

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 286 of the Find Your Food Voice podcast. I am Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. I'm so glad you're here. I know for many of you, you have been dieting for as long as you can remember, probably as a child, when you were told that there was something wrong with your body, or you needed to be careful with how you're eating in order to prevent yourself from just going out of control with food and your body as you are really uncovering all of the lies that you were told about how to relate to food, and how to relate to your body. It may be really cool to see how you're healing, and to notice that like, oh my gosh, I can actually not diet. I paused there, because it may be really hard to see this outside of yourself. What I'm referencing is, we live in a world, like I always say, that has not recovered from its own eating disorder. It haven't, hasn't even acknowledged it has one. So what do you do when you're living in a household with other people who are knee deep in diet culture, or actively in an eating disorder, and just aren't aware of how much harm that it's bringing to themselves, let alone you? Well, I have a letter from someone who has been dieting since they were around eight, and now in their mid twenties is really like, starting to do some recovery work, but yet living in a household with their partner. And this household includes people who are actively dieting, talking about bodies in a negative way, and this is a really big struggle. I'm excited to share this letter with you, because I have a feeling you can relate to, if not all of it, at least most of it. And I asked my friend and colleague Kimmie Singh to join us. Kimmie is someone who I recorded the PCOS and Food Peace podcast with a number of years ago, and she's been on the podcast before, but I asked her to help me with this letter. So I'm excited for you to meet Kimmie if you haven't met her yet, but before we get to the discussion with Kimmie and this episode's letter, a quick word from our sponsor.

Julie (ad): If you are living with polycystic ovary syndrome, you probably have been dieting for as long as you can remember. I know for many of you with PCOS, you diet, and even before you had the diagnosis, because you were told your body was wrong or you were told that everyone, your family, has to worry about food and weight and exercise. And so that's just how you were raised. You may find listening to this letter that you can relate to a lot of it, because recovering from diet culture while living with PCOS and having a history of dieting your whole life is so complicated. Well, before you start another diet with PCOS, just know that there is another way. I have a roadmap for you. It is the first three steps that I recommend to move away from diets when you're living with PCOS. It'll help you make those first steps to move away from diet culture and start to explore new ways to manage the symptoms. If you're wanting to do that

while living with PCOS, you can get to that resource and all the other free downloads I have at julieduffydillon.com/voice. Again, the PCOS roadmap as is at julieduffydillon.com/voice.

Julie: Enough of all that. Let's get to this episode's letter, and hear from our guest expert, Kimmie Singh.

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, I have so many questions for you, food. I am currently 24, and I can't even remember a day I didn't think about you. Sometimes I was much more obsessed with you than other times. It started when I was eight, and someone mentioned I was "chunky"-ew, I hate that word. That's when I started looking at your nutrition facts, food. When I was 10, I started eating less and less of you, food. I was eventually diagnosed with EDNOS when I was 16. You ruled my life, and now I am taking my life back. I am so proud to say I have been on my health at all sizes journey for a year now. I work with a health at all sizes dietitian every other week, and a therapist the alternating weeks, and man have I made major steps this last year. But food, you still ALWAYS come up. It never ends. I live with my boyfriend and his parents. His family is extremely fatphobic, and you are the center of SO many conversations. How you are bad, and some of you is good, but only at certain times of the day? Your siblings, weight and exercise, constantly get brought up too. My boyfriend's mom has an active eating disorder, and this is very hard to live with while trying to heal from my own eating disorder. I still fear your sibling, weight. I have gained a lot of it over the course of my recovery, and I can say for the most part I'm pretty comfortable where I am right now, but I still FEAR gaining weight. Living in a fatphobic household is so hard to try and tackle this fear. My boyfriend is AMAZING and not like his family at all- it's just so hard to be living with them. How do I live in a society that is still so obsessed with weight, exercise, and you, food? How do I not feel so hurt when the people whose opinions I hold highly talk about you in a bad way, when they compliment people's weight loss, and comment on people's weight gain as a bad thing? You know food, when I was eating less of you and lost weight, my boyfriends mom "rewarded" me by getting me a workout outfit without me even asking me...now that I've gained weight, nothing. How do I cope with that? I'm so happy, food, that I have a way better relationship with you, but how do I cope with the outside pain? Any advice is appreciated. Sincerely, Tired of healing in a disordered society.

Julie: Hey Kimmie, welcome to the podcast. It's nice to see you.

Kimmie: Hey Julie, thank you so much for having me.

Julie: It's so nice to connect with you, and you know, if someone doesn't know about you, I mean really, honestly, where are they living?

Kimmie: You flatter me, so. [Laughs]

Julie: But we um, did the PCOS and Food Peace podcast together a number of years ago, and you've been on the podcast before. So welcome back. I appreciate your help. And um, did you get a chance to read the letter I sent your way?

Kimmie: Yes, I did, I did. Yeah. What a great letter.

Julie: Yeah. Yes. Um, and a lot of things that we could unpacked, unpacked? Unpack. [Laughs] Um, and before we pushed record, I told Kimmie, I'm like, I have a cold, I have medicine head, so I'm gonna be talking all jumbled, so I'm gonna make up words. But anyway, when you were reading through the letter, um, what was your like, general impression about what this person is experiencing?

Kimmie: Oh my goodness, um you know, there are so many things that stuck out to me, the first one, I just wanted to like add some solidarity of not liking the word "chunky", it always reminds me of chunky salsa, and I feel like it's just kind of like, a weird way to describe someone. Um, so yes, I understand that, but uh, yeah, you know this, this really brought me to um, make me, it brought me to make me think of some of the inner child work I do with clients, because when I hear this person describe their relationship with food when they were a child and through their teenage years, and then to be in this situation now where they're living with their partner's parents and it's almost like um, I know for a lot of folks being in that situation can bring them back to that, that childlike place and feeling, and feeling like there was some authority figures in the household that are in parent-like positions. So it um, yeah, like I totally understand where this person is coming from.

Julie: Yeah, like it seems like there's a lot of the recovery process this person has in their brain, but there's a part of like the feeling of, and when you were talking about like, authority figures and going back to the childlike place, I can almost imagine like, the energy of the body being like, no, I'm a kid again, you know? And not being able to get unstuck, even if intellectually a person is like, aware of this is not where I want to be, and I'm a grown up, I get to decide what I wanna do with my body, but you know.

Kimmie: Right? Oh my goodness. Yes. And that like, I guess lack of autonomy with being a child, I feel like it really speaks to how food, for one, can be a really safe and how, what's the word, resourceful tool, because children have access to like such a few options for coping, they don't have the options to maybe set a lot of boundaries at times, or make a lot of other changes, and I really appreciate that for this person, food wasn't, it sounds like it was a tool in some way um, whether it was through restriction or, or through eating more, I'm not sure if this person went through that too. But um, yeah, I just, I feel like it's so important that we have that kindness and gentleness to our inner children, right? Like when we consider that was one of the only tools that was available at that time. And so it sounds like this person is feeling pretty frustrated to feel some of these thoughts coming up again, and I know it's really difficult, but I, I wonder if, if they maybe like get in touch with that inner child, if they're able to have some compassion and gentleness, how that might help to slow things down, and maybe stop, stop it from becoming a cycle where they're feeling frustrated, and then maybe feeling not so great about the relationship with food, and the shame comes in, and it just sort of adds to that super vicious cycle.

Julie: Yeah, I was connecting with like, the feeling of shame reading through this, and again, like having an awareness of like wanting something different but feeling ashamed that they're like, still in this place, but also like, I'm so glad that they also honored like, I'm trying really hard to

recover and this world hasn't yet, this family hasn't yet, this family hasn't even like really said that there's a problem, you know? And how that must be just so exhausting. Like that's the thing I was thinking too, like just having to like being that kind of dynamic and um, just not even aware that this anti fat bias is such a big part of this family's like, system and conditions.

Kimmie: Oh yeah, absolutely. And in reality fatphobia is so ubiquitous, right? Like we see it everywhere, but then to not, I mean, I'm thinking of it from the child, a child's perspective and then also from this letter writer's perspective, but to not really have a safe refuge from it at home, or from your relationships that are maybe you're closer relationships, it can just feel like it's really surrounding you and you don't have a way out. And that's where a lot of times I'll even encourage folks to build community and connect to resources that can sort of um, remind you that actually, no, this is not the entire world, and you can also build this world around you, the folks that can support you, and also know that diet culture is ridiculous. Because it's kind of like, yeah, you're getting gaslit all the time if somebody is really normalizing dieting and reward, you know, quote unquote, like rewarding weight loss, and so I definitely recommend trying to connect to that community that can just be a safer place. Um yeah.

Julie: I wrote down diet culture is ridiculous. That, like, needs to be on a bumper sticker or a t shirt, something, Kimmie. [Laughs]

Kimmie: Oh, I agree, you can make a whole brand with it.

Julie: There you go!

Kimmie: A merch line.

Julie: Yes, that, that's really, I mean, it is, it's ridiculous and so many layers to it. Well, you know, you're, you're, you're, you're kind of mentioning something that this letter writer can do and yeah, I'm curious like, what would you recommend to someone who's in a similar place? What are some things they could do that could be some steps forward?

Kimmie: Yeah. Well, um you know, when I was thinking about this and I was looking through the letter and I think it's, one piece is, it's tough because I just want to emphasize, I really don't know exactly what this letter writer needs. And I would, the first, my first recommendation would be that they like, with the support of their dietitian and therapists, that they really get in touch with what their needs are and um, that's going to be something that's super different for each person. It might be related to what their needs were when they were a child, and they didn't have um, some of the support that they have access to now. Um, it might even be helpful to explore some fun, childlike curiosities outside of the relationship with food, just to connect to that inner child. So I always think, when I think of mine, I think of um, listening to like 90s music, like I was a kid in the 90s, I think of like Lisa Frank and um, like I don't know, just all these ridiculous 90s things.

Julie: What's the 90s song you think of is that,8 I'm totally putting on the spot there.

Kimmie: So okay, there's so many, but I feel like my inner child would like lose her shit if I didn't mention Backstreet Boys and Spice Girls. So like, anything Backstreet Boys and Spice Girls.

Julie: [Laughs] Oh goodness. That's awesome. I love the 90s music too.

Kimmie: Yeah. Right, yeah. And so it's um yeah, like I wonder how you know, even connecting to some of those fun things that they're inner child would enjoy outside of who would, like it might offer um, it might offer some space to be curious about what their needs are when it comes to the inner child.

Julie: So by connecting outside of food and body and all these kind of concerns with their inner child that's like playful and um, positive or neutral. It'll, is it something that kind of helps to open up the, the like communication of compassion and help access that? Is that what happens?

Kimmie: Yeah. Absolutely. Well I feel like it really sets the stage for, like you said, that playfulness, childlike curiosity, and it can really help to bring in some of the positive memories of childhood, right? Like, I know, I imagine that if this person really focuses on food and childhood, it might be a bit more nuanced, obviously, like there might be some really fun childlike food memories, and hey go forward and explore those too. But yeah, like I wonder how doing something that might feel a bit more neutral, might also, yeah, just create a safe space for exploring that.

Julie: Yeah. Yeah, that's awesome. Well before we move on to the next part, are there any other steps that you had in mind?

Kimmie: Oh gosh. I mean, so this is where like, um, so I definitely don't know what this person's inner child needs. And also, I feel like when I was reading this, I know what was going on, going on for me. Like what I know, what I feel like I would need if I were in this situation would probably be some boundaries, and yeah, so this could look different for each person, each relationship, but it could be like, asking that they not um, reward you or comment on losing weight or gaining weight or staying the same. Also setting some boundaries around conversations that you want to engage in. Um, let's say at the dinner table or any other time. And this is one where like, I don't, I don't know how they're gonna respond, right? Like there, it could be really scary for you, and yeah, so that might be something to explore more with your therapist.

Julie: Yeah. You know, the thing I appreciate about with boundaries is, you know, I think for a lot of people, they think of boundaries as like being like, hey, you need to do this and this when you're around me, like communicating something, and, and there, and that may feel inaccessible, especially in the beginning, and it's okay to, if it's like a silent boundary, which is the phrase I learned from Elizabeth Armstrong. Um, you know, just even like, not engaging in the conversation or leaving the room. Um, and maybe the boundary may be easier to discuss with partner versus partner's parents. Um, but yeah, like I um, I know I've talked to some people about setting boundaries and I just feel like, oh that means I have to like constantly be fighting with someone, and there may be a couple of people that you do that with, and and, there may be

some people that you just use silent boundaries with, which, you know, you just leave the room when that comes up. And um, I, I wonder too, like especially if you're connecting some of the inner child stuff with this, um, you may find as practicing kind of these things um, it make get it easier as time goes on, but, but yeah.

Kimmie: Oh my gosh, thank you so much for mentioning that. Yeah, I love that descriptor of like silent boundaries, I usually call them like internal boundaries.

Julie: Ooo, that's a good word.

Kimmie: Yeah. You know, it's funny you mentioned that because when I, I feel like when I first started recovery so many years ago, um, I had this provider and this person said that like um, like the way she framed boundaries was it was very rigid, and I just kind of felt like, oh culturally this like, doesn't apply to what feels right for me, what feels right in my community and my culture, but I was really new to recovery and I didn't know, I really took that as like, oh, I'm wrong, or I'm doing this wrong, or I can't hold space for my recovery in my cultural identity. So, I imagine there are lots of listeners that have different experiences and that come from different communities. So I feel like it's important to consider a lot of the frameworks that we discuss in the mainstream therapeutic settings. Like it comes from a really eurocentric, like, idea of what it means to set a boundary, right? So yeah, I don't think there's a right or wrong way to do it.

Julie: Yeah, for sure. Oh my gosh, I'm so glad you said that. Yes, because I've, I've been that provider who's given that kind of like, [laughs] boundary description, and it's really important to know. Yeah, like the, there's gonna be differences what people are able to access and the, culturally what is actually gonna be, I'm searching for the right word, like just what is in the norms or what's quite part of um, is expected and expecting to have these kind of like, well, I'm just going to leave kind of boundary, you know? Not going to be accessible for so many people.

Kimmie: Right? I'm even thinking like financial privilege, right?

Julie: Yeah, 'cause I didn't think that!

Kimmie: Like I can see this person being told like, hey, like why don't you move out? And like, I I just, yeah, I work with lots of folks that are in situations where they are living with people that maybe you're not the most supportive to their recovery, and if there were an option just to get up and move out, they would have already moved out.

Julie: They would have already done that. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, because I was like, in a perfect world, this person could just live somewhere else. But yeah, that may very well not be the option, or may not be what they wanna do, you know, it just.

Kimmie: Right! Yeah.

Julie: Yeah. Oh my gosh, well we are, letter writer, we are sending you support, and as you get in touch with what you need, you know, um, we're hoping that you connect with a way to, to satisfy that and um, you know, finding a way to have some compassion for that inner child that

experienced some things that did not like, I'm totally minimizing when I say this, but did not feel good, but then also connecting with the parts um, that were playful and fun and you know, rocking out to the, to Backstreet Boys. [Laughs] Well, thank you so much for your insight Kimmie and you know, there's gonna be people listening who are like, oh I want to know more about Kimmie's work or maybe I want to work with her, um, where can people find you?

Kimmie: Yes, you can find me at bodyhonor nutrition.com or on Instagram @bodyhonor nutrition, and yes, please feel free to reach out. Um, we would love to work with you and yeah, thanks for listening.

Julie: Yes! Well, thank you so much. Um, again, it was so great to talk to you, and I hope you have a great day.

Julie: So there you have it. Letter writer, I hope you enjoyed my conversation with Kimmie Singh. I hope it gave you some pointers as you're moving forward. And for anyone else in a similar place, I hope it helped you as well. I see that food has written back, but before we get to food's letter, if you enjoyed this episode of the Find Your Food Voice podcast, I would love it if you left a rating, a review, subscribed, or shared an episode. Seriously, doing this helps so much, and I thank you in advance. This episode of the Find Your Food Voice podcast was brought to you by my PCOS roadmap. If you are someone that is living with PCOS and just tired of dieting, I made this roadmap for you. It has the first three steps to help you move away from dieting while also exploring ways to manage the symptoms that come with polycystic ovary syndrome. You can get to that resource and all the other free resources I have at julieduffydillon.com/voice. Alright enough of all that. I am going to go ahead and read food's letter next, but until next time, take care.

Julie (as food): Dear tired of healing in a disordered society, We are here with weight and exercise, rooting for you to continue on your recovery journey. We see the struggle with people around you pushing the thin ideal in words and actions. Honoring your childhood of body ridicule and disorder eating, what does your young self need? What did the disordered eating try to serve? We wonder what it would be like to curiously connect with a playful part of your childhood. Maybe it is music, or a movie, or a book. Consider letting your brain wander to that time and sit with that wonder and silly playfulness. We think this could help you reconnect with a part of yourself that was harmed by diet culture. Here, self compassion for that young person may be more accessible. We see that your brain knows recovery, yet your body still has fear. Practice that self compassion often, use boundaries as you can. This is hard work, yet know your 8 year old self and your 10 year old self and your 16 year old self are proud to see how far you have come in your healing. 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

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