderful memories of family meals, making salads with my sisters, or sitting around a big Sunday roast. I caught the "theatre bug" early, and my first serious attempts at restricting you were in my teen years, trying to get thin so I would look good on stage, or get cast in the roles I wanted in our community theatre. I wanted an eating disorder. I wanted to be like some of my mum's students - the girls who passed out in the bathroom. I felt out of control and I wanted to be diagnosably sick so I could therefore be treated and fixed. In my twenties, my relationship with you looked more like bingeing than restricting, and believing that this was a serious problem, I joined a food-related twelve-step programme. I grew a lot spiritually, and finally felt at peace with you, but realize now that it was basically dieting with a side of spiritual baggage. I'm still confused about whether my bingeing was a problem, and whether that programme, and some of its food rules, was a good choice for me. I moved to a different country to go to grad school, and found I couldn't keep up with the demands of the programme with such massive life changes. I now know it was completely normal that I gained back all the weight I lost, plus more. I'm no longer restricting you, and feel more balanced. I am still gaining weight, which is frustrating mostly because I can't afford to buy clothes that fit. I feel frumpy, and I miss being stylish. As my body ages I feel myself slowing down, and I am a little sad that I will probably never be thin again. But I am beginning to be ready to face what is next in our relationship, as friends and not enemies. Sincerely, Ageing from Australia

Julie: Hey there letter writer, thank you so much for your note, and I am excited to introduce you to Lindley Ashline. She's a photographer, a writer, and activist. She's someone who I have admired for a really long time. She has been shining a light on who is missing from the conversation when it comes to weight inclusive spaces. When we talk about body positivity or body liberation and topics like clothing, those are things that she often will talk about. And again, I've really admired her work and I am thrilled that she is willing to help us, and you, answer your letter. So let's go ahead and give Lindley a call.

Lindley: Hi, this is Lindley.

Julie: Hi Lindley, it's Julie Duffy Dillon, how's it going?

Lindley: Pretty good. How about you?

Julie: I'm great, it's so great to talk to you. I don't, I feel like I know you really well, but is this the first time that like we've actually ever really talked live?

Lindley: I think so. Yeah.

Julie: I think so. I'm having that weird experience. It's like the internet makes me feel like I have already like, have known you for a long time. Um, which is the great part of the internet. But anyway, I am so excited to have a few minutes here with you to sift through this letter. Um, did you get a chance to read over it?

Lindley: I did, and I'm so excited about this letter because there are so many threads that we could pull.

Julie: So many, so many threads and um, you know, I have a theater kid at home, so reading about performing arts in any way, it is something that pulls extra hard, so um I feel like, you know, an even more like kind of an emotional connection to this letter, but when you were, when you were reading through it, what was your kind of general impression about what this person is going through?

Lindley: Well, I think I have a real personal connection to this letter too, because I did not grow up in a family with any performing arts folks in it, um but as a, as a kid and a teenager, I sang, I wanted to be involved in theater, um, I was very passionate about music, and uh, and as an average sized child, I was able to be involved in that, but after puberty, when suddenly I looked like every- every uh, fat female German peasant in my family, because you know, we all, we all have the big chest and the big child birthing hips and the, and the blond hair, we all, we all look like German peasants. Um, and suddenly, uh, suddenly no one wanted me on stage. So suddenly I wasn't able to get cast in community theater, and I spent a brief period as a vocal performance major in college, because I was really passionate about music and performing and I just, I was getting messages from all over the place that my body uh, was just not going to be accepted. And so, uh, unlike the letter writer, um, I just turned away from performing. Um, and I just, I just took a different path um, like I didn't, and I'm very lucky, I realize um, that I didn't end up with an eating disorder because that is such a common thing in the performing world because of the obsession with thinness, in the, in the performing arts. And so, so this is a very personal letter for me because I also felt like my body was stopping me from doing the things that I was perfectly capable of doing on the stage.

Julie: Yeah. You know, I'm feeling so much sadness thinking about like, you and so many other people who are kind of just pushed out of these different areas of expression and like, career choices based on body size and um, I know there's many different reasons why people, um I think- I'm thinking about accessibility and people who may not seem like someone like themselves in um, performing arts, and how that is just like sadness for all of us. We're missing out on so many people who could have done some amazing things. So, I just want to name that. And I wonder too if like, by you turning away from it, is that part of why you never experiencing disorder and other people in a similar place, you know, as a protective in the end?

Lindley: You know, I don't know, and I want to be very clear too that uh, that me turning away and someone else developing in the in disorder, those things are morally equivalent. Um, I didn't, I didn't have some, you know, I'm not better than the letter writer. I'm not- I didn't, I didn't make better choices. I didn't, you know, I want to be very clear that- that I'm not saying, well, unlike the letter writer, I didn't develop an eating disorder, you know, that's uh, in the world that we live in, in the systems that we are part of, an eating disorder is a perfectly reasonable mental path to take to try to deal with those pressures.

Julie: Oh, I agree. 100%. Thank you for clarifying that too. Um, and I agree, like it's it just makes so much sense, and um, I think that's part two of why there's so much um, it's so messy to like, try to repair one's relationship with food and you know, thinking about that and this letter writer, maybe someone who can identify with some parts or all of this letter, what would you recommend to someone as some first steps forward?

Lindley: Well, I think, I think the other really important part about this letter is the grieving. Um, grieving not being able to get cast in roles, grieving uh, gaining back weight, grieving uh, you know, grieving being in a larger body, grieving not being [inaudible]. Um, and we talked so much about fashion choices. Uh, and and plus size clothing, and things in the activism world, because it's one of the most easily discussable and visible ways that, that people in large bodies aren't allowed to belong. Um, and it's okay to grieve these things. It's okay to grieve the privileges that we lose when we live in a larger body. Totally okay and totally normal to grieve losing those things, because it sucks to not be included. It sucks to not be able to get theater roles. It sucks to not do the things that you want to do in life because you have been arbitrarily excluded based on your body. So, so I think allowing that grief is really important. Um, and it's also really important to get angry if you need to get angry. But the most important part of this is placing the blame where it belongs. The blame is on the systems that we live in that oppress fat people, people in larger bodies, our bodies are not the problem ever. Even when our bodies feel like a problem, because that exclusion is based on other people making choices that exclude us. So not- because it's so easy for us to turn in our inward and say "my body is bad because it doesn't fit. My body is bad because the only clothing I can afford is frumpy" and and you know, uncomfortable or it doesn't fit right. Uh, "my body is bad because it's big," but the the problem is in the system and that's hard and that's scary to face that the world is the problem and not us. So it's easy to turn that inward. And that is, that is part of what causes mental illnesses like eating disorders, because it's easier to turn inward and blame our own bodies than it is to blame the world. Um, but if you are angry, that is valid, but point that anger where it belongs.

Julie: Yeah. Yeah. I think about how anger for so many of us is not something that we're really trained to tolerate, and turning inward just seems like more natural, and also more appropriate maybe, based on how we were brought up. And uh, sometimes when I talk to people individually, like when I was working with clients individually, they would get to a place of anger noticing these big systems that you're describing and, and it's as a someone who is sitting, I always say, I'm sitting in the easy chair, like I'm like, with someone as they're exploring this process and um, as I witness a person going from like blaming themselves to start to like, look outside and like, oh, it's the system that's broken, not me. Um, it's really like, it brings me to tears every time when I would hear about it, and um, I would observe how it was uncomfortable to like, even start to open up the anger, because I think there's not a lot of like, training that we've

had with like, tolerating anger and it's a lot of anger, you know, these are big systems, you know, and is there anything that you have found in that space for you or anybody else that helps to like sit with that anger? Because it is, it's a big one.

Lindley: I mean I think I think allowing yourself to feel anger, um you know, I grew up, I grew up in the Southern United States, um you know, I grew up being trained to be a nice sweet southern lady, Southern white lady specifically, and we didn't do anger, we did passive aggressive.

Julie: Yes, I live in that area myself right now, we do it that really well.

Lindley: Yeah, yeah and I'm really good at it, but it's not, it's not a healthy mode of communication either. Like I had to learn to use my words and state my needs um, and move out of passive aggressiveness into boundaries. Um, and so setting boundaries around your body is one method that you can learn to channel that anger, and I don't mean treating others badly because you're angry that your body is being excluded. I mean um, setting boundaries like um, I'm angry because I cannot buy clothing at Forever 21 because Forever 21 has made the choice not to serve me, so I'm not going to go with my friends, I'm going to set a boundary that I'm not going to go with my friends to Forever 21 and stand around while they turn on clothing.

Julie: Yes, yes.

Lindley: So you can you can channel that anger, channel that frustration, and channel that grief into demanding that you be treated better. Um, and setting boundaries around what you will accept. You can- you can channel the anger of not being able to get equal health care into uh, firing your doctor and searching for one that is not going to treat you badly because your body side. So, so, channeling, not only allowing yourself to feel that anger, but channeling- channeling it into what you can reasonably do. You cannot fix the whole world yourself, you know, but, but you can- you can channel that anger into being firm about what kind of treatment you will and won't accept. You can channel it into anything that places it outside your body, you can channel it into- you can channel it into activism if you want to start taking steps to be an activist, that was how I became an activist. I kept getting mad and I had to start talking about it.

Julie: Yeah, and we're so grateful for you, you know, having that, that, you know, that claim of like activism, and I think that's like as an observer, that's what I often would notice if people learn to find a way to, to kind of like sit with that anger and not be ashamed of it. Um, and just name it, like you said, like observing, and this is what's happening right now. Oftentimes it was like this like jet fuel for something. Um, and it may be just, um, like the activism that you're describing, or finding ways to have some new boundaries and- but it was like an energy that was so important because this is like, a really bumpy messy process because again, like you said, it's like the whole system is broken, so it's not going to be fixed overnight and it's not gonna be an individual game, you know, it's- we're all needing to come together on this and um, I was gonna ask you about the food peace syllabus, but before I moved on, is there any other kind of steps you had in mind or did we cover everything that you were hoping to say?

Lindley: Very quickly, um, the other part of this, um, the other part of this letter, letter writer, your personal history is so fascinating because of the boomerang through the generation. Um, your grandmother, your grandmother was very invested in diet culture because that was the system that she lived in, and so she, she tried to then enforce that system. Your mother rebelled and totally went the other way. Um, but the thing about this is that even though your parents try to protect you, uh, you still live in a world that is full of diet culture and that worships fitness, and so you know, so as soon as you were able to get out in the world, um, what your parents were doing to try to protect you wasn't quite enough, and- and that is very normal because we all live in these systems. And so, so I just want to sort of note this intergenerational dynamic um, and that uh, people who are parents um, you know, you do what you can, but that your kids still live in that world. Uh. So.

Julie: Exactly.

Lindley: So you know, you should do what you can to protect your children. Um, but- but I just, I want to note this really fascinating dynamic of this sort of boomeranging through generations, and that that is also very normal.

Julie: Right? Yeah, that was a really interesting part to- to read too, and it's um, it's not very often that I hear a parent um, being brought up by a parent who's dieting and knee deep and eating disorder behaviours and then decides "I'm not going to um, teach my child that" and um and then, you know, it can still happen because like you said, yeah, like diet culture is so pervasive, and um, there's so much pressure on, as a parent right, to think that you can protect everything, but, but we can't, and um, yeah that's a, that's a, that's a hard part, but I wonder like moving forward how the generations will look for this family, you know, how this person doing the work, um, and where they are right now, and how that will look just generations down the line. So, um, well, I wanted to ask you, Lindley, about the food peace syllabus - if you are new to the show, the food peace syllabus is a collection of resources that we've been gathering over the last five or six years that help with your own relationship with food and your food peace journey. You can get to the latest, latest copy by going to juliedillonrd.com. And Lindley, would you like to add anything to it?

Lindley: I would, um, every week I put out a newsletter called the Body Liberation Guide. And uh, I say the word newsletter and people go, oh no, but this one is worth it, I promise.

Julie: It is worth it.

Lindley: Yeah, yeah, we talk every single week, there is some kind of original new writing in it. Um okay, I lied, every once in a while I recycle stuff, that was particularly popular, but there's some kind of original writing in every single week. Um and we talk about body image. We talk about accepting fat bodies. We talk about power dynamics. We talk about this sort of um, how to fix your body image. We talk about weight gain. And uh, and so there's also resources of, here's what people in the body acceptance world are talking about this week, uh it's a really great, it's usually a fairly long read. There's a lot of stuff in it, but it- it's something that a lot of people are really looking forward to every week. I get lots of responses going, oh, this is fantastic. So, it's not just me pumping up myself.

Julie: Right? It is, your newsletter is very generous, it is very generous, and, like, I appreciate that you put a lot into it, and um, I know when we were prepping for this episode, I mentioned, like, I get a lot of, like, emails and newsletters that I delete without even opening, and- but yours is one that, like, if I don't have time to read it in that moment, I don't delete it, because I'm like, I really want to read this. Like, it is, there's something every time that I get from it, and again, I think it's just very generous of you to- to do that. So, we will put a link in the show notes for anyone who is wanting to hear we're talking about. Um and if someone wants to find out more about you and the work you're doing, where's the best place for them to go?

Lindley: Well, you can find everything that I do at bodyliberationphotos.com. And uh, and I'm also very active on instagram [@bodyliberationwithlindley](https://www.instagram.com/bodyliberationwithlindley).

Julie: Awesome. Again, we'll put those in the show notes for you. Thank you so much for your time, your expertise, your compassion. I really, really appreciate it. And um, I know the letter writer and anyone listening is going to really appreciate it too. So thank you.

Lindley: Yeah, thanks so much for having me.

Julie: So there you have it. Letter writer, I hope you enjoyed my conversation with Lindley Ashline. I hope that as you sift through all these complicated parts with your family history, with not seeing yourself in the spaces that bring you so much joy, I hope you give yourself permission to grieve like Lindley said, and name those systems that are broken. Because you are not the broken one. So I see that food has written back, but before we get to food's letter.

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: Did you enjoy this episode of the Love Food podcast? Well, I would love it if you left a rating a review, shared an episode, doing any of those acts of kindness really helps the show grow. You can also push subscribe. I love hearing how you're experiencing the show. And I also have seen some new features in the Apple Podcasts app that I'm not so sure about. But you can even save an episode just like you would save a post on Instagram. So, I'm thinking doing that is something that also helps the show to be seen by others. So whatever you do, any of those things, just know it helps more people find access to food peace. All right. Like I said, food has written back, but until next time, take care.

Julie (as food): Dear aging from Australia, We are holding the intergenerational, complicated ways of connecting just falling at your feet. This burden must feel so heavy. We appreciate your body is often excluded from the spaces and places you're in. This is not okay. You deserve to be seen, heard, and valued, on the stage, with friends, and going to the doctor. Consider letting yourself grieve not being included. With threads of grief tied together, you may notice anger. Anger toward the broken systems that exclude you. Allow that anger to be your jet fuel towards food peace for you and for others. 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.