

*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: Hi and welcome to episode 280 of the Find Your Food Voice podcast. I am Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. I'm wondering what you were taught about how life would be as you got older. What I'm really, really wanting to know is, how did you hear your body would change? As you were 30 or 40 or 50, 60, 70? I mean, up there as far as we're allowed to be. Were you told it was a positive thing, or were you warned? Were you taught to be fearful about how your body would change? Well, that is a big topic, as we are talking about aging today. We have a special segment called Diet Culture IRL that we do on the Find Your Food Voice podcast now once a month with Coleen Bremner. If you're new to the show, or new to this segment, you may not know who, who Coleen is, and Coleen is operations manager behind the scenes here, and she's also a professional like, hype woman extraordinaire, and a body liberation advocate. And Coleen has noticed diet culture in these sneaky ways throughout life, and just has so much insight into just like, what's going on. So, Colleen is turning 30 in just a few days after this recording. So, happy early birthday, um, Coleen, and as she's turning the big three oh, she's noticing some things. And I'm going to be turning 47 this year. Not exactly the most exciting birthday, but it's really close to the big 50, which is pretty fantastic. I'm pretty excited to be almost 50, but we talk about what we learned about aging and how diet culture has really fucked with it. So we're wondering, how is it fucked with your experience as you're getting older? So check this out, let us know what you think, and if you want to get to know Coleen more, check her out on Instagram. Her handle is @abraudabroad, and if you're there might as well add me too, @foodvoicerd. But anyway, before we get to this episode's Diet Culture IRL, a quick word from our sponsor.

Julie (ad break): This episode of the Find Your Food Voice podcast is brought to you by free tools to help your voice. So, I have put together a number of tools that I hope help you to advocate for yourself as you are trying to say fuck off to diet culture. And this includes my free download on how to advocate for yourself when you're going to the doctor. So, this download, download is a customizable form where you can let your doctor know the boundaries that you need as you are accessing healthcare. And on the reverse side it actually has too, like, some handy references in case this experience planted a seed, and my hope is that it will just help it grow and grow and grow. So, if you would like to check out this free download or any of the other ones I have, you can go to [julieduffydillon.com/voice](http://julieduffydillon.com/voice) and you'll get to all of them. Again, it's [julieduffydillon.com/voice](http://julieduffydillon.com/voice).

Julie: Alright, let's get to this episode.

*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.*

Coleen: I'm turning 30 in just two days, which has me thinking about my existence and what I'm doing with my life, although I think about that daily, so I'm not sure exactly what my age has to do with it? I've always felt the most fulfilled helping others, so I found ways to mold and shape my life where I can do just that. We all have a sphere of influence, and it's up to us to decide how we use it. So for today's diet culture IRL, I'm going to share what I have learned in the timeline of my life so far.

Coleen: Self acceptance is key. What exactly is self acceptance? I think it's when we can sit down and, someone can sit down with themselves and feel neutral. Where you can be your authentic self and feel content with that. I have had to reject other people's toxic and outdated ideas of what "healthy" means, and in order to do that, I have to accept that I'm not their version of me, I'm my version of me. I've always been a rule follower, and wanted to feel acceptance from others. Comes with the 2 identity, but at what cost? I think, I think true acceptance comes from a place of respect, not fear or hatred. I truly enjoy my own company. I know that's a weird one, but it's true. You don't have to put up with anything you don't feel you deserve. This is why I listed self acceptance first. I'm not sure you can get to that place without understanding yourself first. I know my time is precious and valuable on this earth, so I'm really no longer giving my time to people who treat me disrespectfully or hurt my heart. I have the choice to walk away, even if it's incredibly challenging.

Coleen: Everyone else doesn't understand the homework assignment either. We're all just winging it. I think when we are younger we think, wow, everyone older just gets it, and they know exactly what they're doing. Nope. We all are doing the best we can with what we know and have. I think it's pretty comforting to know we are all growing, making mistakes, learning and changing in parallel to one another.

Coleen: You may be wondering, okay, but what does all of this have to do with my relationship to food or my body? It's all connected. You as a person are so complex and wonderful. When you think of your life's biggest lessons, you'll see it's all intertwined. So, I want to invite Julie to hop in IRL and help unpack today's diet culture IRL.

Julie: Hey Coleen. Welcome back to Diet Culture IRL. I love your segment. I'm so excited to talk about this today. How are you doing?

Coleen: Great. I love having this segment. I love having the opportunity to chat about diet culture IRL, and it's great.

Julie: Well, you know, we didn't we didn't talk about this just now, but I'm like, it still would be so cool to have a little jingle, so well, maybe we'll talk about that again. Diet Culture IRL jingle. Um, listener, you don't know this about Coleen, but she has an amazing singing voice. So that

could be really cool. Anyway, I digress. So, um we are here to talk about something very specific, and it's your birthday.

Coleen: Yes! It's like my favorite holiday. I know, so, so conceited. But I love celebrating my birthday.

Julie: Honestly, I mean, I'm gonna turn 47 this year and something that I appreciate is the longer I'm alive, the more thankful I am to actually have a birthday. So no, join us in this. But tell me about diet culture IRL, how you're experiencing it as you're about ready to turn 30.

Coleen: Honestly, I think the best part about journey to 30 is coming to the realization that I don't have to fit anyone else's mold of what I should look like, who I should be, how I should be at age 30. Because I think a lot of times we, we get messaging that says, oh, we should look this way, we should act this way, especially um, people who identify as women, and I think that that oftentimes can really get to us. So I'm happy that I've, I've come to a place where I feel like self acceptance has become a key part of who I am and I don't have to focus so much on other people's expectations of me or um, boundaries that I just don't feel like I can set, because I now feel like I'm in a place where no, I can actually set those boundaries, and I deserve to feel at peace when I can.

Julie: Yeah. Oh my gosh, there's so much that I think about with like living alongside diet culture and like all the things you said, you didn't talk actually about like the food part, but like they're so like twisted, wrapped up together um, how, how has diet culture been a part of that for you, you know, like that, not diet culture, but even just like, the pressure to lose weight or the um, which I know that's diet culture, but like, yeah, how is that showed up in like that tactical kind of way?

Coleen: Yeah, I think there's this weird thing that happens as we age, particularly moving from twenties to thirties, thirties to forties, forties to fifties, that it's like the older you get, the less "attractive," air quotes here for folks listening, that you, you get, and it's almost like we hear this messaging that we're letting ourselves go somehow, and rather than viewing my thirties as being something where I'm constantly focused on the latest diet craze, the food that I'm eating, tracking my food, because that was a huge part of my life in my 20s. I'm excited to know there's this kind of next chapter for me that doesn't involve those things, and, and I think it's going to be a huge time saver, but I also think it's going to just be a huge peace giver as well.

Julie: Yes. Oh, I was as you were talking about this, I'm like picturing, Coleen about ready to turn 20, and not knowing that this was even an option that you would be, like have available of like, oh, maybe I actually don't have to diet, and maybe I don't want to, and that just seems like a huge 180. Like that's huge.

Coleen: It's, it's wild. It's wild to think about, thinking back on 20 year old Coleen and you know, you get that question, that interview question where someone's like, where do you see yourself in five years? Where do you see yourself in 10 years? I can guaran-damn-tee you, I did not see myself sitting on Find Your Food Voice podcast talking about how I just don't want to diet and

I'm so over dieting, and want to fight diet culture, the patriarchy, injustices, didn't think that that would be me, and here I am.

Coleen: I am so glad you are. Oh my gosh, well, so you talked about self acceptance a lot in this, and something that I don't know, as I was like reading through it and then listening to you, um, read through it. I was thinking about like, I don't know, I have trouble defining sometimes what even like self acceptance is, and I have a feeling the listener is in the same place, like what is, what actually is that to like accept yourself, you know?

Coleen: Yeah.

Julie: What does that mean to you?

Coleen: Such a great question. I think this probably looks different for every person listening. For me, self acceptance is being able to sit with myself in silence or maybe with music or a journal or however you like to sit with yourself, and feeling neutral. So, not feeling great about your life, where your life is, thinking about, you know, we can run through the laundry list of things we wish our lives were, and we can run through the laundry list of things we wish we could accomplish or achieve or whatever it may be, but sitting down and actually feeling neutral about yourself as a person in that time. I'll say, I think self acceptance is not a linear thing. I think it's, it's definitely, probably more looks like a roller coaster than a circle, because some days I feel like I've really come to terms with myself. I accept myself, and other days I think, okay, I accept a version of myself right now. But I know this version of myself is going to change, and that's okay.

Julie: Yeah. So like the self acceptance, what I'm hearing from that is, it's a knowing of this is what is right now and it's going to change. And that's not something that makes me good or bad.

Coleen: Yeah. It's like giving yourself the room to change, and feeling comfortable knowing, maybe not even comfortable. I think there's room for discomfort as well. And just knowing that some changes are heading your way. And like I said, in 10 years, who knows what, what I'll be thinking or feeling in my 40s.

Julie: I'm so glad you said that room for discomfort, because whenever I've talked to people about moving away from diet culture and the concept of self acceptance, there's often this association of like, well I can't accept myself because it's, it's so uncomfortable and um, you know, just whatever that brings, and what I'm hearing you say, and this is what I would say too for like how I define self acceptance is like, it's not necessarily feeling good about and like positive and happy and um, I don't know, like you're not skipping through the fields, and it's really about being in the present and yeah, welcoming it, and as I say that, I appreciate that like, depending on the type of life you, the listener, are living, that will have different challenges, and mine are going to be different than Coleen's and versus you, the listener, and um, like there's definitely different challenges with it, and that, that makes me think about, you know, as, as I was reading through your um, words for today, I was thinking about my own aging process. You know, like I said, I'm going to turn 47 in May, and so it's closer to 50 which kind of, there's a part of me that's like that's so cool, that I'm gonna be 50, but I have this weird, but I'm also like okay

with it? Um, that I love reading the obituaries in the paper, it's like my favorite part to read, and that's where my enneagram 4 comes up. And so you mentioned your enneagram 2. So I'm like, I love reading the morbid, I guess, but what I've noticed the older I get, the closer in age I am to people in the obituaries, you know, and and um, you know, there's a certain age where it's like, oh yeah, like it's not as like shocking, you know, there's certain ages where it's shocking to see someone that young in the obituaries but getting closer to 50, it's getting less shocking, you know? And what that means and um, as a dietitian too like, self acceptance um, you know, all the layers of like the world telling that were accepted, not self acceptance, but like telling us that we're accepted, of course um, since we're talking about diet culture, like body size, whiteness, um, beauty, and aging, you know, those are all how the world sees us or like, gives us platform, you know? And I know for me, in the aging process has been one of the first times that I've really like witnessed my privilege start to wane as a, as a thin white woman, I've always just kind of had it, you know? And so, um, going gray and seeing people's kind of like, you're not covering that up, don't you need to go to the salon? And I stopped covering it up in, I think in like 2008 or 2009, and then I got my hair highlighted after my, after I finished all my fertility treatments, so we couldn't try anything else. And then my dog died a day later. So, I was like, classically just needing a change, covering up my sadness with like, I just need to feel pretty, and um, that was the last time I highlighted my hair, and I was in, I think that was in 2010. Um, but I, you know, something that we talked about before recording is like, my experience with going gray as a thin white woman is going to be different, and like just aging is going to be more acceptable than someone who already has these levels where they're experiencing systemic oppression, you know? And I don't know what you, what you think about all that, but that's just something that you brought up for me as I was reading what you were, what you had written.

Coleen: I think that's the tough part of it kind of, I think comes back to self acceptance or belonging even, is this stems from, for me, I'm going to speak personally, when I found my first gray, I immediately panicked and was like, oh my god, like, if I go gray now, like, if I'm getting grays now, what does that mean? I'm going to be all gray by 35 like, and yeah, maybe, but also I feel like I'm putting too much emphasis on what going gray means, actually, and I think that, uh, with, with the self-acceptance piece, I of course want to be considered beautiful and wonderful. And, and I think that that comes with some of our beauty standards as well. We don't view older people that are going gray necessarily as conventionally beautiful. Uh, and I think with time though, that, that those things can change as well, because I remember like seeing you for the first time after hearing your podcast only. And being, wow, that's so badass that she's just like going gray. I love that.

Julie: [Laughs] Thanks.

Coleen: But I also think there's room if you decide at some point that you want to dye your hair again, so what? Go for it!

Julie: Yes, I've always, I've always said that like, I reserve the right to change my mind like I did back in 2010, you know? Like I may want to do that again. I don't know, but I just, for right now, I'm like, it'd be kind of cool to show my kids this is what aging looks like without- I'm also not doing like plastic surgery and stuff and, and I'm not saying that to be like people who choose to color the hair or do Botox or plastic surgery are bad or doing the wrong thing. I just wish we

lived in a world where that was just, didn't need to exist, you know? I mean frankly for me, it's like, it takes time to do all that stuff and uh-

Coleen: And money. A lot of money.

Julie: And also like, yeah, and, and money, yeah, that too. A lot of money to color hair and do all those plastic surgery things. And it's also about holding onto power, you know, and, and um, I certainly, this may, I don't know if this is going to land the way I want it to, but like there's certain people, I want them to have power. Like there's, I want people who have experienced the hardest, um, life with like, systemic oppression to have more power. So, you know, if Botox is gonna help, then I'm like, I'm for that, you know?

Coleen: I also think there's room for, if you feel like something makes you feel more confident or makes you feel better or stronger in some way, if that happens to be coloring your hair or for me, I love putting makeup on. I love doing my makeup. I think it's so fun. I think it's like an art form, and I think I look beautiful when I put makeup on in the way that I like to. So I think there's also room for that. I don't think there's-

Julie: Oh my gosh, that's such a great point. Thank you for saying that because yes, like there's so many, there's not a good/bad, like getting out of that binary of all of this and um, you know, you're only going to be accepting yourself if you do this list or you avoid this list, which in itself is so diet culture-y.

Coleen: Yeah. And I think also goes back to whiteness as well. I think we as white people tend to put things into black or white. There's not a lot of nuance, there's, you know, that this room, this area for we, we have to follow these particular rules and that's how we stay in power. And also the same with dieting. We, when we go on a diet, we like to follow rules with, that's, that's something that we do because that makes us feel secure, or makes us feel more powerful. So I think, yeah, just accepting, like it's okay to, to weave in between and weave in and out of what, what feels good for you.

Julie: Yes. Right, right. Yeah. Your truth is your truth. Yes. And you know, something else I'm thinking about with all of this is I can remember going through the different decades that I've lived so far and being told a narrative or a story about the getting older, and in particular about nutrition in my teens, I can remember other mothers, not necessarily mine, but just like other like adults around me and mothers um, talking about um, oh you eat that much pizza now, but when you're older, you're not going to be able to. Or if when you get older it will just ruin blah, blah, blah, whatever that was. Um, and then as I got to through my twenties, it was similar, you know, oh, once you hit 30 then you're going to need to cut back, you're not gonna be able to eat with that much um, gusto and um, you won't stay thin basically. And you know, the thing that I've noticed, you know, in my forties, I can definitely tell like my body um, needs nutrition differently. Like it, the appetite definitely changed. Um, and it's so subtle, it's so subtle, but you know, I'm like in this work all day long, talking to people about like, how does your body feel when you're eating that cookie or that blueberry, you know, like in that, in the, like in all that, like grayness all the time. So, it was kind of cool to be like, oh, I can see this happening very slowly in real time, how my metabolism is probably changing. It's doing the thing that people

told me to be scared of, and because of this work, so grateful that somehow I stumbled into doing this, it protected me from even being like, fuck. And um, like to, because yeah, like things change. Our body just doesn't, I'm not like laying bone down anymore. Like, I'm not building muscle in the same way, I don't have the same needs, and I still need to eat, and it's, I still enjoy food, I still get hungry. And it's just different. Um, and so I just wanted to put that out there into the, you know, podcast land, that it doesn't necessarily need to be scary, and also I'm wondering for you, Coleen, are people still talking about that in the 20s, like, oh gosh, once you hit 30, you need to change blah blah blah. So like you might as well get used to it now kind of thing?

Coleen: I think it's even, it feels like it might be scarier as well for people who have already begun at a higher weight-

Julie: Oh I'm sure, yeah.

Coleen: -when, when, you know, we, we hear those things, because yeah, of course, I, I've heard those things and anything, that, it's the difference of seeing, you know, I think people have seen this probably on Instagram or elsewhere, but they see a smaller bodied person with a salad and they assume, okay, healthy, like good to go, and they see a larger bodied person with a pizza and they're like, oh, like you probably have a good however many years left, and then that's, that's that, and I think that for me hearing that that messaging, like when I was younger, it was really harmful because then I was like, okay, well, I'm never going to eat XYZ. I'm never gonna do that, which of course turned into disordered eating. So, I think that um, that messaging still definitely exists and the, again, like you said, so glad I stumbled into this, same, because I now can, can treat that messaging a little bit differently. I have a different view or a different filter on, on what that looks like when I hear it, and I think feeling comfortable to ask questions. Um I, you know, in the theater world, there are so many things about image, body image, things that come up, we're all dressing in front of one another, and, and people make comments, and I think instead of, and, and really harsh comments to themselves. Instead of um, always being defensive about it. Um, which I think in my earlier journey of body neutrality, I felt defensive about a lot of things. Um, now I'm like, don't talk to my friend that way, you know, I'll say something like that, like to someone instead of, instead of getting defensive because I just want them to care about themselves as much as I care about them.

Julie: So someone saying something about disparaging about their own body, you'll say like, don't talk to my friend that way. I love that Colleen! That's so great, oh, that's so wonderful. Uh and I think too, even like talking about um, going through our bodies changing just from being alive longer, like I wish it was something that was um, happening more outside of diet culture or like, or an awareness of a diet culture at least as this not cool thing. Um, I wish it happened more often um, you know, as I'm getting closer to menopause and I'll hear snippets like from my neighbor, she's like 10 years older than me, and I'm like, man, I'm so glad you told me this. And she's like, oh yeah, this is a big thing that happens, you know, in your late forties, and again, it's outside of diet culture stuff. And I'm like, this is something that I wish, like I wish we talked about our bodies outside of weight more often, because it would help us to just be more aware of like, what is going to happen in a way that's like, oh, I'm not abnormal or I'm not this like, anomaly, this is living. And this reminds me what you said about like, no one understands the assignment. Like we're all winging it, and like no, none of us know. But I think the one thing that

we could do is have like, neutral conversations and in a way like, you know, like my neighbor talking about, you know, I was talking about my migraines and she was like, yeah, until I went through my menopause completely. I had them for about five or 10 years and she's like, yeah, that's pretty much what a lot of people go through. And I was like, this would have been helpful to have.

Coleen: I know, like-

Julie: So I'm passing onto-

Coleen: We need this, we need this like um, like Wikipedia for like, everyday life in the real world. Wikipedia IRL, yes.

Julie: Without dieting because, because I think for a lot of people they would insert so you know, you just cut out gluten and then you don't have them or oh, you know, it's just another way that our body is failing us um, when in reality like, this is just what it looks like.

Coleen: And like it- it's so, health is not the gold standard. I think too-

Julie: None of us are getting out of here alive? [Laughs]

Coleen: None of us are getting out of here alive, right? And it's really, I think unfair to just go day by day thinking like, okay, I have to be like the healthiest, best version of myself because there are a lot of people who lead incredible lives, who live with chronic illness, who, who go day by day as healthy as they can be. And I think that that's like, we're not acknowledging those people's lives when we.

Julie: Some people [inaudible] be healthy, like that, they'll know and, and no one should have to like pursue it. I mean, that's the other part. I mean, you still deserve the same dignity that everybody else has. Oh yes. Oh my goodness, I appreciate this conversation so much and um, happy early birthday.

Coleen: Thank you! I'm so excited!

Julie: And you know, from all of this, what I really appreciate is like being in your body like, in like, embodied in the now when you are safe to be there, there's something to that in this experience as we're moving through life that, I don't know, that, just to me that connects to some really cool, just like knowing, you know, and to me that is, brings joy, in a sense.

Coleen: Yeah, I'm very excited to celebrate my theme for my birthday is the 13 going on 30 movie, I don't know if you've ever seen it but the quote in that is 30, flirty, and thriving, but I'm changing it for my more authentic self. So my theme is 30 flirty and trying.

Julie: I love it. Well, happy early birthday. Thank you for bringing another Diet Culture IRL. If you enjoyed this conversation, we have another one that we already recorded um, I think four episodes ago? And you can see it in the, if you look in the search bar you'll see Diet Culture IRL

in little brackets so you can easily find them, and every month Coleen comes by with another topic. So thank you so much for stopping by again, and happy birthday, and I'll see you next month for another Diet Culture IRL.

Coleen: Thanks Julie, and thanks to all of our listeners. Great to have you here.

Julie: So there you have it. What do you have to say about diet culture as it relates to your experiences with self acceptance and aging? I would love to know. And join us over on Instagram. My handle is @foodvoiceRD and Coleen's IG is @abraudabroad. Check us out over there. Let us know your thoughts about this episode and if you can relate, or if you're experiencing things differently.

Julie: If you are looking for more tools as you navigate self acceptance and aging, head over to [julieduffydillon.com/voice](http://julieduffydillon.com/voice). And you'll find a number of tools including, including the one I told you about that is a download that you can take to your doctor to help you advocate for the care that you are wanting and needing and so deserve. Did you know you can also find the Find Your Food Voice podcast over on Youtube? Yes, there you can see my gray hair IRL. And so if you're watching this on Youtube, Youtube, go ahead and subscribe now. Or if you're listening to the podcast and you sometimes are on Youtube, check us out over there so you can actually like, see us and all the things that we're talking about.

Julie: And if you also enjoyed the episode, we would love it if you shared the episode, subscribed, and left a rating and review. Doing any of those things really, really does help, especially for independent contractors, or, contractors? Not contractors, independent podcasters [laughs] who make mistakes as they're talking and recording. Independent podcasters like us over and Find Your Food Voice. Um, doing those things really helps us because we have these huge giants that are making podcast episodes um, I don't know, in studios and stuff, and I'm just here in my office where I see um, clients and do work. So whenever you can subscribe or leave a rating, review to podcasts like mine or for other people who do similar things, it really, really does help us to grow. So thank you so much, and until next time. Take care.

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