

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 284 of the Find Your Food Voice podcast. I am Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. This episode today is for you, those of you who are feeling overwhelmed with like, moving away from diets or recovering from your eating disorder, or both. It can be so overwhelming, because like I always say, the world hasn't recovered from its own eating disorder yet. So how are you supposed to recover from yours? Well, I am excited for you to hear from Daralyse Lyons. If you're new to the Find Your Food Voice podcast, well, welcome, I'm so glad you're here. And Daralyse is someone who was on the podcast a little over a year ago. I learned so much from her wisdom and her lived experience. She has been there in the throes of an eating disorder and she has really, really important um, messages for us to help you as you are like, noticing that like, while you want to get away from naming foods as good or bad or you don't want to consider foods to be like a moral thing of like, choosing this over that, or maybe you're moving away from the thin ideal and trying to come to a place of acceptance with how your body is going to be without dieting and without restricting. It can be really hard to hold all of that, and we have a letter from someone today who is feeling so overwhelmed, and then also feeling stuck in inaction, and what Daralyse has done with this letter, I think, is so beautiful, and there's so much wisdom within you already. I hope that's something you come away with by listening to this episode. But before we get to hear this episode's letter and hear from Daralyse Lyons, a quick word from our sponsor.

Julie (ad): Are you living with PCOS and also feeling overwhelmed with how to actually eat? You've probably been told you have to diet and been told many different diets to choose, but as you've, you've experimented with them, as you tried them, they just don't seem to work well. I am so glad to meet you. My name is Julie, and I help people with PCOS to burn their diet books and reclaim expert role of their body, because you are king and queen of your castle. Yes. And you may also, as you hear about that, like burning diet books may not be ready to strike the match. It may be really hard to think about moving away from diets while living with PCOS. And I hope that one day that you can connect with the freedom that is living with PCOS on your own terms. But if you need some first few steps, well, I have a PCOS roadmap for you. You can get to it at julieduffydillon.com/voice. There, you will find your first three steps to food peace with PCOS. It's called my PCOS roadmap. And again, if you're someone who has been trying really hard to find a relationship with food that is just not as chaotic while living with PCOS, this is a road map just for you. Get to it at julieduffydillon.com/voice.

Julie: Alright, 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, Our love and hate relationship has been ebbing and flowing. It all started really innocently, wanting to opt for healthier options until it led me to an unhealthy place, a place where I feared you, a place where I felt guilty after eating you, and a place that took away all the pleasure and freedom around guilt. I've been recovering from an eating disorder for almost two years now, and although our relationship is relatively better, we could say that we are not in peace yet. Diet culture has made me believe that there are bad and good foods that I should fear some of you, that some of you are evil. I really want to change that. I want to make peace with you. I'm trying to unlearn all the lies and myths diet culture has taught me, but it's hard, you know? I've been really trying hard to reject diets, the mentality of good and bad, and surround myself with anti-diet, body positivity, and food freedom content, but I'm struggling to take action steps to have a better relationship with you. It's easy to consume and motivate me with a lot of inspiring content, but it's overwhelming, you know? I mean, there are so many fear foods I need to face, unlearned diet myths, change my mentality around food, learn to brush off diet comments, relearn how to listen to my body and treat it with respect, and so much more that I need to do. I don't even know where to start. Also, I'm afraid. I feel alone and I'm afraid of what will happen if I let go of control and food restriction. I really want to have a better relationship, but things like diet culture, fear of weight gain, or eating disorder thoughts get in the way. I won't give up, food. I am positive I will get to a place where I no longer fear you, but embrace you. I know I will get there one day. This girl needs a little guidance. Love, Nikki.

Julie: Hey Daralyse, it's good to see you.

Daralyse: It's good to see you too. It's so great to be back. Thanks so much for having me.

Julie: Oh my gosh, I enjoyed getting to know you. Um, you know, in case you're listening and you are new to Daralyse's work, we chatted in episode 243, and I'm so glad we have a chance to talk again and go through this letter, and I know you had a chance to read over it. We were chatting a little bit before we pushed record, and you know, when you read through it, I don't know, was there anything that you were like, was your big impression that you were like, this is what I think is going on with this person?

Daralyse: Yeah. You know, there were so many things and, and like, thank you for asking the question, and thank you so much, um, also to Nikki for writing in, because I think it's very sacred and very deep to be willing to talk about one's issues with food, especially you know, the present issues. For me, it's so much easier to kind of like, talk about that stuff in the past but to really be in the present, I did have some reflections and I'm happy to share those, but I also had a question which I wish, you know, I wish Nikki were sitting here with us, and I could ask them like, you know, what it means to be recovering from, from an eating disorder for almost two years, but to have a relatively better relationship and not be at peace? So, I really thought about that, like, the, the definition, Nikki's definition of recovery, and what that means, whether that's like, symptom

remission, you know, or whether that's um, yeah, like, I just had so many questions about that, because for me, recovering, or being recovered, like is such a, it's such a form of freedom, you know, and that, what I heard in Nikki's letter was perhaps um, improvement, but still sort of like a bondage to the, to the mental anguish of, of, of a relationship with food that isn't entirely free, and an inability to kind of like, make choices from that intuitive place. So, that really stood out to me so deeply, and also, you know, this idea of Nikki writes about, you know, rejecting diets, rejecting these various mentalities, and I think that is so important for me, that's been so important. Um, and I always think recovery is like an invitation not so much to define ourselves against something else, but to explore the true hungers of our hearts and like who we really are and what we really want and what we really like, and so I'm so curious, like if this relationship with food, if this recovery journey so far has been about, you know, rejecting things, what it might look like to step into, like, what do I want, what is my intuition, what am I truly hungry for? Um, because I, I think for me, you know, having a better relationship with food, with my weight, with my body, with you know, culture at large, has really come from giving myself permission to step into my own intuition and to like, go inward and to kind of cultivate that inner awareness, rather than try to define myself against something outside of me. So those were the things that really stood out to me on first impression.

Julie: Oh my gosh, that is um, that is such important information in itself, like, and when I was reading this letter and the, the statement about being in recovery for two years, it really brought me back to working one on one with people, and I would often, I would often hear people talk about being in recovery, and for me as an outsider, as like a clinician, you know, it, it often, I was like, well I don't want to argue with this person, like they get to decide where they are, and it doesn't really seem like the eating disorder has let go, you know? Or like, it still seems like the eating disorder is like, defining so much of the day and you know, you mentioned that word, freedom, like recovered for you was a form of freedom, and Nikki's not describing freedom, and I wonder sometimes too, like, I often like, uh personify the eating disorder, I mean, that's why this podcast was called Love Food and people write to food, you know, and I think there's almost like this like, manipulation that the way an eating disorder and diet culture can get in the brain of like, well you're not like restricting as much as you used to. So now you're recovered. Like, minimizing, you know, like lots of minimizing how much control is still there. And what I like, was reading with Nikki, it was like, um, yeah, this is still hard, like you're not doing it wrong. It's still really hard. And um, there's, it may feel easier, or different, and yeah, we want you to have freedom. Like, this is not, like this is not the ending point, right? Like that's what I hear from you. It's like, there's so much more awesome shit ahead.

Daralyse: Yeah. Well, the other, I mean, the piece for me, that was a huge lightbulb moment, like a huge realization was, I always thought that my symptoms with food were the problem, and there came a point when I realized like, oh, actually, no, like they're my solution. Actually, what's the real problem is that, you know, I'm severed from myself, I'm segmented, I don't check in with me. I'm not, um articulating like, my true wants and needs and values and hopes and dreams, like, I'm starving on the inside. Having nothing to do with food, right? Like, um, and I've often felt like food is a metaphor, you know, I was bulimic for decades, and um, for me, you know, that was a metaphor for how I lived every other area of my life, you know? Sort of, like, I guess having, like, almost, like, too much, like, too many people, too many jobs, too many responsibilities, too many, followed by, like, nothing, you know, or I would, I wouldn't go for

what I really wanted. I wouldn't pursue my creative dreams and aspirations. And so, you know, it seemed like for me in the letter, there was still a focus on, like, well, if I could just fix my relationship with food, then I could emerge, you know, when this, then that, and, and my experience has been that actually, like, it's the relationship with myself, and certainly there are certain things that when I do them with food and when I'm consumed in that direction, I can't really discover the hungers of my heart? But it seems like from Nikki's letter, um, they're in a place where, like, those, whatever those, those really horrific, um, self, you know, murderous symptoms might not be what they're contending with in this moment. And so that to me is a great invitation to say, like, well, okay, who are you? You know, what do you want, what are you really hungry for that has nothing to do with food? And, and also, like, how can we build an intuition around food? Like, would you prefer an apple or an orange? Do you want a cookie or a salad, or whatever it is? You know, and knowing that there's no, there's no right or wrong, like, we just get to, kind of explore and discover what we really want, and, you know, to your point, Julie, about working with people, one on one, something that I found, you know, for me and my eating disorder recovery was it almost felt like a little bit of a pendulum. Like, I'd swung from this hyper restrictive place to suddenly this place where, like, my recovery had to look like eating quote unquote "fear foods" every meal every day. Like, I didn't even think about, oh, like maybe I legit want something that's like, lighter or whatever, you know, in this moment, and then the next moment I want something that's a little more dense or whatever. So, like, it just, I really had to get out of trying to make my recovery look a certain way, and think about how am I going to emerge as a beautiful, wonderful, well rounded, like flawed, imperfect human being.

Julie: Ugh, get out of recovery looking a certain way. I'm writing this down, I love it, you know, because what Nikki's describing, I'm like picturing this like, whirlwind of all, like the overwhelm, like that's one of the things I typed was like, overwhelm, so many things um, and struggling to like take a step of that looks like action, but what I hear you saying is like, the whirlwind is the distraction, you know? And really the coming home to yourself, and food as a metaphor, is like 100% how I see so much of this. Um, that's why, I mean that's, that's the work that I just like feel so aligned with is like, how we relate to food is this metaphor for so many other relationships, including our relationship with ourselves and um, so yeah, I wonder um, I wonder about like, how can someone who is like Nikki and feeling this kind of whirlwind or noticing it and, and decided, okay, I'm going to get out of this, like, rigid way of thinking about recovery and try to like, really connect with my own hunger and my own relationship with myself, like what are some first few steps? Like that seems like a really important work, but also like, how?

Daralyse: Yeah, oh my gosh, I love that. Well, so in the framing of that as a whirlwind, which I love, Julie, I'm so excited that you asked that question um, for me in the framing of that as a whirlwind, there's two ways to understand it, right? There's the whirlwind outside of myself and then there's the whirlwind inside of myself. And if I, for a really long time, I mean, I don't know how much people know about my story, but I was institutionalized 18 times for anorexia and bulimia. So, like, I am someone who really went into the trenches with this disease. Um, but I will say, during the course of my attempts to get well and to get, you know, healthy and whole and recover my lost self. Um, I for a long time thought that the whirlwind was outside of me. So I thought that like, when I just control this about my external environment, when my mom's better, when this is better, when diet culture ceases to be a thing, when I can, like, then I'll be

okay on the inside. And so I think for me, the first step is really recognizing that like actually I can't fully be empowered to heal, I couldn't fully be empowered to heal until I realized that the whirlwind was inside of me, that that was, that that was the source of the inner worrying, was it was, it was, it was being generated from within. Now like, yes, the things outside of me were certainly contributing to the internal issue, but I couldn't do anything about that. So I think step one is to just say like, all right, if this is, you know, if this problem is being generated from within, or these behaviors, or this pain is being generated from within, then I actually am empowered to, to go within, to locate it, and to do something about it. So, I think the first step would be to like taking real ownership and responsibility and accountability for um, for the fact that the disturbance is an inner disturbance. Um, so that was really important for me. And then the second piece was knowing that, having resisted my inner world for such a long time, knowing that my experience of it at the beginning was probably not going to be pleasant, um but it wouldn't always be that way. So, I remember when I first, I first started meditating, I could meditate for two minutes, it felt like two hours or two years. Um, and it was all just like thought, thought, thought, thought, thought, thought, thought, thought, thought, and, and I would cry, like I would sit down, set my timer for two minutes, and just weep and so, fast forward. You know, today, I meditate for like, I don't know anywhere from 15 to 20 minutes a day, and I love it, and I feel really centered and grounded. So just to kind of say to Nikki or to anyone else out there who's feeling really um, that whirlwind-y feeling, just knowing that um, that it's a journey to go inward, and that sometimes I think for me when my behaviors were showing up early on, in my attempts to recover, a lot of it had to do with the fact that, um, I kept thinking that my initial forays into myself were what it was always going to look like, and what it was always going to be. So I would sit with myself and I was just awash in self hatred or pain or self loathing or fear or loneliness, and, and then I would immediately back out of that and be like, oh, I'm not, like, I can't meditate, I can't journal, I can't do any of this anymore, because it felt like that pain was never going to end. It ends. Like, I promise, I've never met anyone. I mean, it ends if we continue to do the work. I mean, I don't think it does end if, if we don't. So I think those would be my two sort of, initial steps would be taking that, that empowerment back and saying, like, okay, maybe I can't ever change the world, which doesn't mean we shouldn't advocate, doesn't mean we shouldn't do our part, but like, I'm not going to wait to get healed, um, and to recover until, and to be free until the outside world changes, but I can go inside and then, and then creating a commitment and the discipline to building that relationship with yourself, and like, any other relationship, right? Like, it's about spending quality time, it's about inquiry, it's about exploration, it's about curiosity. Um, but, you know, for me, I really didn't trust myself early on, I had had a lot of experience with being very, very self harming with my, with my eating behaviors and I, and I felt very disconnected, mind from body, and very disconnected from my intuition. So early on it was really hard and really painful, but that's not, I think there are some things that are hard and painful and that should be a cue to stay away. But for me, recovery, it's a hard and painful that is so worth that regular discipline of self inquiry.

Julie: Which- this may be oversimplifying. But what I'm hearing you say is like, meditation was one of the tools that helped you to connect with that inner world and um, sit with that pain, and connect with your own power again, and like, connect to your true like, hungers. Is that, is that correct?

Daralyse: Totally. But, and, so I use meditation, I use journaling, I used um, like different like, you know, body work modalities, just because it was really important for me to have new experiences with my body. Um, you know, but, but it can be, I think it can be anything that allows a person to be self expressive. So some people really find that like, exploring, you know, being with music, we're going out into nature, or you know, just kind of like, I don't know, taking a bubble bath. Like it doesn't, it just, I think being able to quiet all of those external distractions and going inward whether that be through meditation or journaling or art or you know, anything else that allows for less outer noise and more inner exploration, I think would be important. So I don't want it to sound like it has to be a certain way.

Julie: Yeah, yeah, well, thank you for clarifying that too. And you know, hearing your description of your experiences, and like how to like connect, or just even noticing like the whirlwind is really like something that's inside of you. Um, it reminds me of a conversation I had with a therapist many years ago when I was struggling to like, like I just felt so overwhelmed by some emotions and feelings and one thing that the therapist said was like, oh the, the feelings are inside of you, which means that you're bigger than them. Like you're, they're, they're, they're something that you can, you can do this basically. You can feel them, and they will always feel this intense, but they're also within you. You know, like there was just something about that, I was like, oh, like I'm in charge, you know, and, and not that I'm gonna like stop an emotion but like, it can't hurt me. You know, it's, it's a part of me, you know? So um, I don't know, I, there's so much that you are mentioning that I didn't even like, notice with this letter that I think is super helpful. So, I am so glad, I always learn so much when I talk to you. So thank you. Thank you for that.

Daralyse: The feeling is so mutual. I love what you said about feelings because you're right, Julie, the feelings can't hurt. And for, for me when I was in my active eating disorder, or even in a period where I didn't really know that freedom was the goal and I just kept trying to like, manage my symptoms. Um, you know, the thing about feelings was, what I didn't understand that was feelings did not equal behaviors. Because I would have a feeling and then suddenly, you know, it's like, I'm feeling uncomfortable with this meal, therefore I can't eat it, you know, I'm feeling unsettled, therefore whatever. Like so, my, I always thought that a feeling meant I had to do something about it, I had to take some behavior, and not that there's not value from taking healthy behaviors when emotions come up, and I, feelings in and of themselves have no power. It's when we attach action or inaction to those feelings that I think that becomes problematic and there's consequences that show up in our lives.

Julie: Yeah, and I wonder if Nikki can relate to that part too, because I get the sense that Nikki is still feeling a lot of um, maybe like, the, oh I'm bad if I do this, or like feeling that kind of stuff, and that doesn't mean that these steps are wrong, that she, you know, moving forward, like there, that may still be there, you know, and still like creating the action, that's really what she's describing in wanting this freedom. Um yeah, I would imagine like making some actions that's according to how you want to eat, whether it's something more dense like you said or something that's not as dense because you're just not as hungry. It may not always match those feelings, but it's still the freedom that you're really craving. You know? Yeah.

Daralyse: You know that reminds me sometimes I'll do like ideal work – i-d-e-a-l. I feel like it sounded like idea when I said it. But yeah, ideals work, where like I, and I still do this to this day having nothing to do with food, but just like in my life these are my values, these are my ideals, this is how I wanna live. Um, and then in the moment when emotions come up, which they do, I can ground myself in my ideals. So, for example, I want to be a really loving and kind person, you know, and I want to have really healthy relationships, and there are times when people in my life reach out to me and my first response is like, I don't want to talk to you. You know what I mean? But [inaudible] and what, you know, I could react from that emotional place, I could like pick up the phone and be like what do you want? Right? But I don't do that, because I'm grounded in my ideal, which is like actually, this relationship matters so much to me. So even if I'm like tired or whatever, you know, I can, I can kind of refocus my lens back onto my ideal, same thing with food. You know, if I know that my ideal is to nourish and nurture my body and eat food that supports and sustains me, you know, in a way that feels like, balanced and allows me to feel free. Like if that's my ideal, well then it becomes very easy to think about in that moment, like, okay, well is eating in this moment gonna bring me closer to that ideal, and notice I didn't say, I'm not talking about like the ideal number on the scale or the ideal body. I'm talking about like a value ideal, a core sort of essential belief kind of ideal. Because I think if we can live according to our ideals rather than the fleeting feelings in the moment, um, the feelings will eventually match the behaviors, but there, there is a period of time where like they just don't.

Julie: Yeah, it's going to be super messy. Yeah. Oh, that's so, um, I so appreciate that, and I am wondering if someone is new to you, they may not know about your podcast, could you tell us about your podcast?

Daralyse: Oh yeah, thanks so much for that question. So I'm the creator of the Demystifying Diversity podcast, which is a wide ranging audio journalism initiative. I get to sit down like you're doing with me and interview, you know, at this point it's been hundreds of people. And then I sort of weave in their stories around topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. And it's really for me, like it's, it's been an incredible discovery of the, the, the interconnectedness of humanity, right? And the differences that we experience and the, and the similarities. But um, yeah, it's a great learning resource for folks like to learn about people from all stratosphere is of life and to deepen your commitment to allyship. And so yeah, I would highly encourage listeners to check out the Demystifying Diversity podcast. And then I also wrote a book called *Demystifying Diversity: Embracing Our Shared Humanity*. So if anyone's a reader out there, you know, feel free to pick up a copy.

Julie: Yeah! We'll of course put everything in the show notes. And in season one, I know you interviewed Dani Adrianna who talked about um, size, fat positivity, and I know there's other people that were talking about that too. So I was, when I saw that I was so impressed, because it's not something that like everybody's talking about, you know, on, especially when people are talking about body diversity, size is often left out of the equation or the conversation at all, especially from a fat positive kind of way. So, I was so glad to see that included. Yeah.

Daralyse: Yeah. I would love if you put a note, link to that episode in the show notes because um, yeah, that episode really was about body diversity and um, and understanding the various ways in which societal stigma can impact people and the inner biases that we bump up against,

and also kind of creating different relationships both with the messages that we give ourselves and also with the messages that we give others. Because to the point I made earlier about kind of like, the external whirlwind not being in our control, that is true, and I can very much change and shift the behaviors that I have around food, whether it be what I'm putting on my own plate or whether it be the judgments and the perceptions that I have about the people around me, and the things that I say to others, because many of us, I think even, you know, body positive people, fat positive people, people who are invested in like, you know, body liberation and bodily autonomy, can still I think sometimes say things or think things that are not all in keeping with our values. So hopefully that's an eye-opening episode for folks.

Julie: Well I hope so, well and I um, you talked a lot about those, that that concept too in the episode that you did with me, which was episode 243. So I'll put that up on a link to that in the show notes too, um, I think this episode that you're talking about from your podcast and now this one we're recording right now and the one you did before. Those are like a really good package. So if you're wanting to know more about Daralyse's work, definitely check those out. And besides those two, are there any, is there like a good way for people to find more about you? Like a website or social media?

Daralyse: Yeah. People can go to my website, daralyselyons.com, or check out the demystifyingdiversitypodcast.com, because I love hearing from people, and yeah.

Julie: Well thank you so much for stopping by again, I'm so glad we had a chance to chat and I hope you have a great rest of your day.

Daralyse: Yeah, you too. Thank you so much for having me.

Julie: So there you have it. I hope you enjoyed my conversation with Daralyse Lyons. I always get so much wisdom whenever I talk to her. So letter writer, I hope it helps you in the spot that you're in right now. And anyone who can relate, I know there's many, many people who can relate to you, Nikki, and where you are in your food peace journey, I hope this episode helped you as you are trying to move forward and connect with that freedom that Daralyse was describing. So if you enjoyed this episode of the Find Your Food Voice podcast, I am so so thankful and glad that I'm able to provide another like, way for you to move forward, and I would be so grateful if you provided a rating, a review, subscribed, or shared the episode. Doing any of those acts of kindness really helps the show grow, and I thank you in advance. And if you would like to have your letter on the show, there's two different ways that you can do this. You can submit a letter like Nikki did, and me or a guest expert will come on and help sift through it. Or you can submit a letter and then join me for a conversation and record with me as we sift through your letter. If you'd like to do either one of those, just contact us at julieduffydillon.com/contact. And there's a way for you to submit your letter right there.

Julie: And this episode is brought to you by my PCOS roadmap. You can get to that free download and any other resources at julieduffydillon.com/voice.

Julie: Alright enough of all, that we have food's letter to hear right now, but until next time, take care.

Julie (as food): Dear Nikki, I see your exhaustion while mending our relationship. Recovery is hard, yet no, it won't always be. Good/bad foods, best ways to exercise, and the thin ideal are the distraction from the healing needed within you. Freedom will come from intentionally turning your eyes away from diet rules and turning inward to the whirlwind within you. This needs your attention, compassion, patience, healing and care. It will be immensely painful at first, and we hope you feel empowered to stay within. Don't let diets and diet culture distract you from your freedom. 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.