

Intro music: Bags are packed, are you ready to go?...This time tomorrow we'll be on the road...riding with you into sunnier days...I wouldn't want it any other way.

Julie: It's time to name the neglect from typical food advice. Welcome to the Find Your Food Voice podcast, hosted by me, Julie Duffy Dillon. I'm a registered dietitian with 20 years of experience partnering with folks just like you on their food peace journey. What have we learned? Well, cookie cutter approaches exclude too many people, and you don't need to be fixed. It's not you. It's not me. It's all of us. Only together we can start a movement and fix diet culture. And we will. Let's begin with now.

Transition music: I want to see how the world turns round...Let's go adventure in the deep blue sea...home is with you wherever that may be...home is with you wherever that may be.

Julie: Hey there. Welcome to episode 277 of the Find Your Food Voice podcast. I'm Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. So if you are like most people, I know you didn't just happen to stumble upon a complicated relationship with food. If you're new to the podcast or you've been listening for a while, I don't think it matters. I have a feeling that your complicated relationship with food started back when you were young. Maybe you saw someone else dieting, maybe you were told your body was wrong. Maybe a doctor like a pediatrician told your caretaker that you needed to stop having desserts in seconds. Seriously, most people I talk to who are struggling with how to recover either from their eating disorder or diet culture, they get so frustrated, and I wonder if you do too. Because so many people say I know what I need to do, but I just can't seem to do it. Well, one reason why it's just so hard is because this complicated relationship with food is very sticky because your foundation, like how you learned about food and how you learned about body, your body, and other people's bodies was really in this container alongside with diet culture.

Julie: So our letter today is from someone who has been diagnosed with a new chronic illness, and even before they were diagnosed with this chronic illness, they identified that yeah, I think I have something complicated going on with my relationship with food. And it was already hard to try to recover with now this extra added layer. So we're going to go through for those of you listening, which I'm thinking it's going to be just about every listener, including you. This is for those who have had a complicated relationship with food since you were a kid. What can you do when you feel stuck, and you really look at those memories and they are sticky. So before we get to this episode's letter, a quick word from our sponsor.

Julie: Are you ready to divorce that dumpster fire that is your PCOS diet? Want another way to manage your PCOS that is not dripping with diet culture? PCOS Power is finally open today. PCOS Power is my new course designed to help you get the truth and silence those lies you've been told about PCOS. It includes my nine step PCOS Power framework to help you move from powerless to powerful using videos, a private podcast feed, and a community to help you rally against diet culture. You can choose a self-guided option or add live group coaching calls. There's even a premium option to add one on one coaching calls with me. I have not offered one on one coaching support for years. I can't remember the last time I've offered it. So, I am looking forward to connecting with you however it fits for you. Are you interested in details? Well, go to juliedillonrd.com and you can get right to it. Because this is a new course system, we will be

closing the doors so my team and I can take really good care of everyone inside. Doors do close March 10 of 2022. So we hope to open them up again very soon and keep them open so you can purchase any time, yet for now, just to be sure we provide the support that were promising and all the care, we will be closing the doors March 10. So again, PCOS Power is open to buy today through March 10 of 2022. Go to juliedillonrd.com for all the details.

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

Transition music: Take the good and the ups and downs...I want to see how the world turns around. Home is with you wherever that may be.

Julie (as letter writer): Dear food, As being a person in a larger body, ever since I was a kid, I had a rocky relationship with you. The people around me always made fun of me because of the way I looked. I was bullied at school. My own parents shamed me. I had nowhere to go. Then I found some sort of comfort around you. I really liked it. But then I started noticing my weight changes, and the people noticed around me too. The shaming got worse. I was put on a diet at a young age at 14 by my parents. The relationship with you got even worse. The diet was super restrictive. I lost weight but gained all back, sometimes, sometimes even double. After leaving home, I was in this diet on slash off for four years. During this time, there were days when I used to binge eat, there were days when I used to stress eat. But one thing I noticed was my periods got irregular, not getting it for months. Sometimes my body was trying to say something to me, but I didn't get it at the time. Recently I got diagnosed with polycystic ovarian syndrome. I want to improve my relationship with you, but I'm scared because the world around me is telling me the only way to manage PCOS is through diet or restricting certain foods which give me joy. Sincerely, scared to move forward.

Julie: Hey there, letter writer, thank you so much for your note. And this is really scary. That's why you're scared. It's really scary to move away from diets, especially when you're living with a chronic condition that is pushed to diet, especially if you were told as a young person that your, that your body was too big or not acceptable, especially if you're living in diet culture. So those are three big things that you're holding onto, and probably more than that. Even though this is really scary, that doesn't mean you're not strong enough, or you're not able to, or that you're weak. Remember, you got this message that your body was wrong and accepting it was not an option. I'm so sorry, I wish someone would have spoken up about how that was not okay. I wish you were told your body was and is worthy of love, abundance, comfort, power, acceptance. And I also wish your parents, who probably did this out of love and concern and wanting you to be safe, I wish they didn't reinforce, reinforce these false truths with that restrictive diet. And yeah, your relationship with food is complicated. You need food to survive. We all do. And of course, throughout your childhood, and now too, with the stress and dealing with this complication of living with a chronic illness, food is rightfully providing comfort. I so wish you knew that this complication is not your fault.

Julie: Something that we know to be true is that diets predict binge eating for those with PCOS. Diets in the general population also predict eating disorders, and they also predict weight gain. Not that that is something that I hold as something important for someone's access to living, and

um, access to healthcare and all that. But if dieting is the thing that's supposed to make weight go down, it only predicts weight gain. So, you know, that's messed up.

Julie: So here's the thing, letter writer, and anyone else who's in a similar place, here's my question to you. This is a really important question, and I don't think most people have asked themselves this: how will you know when you've dieted enough to know it hasn't worked for you? Like, what proof do you need that you're done with dieting? And I say this because for you, letter writer, or someone else listening, you may not be at a place where some people call diet rock bottom. You may not be done with dieting, and I am so rooting for you to never diet again. There's many of us who are rooting for you. We want you to rally with us to fight diet culture, and you may not be in a place yet where it feels like you've really tried enough, and one time is enough I think, but you know, I don't have your lived experience. I'm not living in your life with all the complications that you described. But I do want you to connect with this. How will you know when you've dieted enough? Do you need to try a certain amount of times? Do you need to try for a certain amount of years? When will you draw the line in the sand? And something I can glean from reading your letter is you're grown up now, and you started being told, you were first told the diet at 14. So I'm assuming that you've been on and off diets for probably 10 years or more. I don't know how old you are now. It could be 10, 20, 30 years. And even if you're not the letter writer, you know, you may be someone who was told, especially those of you living with PCOS, I know many people with PCOS are told to diet as early as preschool, which how dreadful is that? That is just not acceptable. But you may have been told to diet since you were a very young child, and now you're this grown up. So is 10 years, 20 years, long enough?

Julie: And I certainly know, if we were looking at some research, that would be long enough to know that it's not going to work. And when we look at long term research, we find that when people are on and off a diet, or even if they stay on the same diet the whole time, looking two to five years out, weight has been regained. And just like you, letter writer, a third to two thirds of people regain even more than they lost to begin with. So you don't even need 10 or 20 years. The data suggests that it's only two to maybe five to show that if, if it's gonna work or not for you. We don't have an intervention that helps people maintain weight loss. And we also don't have a dieting intervention that is without harm. Diets harm people. They, like I said, they predict binge eating, they predict eating disorders, and they also can cause high insulin levels, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high cholesterol. All of the things that you probably were told that you needed a diet to treat, diets actually can be the cause.

Julie: So for you, letter writer, and anyone listening who can relate, I hope you can be gentle with yourself as you are trying to determine, you know, how much, how many times you need. Be gentle with yourself as you decide these next steps, and be open to the answer. It just may not be that right now, is the time that you want to move away from dieting, or it may be that it is, you know, only you can have that answer. Just remember that your experience with dieting is the norm, not the exception. And you have been led to believe that managing your PCOS with diets is the only way. And it's not, it's, you don't have to diet living with PCOS, or diabetes, or fatty liver disease, or high cholesterol, or just being a human, and being a human especially, especially a human in a higher weight body. You do have choices, yet one thing remains the same: diet culture will exist, for at least the time being. You know, I know I'm working on it, you're working on it, we are all working on it. But I believe that's what makes this decision so tough.

You know, you're choosing in this moment to go against culture, to be radical, to be labeled as radical, and you can make a decision to not diet, yet the world will still be drinking the sugar free keto kool aid, you know? Um, you can decide to do it, but it is a bigger ask than you may really be admitting to yourself. But something that can help imagine for a moment, your life without dieting, imagine living in abundance with food, what food would be in your refrigerator? What food would be in your pantry, what would your grocery shopping be like? What would it be like ordering off a restaurant menu if you were living without dieting?

Julie: Now, as you invite these kind of possibilities in with these, answering these questions, what do you see around you, supporting you to make this move through the world with abundant permission for food, with abundant permission to take up space? Who do you see or what do you see supporting you? Is it your family, friends? Is it some online resource? Of course, books, therapy, dietitian support, spiritual guidance, meditation. I know I'm leaving out some things, but what do you see when you're living in this abundant space and opening the refrigerator, refrigerator, and seeing what you want to see, and opening the pantry and seeing what you want to see taking up space. What support do you see in those moments? And I invite you if it feels safe for you to imagine how all this feels as if it was in the present. If you can imagine this support, it isn't saying there won't be diet culture and all the other oppressive systems, rather there is a way for you to start connecting you with what you need, knowing what you need support-wise and also knowing what you want to see. Those are the first few steps like you need to really outline what you need, and what you would like to have to help you to start moving forward.

Julie: So moving forward, you may also notice some guardrails that you need to bridge you from now to that like, possible self, and that's where especially support will come in, because if you're imagining yourself opening the refrigerator, ordering off a menu, making a grocery list and it's in abundance of permission and you're seeing the support around you? I would assume you would get to that space of permission because that support, whatever you need, was there to help you bridge from where you are currently to that possible self. You are not supposed to recover from an eating disorder, you're not supposed to recover from diet culture, you're not supposed to recover from those alone. Recovery is something that needs to be done in community. What kind of community you need is going to be up to you and your like, your lived experience, but no one, no one does it alone.

Julie: So I see that food has written back, but please, please know, I'm rooting for you. We are all rooting for you, we are supporting you. So no, you are not alone. We are here for you in this moment. So many are in the same space, so many are in the same struggle, and I hope the solidarity can be that first like, spot, spot, that first like, way that you connect with support. And I hope it's the fuel you need to move forward in the direction that you want to go.

Julie (ad break): So I see that food has written back, but before we get to food's letter, this episode of the Find Your Food Voice podcast was brought to you by PCOS Power. PCOS Power is the course for people just like you, letter writer, and other people who can relate, to help you to divorce that dumpster fire that's your PCOS diet, give you tools to manage it without dieting, and also help you build that supportive community to rally with you to reject diets and live life on your own terms. Go to juliedillonrd.com to get all the details.

Julie: If you enjoyed this episode of the Find Your Food Voice podcast, I would love it as always if you left a rating, a review, subscribed, or shared an episode. Doing any of these acts of kindness really really helps the show grow, and I thank you in advance.

Julie: Alright, so let's get to food's letter, but until next time, take care.

Julie (as food): Dear scared to move forward, We are grateful for our connection. Coming to us in times of stress has been your strength. Yet we noticed you were taught to not seek comfort in us. We are sorry no one stepped up to fight for your right for abundance, permission, and acceptance. You deserve it now, and deserved it back then. As you decide how to move forward, imagine what healing looks like for you. Imagine being in your power and feeling hopeful. What do you see in your pantry? In your fridge? What is in your grocery card? Who or what is supporting you? Being able to picture these is your first step away from dieting. You are not supposed to recover your complicated relationship with us on your own. Even if you feel alone, know that we and so many others are rooting for you to reconnect and rekindle your abundant and permission-filled relationship with food, and yourself. Love, food.

Julie: Thank you for listening. I am Julie Duffy Dillon, and this is the Find your Food Voice podcast. Ready to join the anti diet movement and take the food voice pledge? Go to julieduffydillon.com and sign your name to the growing list of people saying no to diets and yes to their own food voice. The Find Your Food Voice podcast is produced by me, Julie Duffy Dillon, and my team of kick ass folks. I couldn't make the show without Yeli Cruz, Assistant Producer and Resident Book Fiend. And Coleen Bremner, Customer Service Coordinator and professional Hype Master. Audio editing is from Toby Lyles at 24 Sound. Music is Fly Free by Hartley. Are you looking for episode transcripts? Get them at julieduffydillon.com, where you can also submit letters for the podcast, give us feedback, and sign the Food Voice pledge. We need your voice to end diet culture. We literally can't do this without you. Subscribe to the Find Your Food Voice podcast to get weekly inspiration and education on how we can defeat diet culture and reclaim our own food voice. I look forward to seeing you here next week for another episode of the Find Your Food Voice podcast. Take care.