

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 264 of the Love Food podcast. I am 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're new to the love food podcast, welcome. What we do here is we get a listener letter, a listener maybe just like you, who has a complicated relationship with food, and we sift through it and hopefully find some different ways, different perspectives or ways to move forward through experimenting with something different, because a news flash, not only do diets not work, but the pursuit of- of weight loss is something that is harmful. It's harmful for you. It can hurt your health. And it is also something that contributes to hurting people around you, people in your community who are in higher weight bodies. So, this episode in particular is an episode for those of you who are starting to connect those dots, but feeling really stuck. I know there's many people listening who would identify with having an eating disorder, or trying to break up somehow with this kind of addiction to dieting, or just not being able to stop dieting, and also been diagnosed with a chronic condition. I do talk about PCOS or polycystic ovarian syndrome a lot, which is a chronic condition, but there's lots of chronic conditions out there that oftentimes when people are diagnosed with them, they're told that they have to diet, they have to lose weight. I'm thinking about diabetes or high cholesterol, um, even things like arthritis or multiple sclerosis, like there's lots of conditions out there that people are told to eliminate a certain food or foods and pursue weight loss in order to manage it.

Julie: Now, we could really debate all those are not rooted in actually any good science, especially the long term data, but what do you do when you're trying to recover from eating disorders? What do you do when, you know, diets are this harmful thing? What- what can you do? So many people have told me that they feel really stuck, and they can be trapped here exhausted for years. I have a letter from someone that we're going to be hearing in just a moment from someone who just feels so hopeless, so hopeless about how they're going to move forward, and scared for their children. Like, are they going to see their parent tortured with food for their whole life? So, I have some, I have a lot of things to say about it, and I'm looking forward to exploring this letter with you. But before we get to that in hearing this episode's letter, 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 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, where to start? I am not so sure. Once again, I lay there at night unable to sleep. Once again, I find myself agonizing over how I could possibly get better after all these years of battling with you hour per hour, day after day. I find myself completely and utterly stuck, powerless, and deeply lost. The struggles have really started early on. I remember how when my mom put me on my first diet at age 11, it felt so good getting attention for how I looked, but then how I missed you. Shortly after that, I remember eating huge amounts of food on my own, and feeling so full and ill, lying on the floor hoping to be sick. From then on, you were always there. Through all the years of mental abuse from my mother while nobody, including my dad, would protect me, bullying at school, years of lonely travels. How can I now feel beautiful when you expose my flaws so openly? How can I feel worthy of my husband's love and attention? How can I hope for my children to grow strong and balanced if they've seen their own mother so tortured? Is this worth living through all this pain? The thing is, you won. I'm now at my biggest, feeling so uncomfortable and ashamed of myself, now diagnosed with PCOS. The weight just won't budge no matter how hard I try. Between PCOS and an eating disorder, how on earth am I supposed to navigate? The messages just seem to conflict so badly. Food, how could we ever be at peace? How could I ever move on and just forget about you so that I can model health to my own children? Sincerely, tormented and longing for a better life.

Julie: Oh, letter writer, thank you so much for this note. Thank you so much. The way you describe your experiences with food in your body is relatable to so many people. So we appreciate your vulnerability writing it down. There's something about the intersection of eating disorder recovery trauma and then the diagnosis of a chronic illness that delivers this very punctual type of hopelessness and powerlessness. I say punctual because it is the textbook experience for anyone with those intersections to feel the stuckness and the powerlessness and certainly, you know, a 15, 20 minute podcast episode isn't going to have a solution, and if anything, that is just so trite and minimizing of all that you have lived through, and how you're trying. And I'm hoping that we can sift through some things so you can maybe navigate your sails a little differently and see if this puts you in the direction that you're hoping to go. Or at least get unstuck. That's- that's a really exhausting space to be in.

Julie: When I was reading through your letter, I jotted down some notes, you know, the things that you're bringing up that are making things complicated and also like, just so exhausting. So not only the intersection of eating disorder recovery, and a chronic condition like polycystic ovarian syndrome, and living through trauma, I also hear about you being a parent, and being in a relationship with a partner, and how it's hard to feel worthy of that love and worried about your kids, you know, and them seeing how tortured you are with your relationship with food, and not feeling connected to the hope that they will not feel that torture. I feel that hope, and I hope that's enough to help you to keep going, that we do hope that as you are sifting through this complicated relationship, whether you know it or not, you are doing the work. It just doesn't look like, all slick and pretty, like, I think we're trained to think that therapy and living with trauma, like how it's supposed to look at the quote "end", because that's just not how it is.

Julie: You're doing the work, and doing the work is one of the best things you can do for the relationships that you have, especially with your children. Something that you mentioned too that I want to highlight, or two things that food was at fault for: exposing your flaws and "winning" since your body is bigger than you wanted to be. And probably I'm gathering too, from the letter, bigger than society, the world, health care providers, your parents, bigger than they want it to be too. And I appreciate that food has basically made you a target by delivering the nourishment your body needed to help sustain you and also help you to survive the trauma. You know, the type of trauma that you're describing from one of your parents is not just this like one time event trauma, those are awful in itself, and a trauma that's more of uh from neglect, and consistent abuse over time, food has been a very reliable constant for many people to help them survive that trauma. And food is also this necessary ingredient for being a human being. You know, we need certain things as humans all the time. Actually there are five things: we need water, warmth, oxygen, sleep, and food. And somehow, food, unlike the other four, gets put in this category of, we need to only have so much, if we have too much we're bad, or it exposes our flaws or makes us fat, and what a shitty thing for one of the five basic necessary ingredients to stay alive as a human. That now we have a relationship with it that is framed as addiction, or this bad thing that we must really restrain from.

Julie: This is just keeping you and that stuck- stuck cycle, because again, we need food just like we need oxygen, and fighting food is just going to keep you stuck. And at first, you know, I take some notes whenever I read a letter, and at first I put the word fight because I was gathering that there was a fight going on, and then I put stop fighting, but then that was not right. Because I don't know if- if you can stop fighting and for you, the listener who can relate to this letter, like, stopping the fight probably comes with a lot of privilege and access, and that's just not an option. I think this type of fight where food is blamed for a person's body getting too big, food is blamed because it's an escape and it soothes and um, has behaviors associated with eating disorders, I think the reason a person gets stuck is because you just can't prioritize healing in that particular fight. If you're fighting your body and really frustrated because it's not budging, I think it's the word you use letter writer, you're wanting it to budge. But having PCOS, your weight just won't budge, which is totally the common experience with PCOS. Lots of chronic conditions too. But with PCOS you have high circulating insulin, really high circulating insulin for most people with PCOS and um, chronic inflammation. And those are two things along with high androgens that make the scale just not move. And it's not calories in calories out. You may restrict with your

friends and notice your friends weights go down but yours don't. That is like the total typical PCOS experience. And if you are trying to heal from the traumas and repair your relationship with food and trying to restrict in order to make your weight go down, there's just no room to prioritize healing. But like I said, I don't- I don't know if like, stopping the fight is an option. It just seems like that is like a pipe dream. But instead what I'm thinking about - what if you chose instead a different fight? So keep that armor on, keep the, I don't know, the instruments that you're using in battle. But instead of fighting the scale, fighting to lose weight. What if instead you fought to not diet?

Julie: I know that's quite a shift, but I appreciate that healing one's relationship with food doesn't mean that there's no more fighting, because if- if we're going to do something like um anti diet work, like intuitive eating or some other tool on your food peace journey, that's still a fight, because you're going to be surviving in a world where diet culture is the norm. So, you still need to fight, but it's a different kind of fight, because this kind of fight, it allows space for healing. And I think the big mistake that so many people make when they're helping someone with a relationship with food, or someone is sifting through their relationship with food is health and good/bad food choices and healing or tried to be- they try to be stacked up evenly, and they can't, there's just not enough room. When a person is prioritizing healing, they're going to be eating food that may feel like goes in the bad pile. I don't like thinking of food in the binary. Um, I have an anaphylactic reaction to shellfish. So that may be bad for me. But besides those, really, I think I really discourage the binary because I don't think food has that kind of moral value, but I know that's how the world kind of looks at food. And same with the scale. Like the scale is so valued. But when we value that binary of food and the number on the scale, there just isn't room to prioritize healing. And when we prioritize healing, it's going to seem like food choices are made out of the opposite of health, because we're just fixated on that binary and we're also fixated on physical health.

Julie: Letter writer, I know that lots of different parts of you are struggling, so not just your physical experiences but also your emotional experiences. You know, you talk about your worth and recovering from this trauma, and it's okay to prioritize healing from those, and if anything, like I don't want to- I don't prioritize health in a sense because I think, yeah, you don't have to prioritize health to be considered a human that deserves dignity. And if you decide that you want to prioritize your emotional health over everything else, I think that's going to help like, move the needle a bit so you're not feeling as unstuck, or not feeling as stuck, rather. I want you to feel unstuck. And if you're wondering how to do this, like if you're needing a supplement on how to move through this process, like how do you go from focusing on the scale and the good/bad food choices, you know, there's lots and lots of different tools, but my absolute favorite one right now is the book and workbook by Sonya Renee Taylor, *The Body is Not an Apology*. That book is life changing. And it's also- it's- not only is it a book and workbook, but there's also an audio version. Accessing that in whatever form you can is something that for so many people was the thing that helped just move something different to help prioritize healing.

Julie: And when you prioritize healing, letter writer and anyone listening, when you prioritize your healing, your relationship with food, some really cool shit happens, because you start to help yourself but you're also helping people in your family. You know, prioritizing your healing, setting boundaries about what is acceptable for you, and deciding that you are worthy, deciding

those things, prioritizing whatever you need in order to help you connect with that worth, is a beautiful thing to teach a young person. And as you do this work, as you unpack your own anti-fat bias, sift through it and you know, smash it to smithereens, you know what that's going to do? That's going to help people around you. Unpacking our own anti fat bias is something that helps everyone.

Julie: And Sonya Renee Taylor talks about this uh, in one portion of the book and actually throughout, and so that is what I want to add to the food peace syllabus this week. If you're like, what the hell is a food peace syllabus, Julie? Well, the food peace syllabus is a list of resources that we have been gathering for the last five or six years on this podcast that helps um, cultivate just more resources and solutions and experiments on your food peace journey. You can get to the latest copy of the food peace syllabus by going to juliedillonrd.com/freebies. You'll see it there and there's some other downloads if you're interested as well, namely if you are someone like the letter writer who is trying to recover from an eating disorder and past trauma and also been diagnosed with PCOS. There's a PCOS roadmap and some documents that you can use when you go to the doctor. So, I hope those are helpful for you.

Julie: All right. So I see that food has written back. Letter writer, please know that we are rooting for you, and we know that you are worthy already today, and as a child, and in the future, and you deserve to prioritize this healing.

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

Julie (as food): Dear tormented and longing for a better life, Oh dear one. We wish you saw how brave you've been on your food peace journey. We know you're exhausted and stuck. Can you keep fighting, yet shift the direction? Link arms with others, other anti diet warriors rejecting the scale. This will finally allow you to make space and prioritize healing. Shifting this way gives you a chance to show your family how important recovery is. It shows your family they deserve to feel worthy, and that's when you'll know your "flaws" were actually your superpowers. 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.