

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 back to the Find Your Food Voice podcast. I am Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. I am so glad to be back with you. We took a little break and we feel rested and ready to go. Welcome to episode 289. And this is an episode, if you feel like this process is so messy, if you are all kind of convoluted with, how am I going to experience freedom with food and hold on to this notion of a healthy weight? I have a letter from someone that was hand picked for this episode. I have so much that I want to share. Um, I actually dive into a number of concepts that I teach whenever I am doing speaking engagements or working one on one with someone. So there's a lot packed into this short episode. So I don't want to spend a lot of time just introducing it. I want to get to the meat of it.

Julie: But one quick announcement, you're going to notice something a little different in between segments of the podcast moving forward. So we are starting to have ads on the show, and I don't know if you know this, if you're a podcaster you will, but as an independent podcaster, podcasting is not free. And so to offset the costs from making the show and my team making the show too, and also having an audio engineer that makes the show sound so pretty, um, we are using an ad service to help with that. So, I am doing everything that I know of so far to keep out, you know, those ads that we don't want to hear on the Find Your Food Voice podcast. Um, I was able to remove some categories like health and fitness, and I don't know, anything related to that stuff. Honestly, I think I also excluded food, but you know, you never know if you're going to hear a mattress commercial or a car commercial and hear some anti fat bias. So I would love it if you could let us know, if you get an ad that totally doesn't align with us, then I can remove that category. That's all I need to do. So if you hear something you don't like on the show, either from us or from an ad, just email us at info@juliedillonrd.com. We'll be so grateful. And um yeah, we're excited to continue with the show. So this will help us to do just that.

Julie: Alright, so before we get to the show's letter and get to all the meaty good stuff, a quick word from a sponsor.

Julie (as letter writer): Dear Food, You have always been a creative outlet for me, and for that I am grateful. I always wanted to learn how to cook myself. I even tried microwaving pancake batter because I wasn't allowed to use the stove, but could use the microwave. It didn't work. I remember working at Panera bread and loving my discount and the foods they had to offer. That

is also when I started gaining weight. I transitioned to college and worked out a lot. I had rules for you, good, such as only one serving of sweets per day. Once married, I really gained weight after cooking many luxurious, fatty foods, such as fettuccine alfredo frequently. I decided to count and measure you by calorie. Restrict and control. I lost X pounds. I felt great. I then learned about eating organic. I tried being a vegetarian after watching documentaries about inhumane animal treatment. I yo-yo dieted and fluctuated in my weight. I ate only "real foods" and cut out fast food and processed foods. I tried Paleo. I tried veganism. I got pregnant. I carried so much pressure that the way I am now impacts how another human being will choose to eat. My midwife ordered me to eat leafy greens every day. She applauded me because my placenta looked very healthy, proof of my hard work. Nursing sucked my baby fat right off me. It was easy. I was actually less weight than pre-pregnancy. I had another baby and had a similar experience. I cut out dairy with both boys while nursing due to acid reflux. And then I have a mental health breakdown. I eat cafeteria food I would normally completely turn my nose up at, and yet I am grateful for the week in the hospital I can eat without caring for two young children. Food, I think about you all the time. What I should and shouldn't eat. What I am doing right or wrong. How can I maintain health and yet eat more normally? How do I learn to listen to my body's cues and trust my instincts rather than binging, eating so fast, and restricting. I am tired of the mental chatter in my head always judging me. I long for freedom, yet I am so afraid of becoming too fat and losing control. Is food freedom and a healthy weight possible? Sincerely, weighed down food enthusiast

Julie: Hey there letter writer. Thank you so much for this note. I hope you're doing okay. I know you sent this in a while ago, and it sounds like it was in, it was written in a time when things were really tough. So I hope things are feeling calmer, or however you want them to feel at this point. But thank you for giving me the chance to sort through your letter, first and foremost. You bring up weight many times in this letter, and of course you do, because society has taught us that food and weight are directly connected, that they hold so much power. And then if we eat a certain way, it will make our weight result in a certain way. If we eat more than we need, our weight will go up and if we eat less than we need, our weight will go down, period, the end. But is that how they really are? That's a really important question. And I think letting yourself really sit in the possibility that that question is actually total, utter bullshit. Um, and I say question, you know, are they directly related? Certainly, science does not support that they are.

Julie: What I mean is that we have found in research that if we look at how much a person eats and their weight and their weight over time, people in higher weight bodies are eating less than people in lower weight bodies or in a BMI range that's considered "acceptable". I think it's really important to know that that research is out there, we don't hear about, about it a lot. But it's been replicated many times. It's not just this random study. So also, you bring up in your letter that your weight gain happened at certain periods of your life, and including when you were working at Panera. And I'm so curious when that weight gain happened. Was that at the end of puberty, or towards the end of puberty, I don't want to assume when you left for college, but you mentioned it was right before. And if you left for college in your late teens or even early twenties, that's the end of our puberty. Puberty ends around the age of 25, and between the ages of 18 and 25, there is weight gain. That is part of the typical package of completing puberty. And honestly, weight gain of 40, 70, 80 lbs during puberty is really kind of average and typical. Often times people don't realize this. Again, it's part of our fatphobic kind of wiring that we have now. But weight

gain is a part of puberty, and it really stinks that as you were experimenting with food, like you were having fun with food, it was a part of your play. And I would imagine that working at Panera was fun, at least I hope it was, it looks like it would be fun, and but then you connected that pleasure and that fun with food as a bad thing.

Julie: I want to mention though, the fun with food, I want you to get back there so much. If there's anything that I could really wish for and grant a wish, which I don't have those kind of powers, but I would love you for you to be able just to play with food again in that same way you mentioned, microwaving the batter, and do you know that they have pancake batter that is just microwavable? Now they come in little cups. I have many, many times. It's not as fun, it's more convenient but still they do have some of those. But yes, like, what would it take for you actually to be able to have fun with food? And I do think the first step for you is to really think about that phrase, "healthy weight" and "healthy weight and health". How do we define that? That was part of your question. And as I have, looking back on the last 20 years as a dietician, I don't think we can or should define that number, because we have no way to define that. We don't live in a vacuum. And the tools that we currently have, namely BMI, they're really problematic.

Julie: I want to keep this podcast episode shorter than a semester, but a really great place to go to hear about the problems with BMI is the Maintenance Phase podcast. They actually have a whole episode where they take a deep dive into how BMI was developed and why there are issues with it. So we'll put a link to it in the show notes.

Julie: So while you're trying to move away from this kind of complicated and chaotic relationship with food, focusing on weight will only be a big boulder blocking your path. I can totally feel from your letter that you want to feel more at home with food. You don't want to have this complicated shit anymore. It's taking up so much space, so much energy, so much emotions, and at this point emotionally, you're not in a place that you want to be so holding onto promoting health, including emotional health, and holding on to a defined healthy weight. I just don't see how they can fit together for the majority of the population. While I say that, please know, we have to honor how the world treats bodies. I don't know you, letter writer, or anyone listening, I don't like, know you individually, but certainly we can all really like, nod our heads to acknowledge how much anti fat bias is in our world. And so just like flicking away that kind of like, desire to be in a smaller body or focusing on a healthy weight, that's gonna be easier for some people than others. Yet those judgments about weight, I know so many people who are on this earth with us that's what they believe, but those are lies. Those are lies that have been put together by diet culture, and really these the roots of where diet culture came from like, racism and misogyny and you know, shake on some capitalism on top. And that has made an industry that has 80 plus billion dollars going into it at this point yearly. And has really fooled us into doubting ourselves, and doubting our basic self care tasks as human beings we're supposed to be doing every day, you know, we're supposed to be thinking about food sometimes, but not all the time, and letter writer, that's something I really got from your note is that like, I'm thinking about food too much and how do I move forward?

Julie: Well, besides naming all the issues that we've been taught about weight, another thing that I think is really important to acknowledge is that you've experienced diet trauma. If you're like the letter writer, and you have experienced this chaos for a good period of your life and you have

sacrificed your emotional well being, it's got in the way of relationships, got in the way of your own self worth. That's a trauma, this is something that I know for many of you, you're experiencing on a daily basis, an hourly basis, maybe even a moment to moment basis. This is a big T trauma for sure. So if you, letter writer, or anyone listening is like, why is this taking me so long to get better? Well it's because you've been traumatized, yet not told that that was a trauma, and you are constantly being re traumatized living in diet culture. So however we can together, like that's why I always say this, it's not about you or me, it's about all of us together. The more of us that can join together to just call out diet culture, the more we can lessen this trauma for ourselves and everyone else.

Julie: I do think about our relationship with food as something that is not just in a balance. Many people think about intuitive eating or any other any other non diet kind of tools as you just eat when you're hungry and you stop when you're full, and it's always kind of imbalanced like that. That is robotic and super rigid and probably pretty diety as well, because even the letter writer, you mentioned the joy that comes from creatively connecting with food. You know, food is more than just fuel. It's so many other things, and rather than this like, exact balance, I encourage you to experiment with the idea that the way we relate to food is on a pendulum, and if you can picture a pendulum that's not getting disrupted, it will not bounce back and forth really far most of the time, but it'll still have a little bit of um, movement to it. But there are times in life where it'll get pulled back far and then in response it'll go back on the other side, and I know I don't have a visual for you, but I have a feeling you could just pick up, you know, your iPhone plug right now, and just even like move it like you would a pendulum, and you can see what I'm saying, is that if you pull it back really far and just let it be, and eventually it'll go back to a calm or slower kind of pace, but it will never be still. And we have times where we get the flu, and so we're not able to eat. Um, I had COVID in May, and I found that it really disrupted things, including how often I was able to eat, and you know, what happens after illness as our body starts to heal, our appetite increases, and it's usually more than it was before we were sick, and that's just what happens. And one of the best things we can do in those moments is to go with it, feed ourselves, if you're able to feel hunger and fullness. But with diet culture, what it does as it pulls on that pendulum, it pulls back on it, and it pulls it all the way to the right. Messages like "I have to maintain a healthy weight" or "I can only eat organic" or "what I'm eating now is going to affect this human being so much that all the pressure is on me", that is a lot. Um, "I have to eat only certain foods", "I can't eat convenience foods". Those are all things that are pulling your pendulum to the right, and with each one of those scripts, the pendulum will very violently pull back in the other direction, which is often times for many of us when we feel chaotic and out of control with food, some people may binge, some people may call it stress eating or emotional eating. Really, um, those are just recovering from those lies, and it can feel so chaotic. But what happens is that in order to heal from the pendulum going to the right, we need to let it go to the left and try really hard to not pull it back to the right, to let it eventually just not be pulled in every direction.

Julie: And what you can do for you, letter writer, anyone listening who's in that same space, is you can be a student of yourself. Try, oh my gosh, try, this is, I say that with as much gentleness as possible because I know this is a big ask, but try to be nonjudgmental with yourself. And to be curious about what rules and regulations are pulling on your pendulum, get to know them, maybe write them down, and then as you're studying them, rewrite them. This is where some people

need to work with a therapist or a dietitian or a health coach, or somebody who can help them recover from diet culture, but you need to rewrite them. And amongst all this chaos, what I have helped some people do in the past, and I'm going to put a link in the show notes to a blog post about this is um, something called check in times, because as your body is trying to heal emotionally and physically from the trauma of diet culture, helping your body nutritionally rehabilitate, that's the fancy term that we dietitians use. Um, first you may need to start on some structure, having three meals, having some snacks and just checking in with your body, figuring out like, do you need anything, are you feeling anything? Are you hot or cold? Do you need to go pee? Are you hungry? Are you angry? Are you all those things? So I'm going to put in the show notes a link to a blog post. It's called um, Scary Hunger. And so there'll be a link there for you. All these blog posts are on my website, it's julieduffydillon.com. But this one in particular is um, Scary Hunger.

Julie: And doing that type of work, naming what's pulling your pendulum, and doing those check in times, those are hard work that could take months, maybe even a good year or two to really sort through. So this is not something that's just like a one time thing with a handout. This is like life work, but those will build a foundation to help you move forward. Keep in mind, limiting food only has resulted in chaos for you, letter writer, and that's the norm for most of us. If you can find a way to give yourself permission to let yourself be and study how you choose food without judgment, you will start to move that boulder blocking your path.

Julie: So you asked, is food freedom possible? Food freedom is a phrase that I know a lot of people use. Many of my colleagues use it. I don't like it. Um, if I could be blunt, I don't the word. Food and freedom is just really tricky, because to be free means that there wouldn't be diet culture, that there wouldn't be racism and homophobia. Like, that's the stuff that would actually lead to freedom. And food peace and now food voice, those to me fit better with our realities. So as you are cultivating your ways of thinking about food, you can start to cultivate a part of your thoughts and feelings to lead to more peace and to your own food voice. And your food voice is going to help you defy diet culture, declare body liberation, and reclaim your peace. So my last piece of advice is, I encourage you to let yourself fantasize, like really fantasize, what would this type of peace look like for you? How would you set your table? How would you feel when you're eating? How would you feel after eating enough and eating something pleasurable, how would that feel for you? How would your thoughts be, what would that look like if you're someone who's visual? I would encourage you to like, kind of look up in the sky and just picture yourself in this place, picturing the table that you set and what's on the plate, and how it feels, and that joy that you were talking about, be sure to include that.

Julie: Alright, so I see food has written back. Thank you so much for this note, I appreciate it. I hope it gives you a place to start, and I hope things are feeling easier now and into the future.

Julie: Alright, before we get to food's letter, if you enjoyed this episode of the Find Your Food Voice podcast, I'm so glad. I enjoy making these so much. And as an independent podcaster, something you can do for me and my team is to leave us a rating or review, even better is to subscribe or share this episode with anybody that you think could benefit from it. We really appreciate that. So, thank you for all that support. And remember, this episode is sponsored by my free download that you can get at julieduffydillon.com/voice. I have my PCOS roadmap. It

has the first three steps towards uh, food peace with PCOS, and I also have a diet free doctor visit handout that has been really helpful for many people. So check those and all the other free downloads at julieduffydillon.com/voice.

Julie: Alright until next time. Take care.

Julie (as food): Dear weighed down food enthusiast, we are thrilled to be working on rekindling our relationship. We think it is possible for us to connect with joy, pleasure, and function. Yet diet culture is making this tough, consider whether holding onto the notion of a healthy weight is actually a value you want to continue to hold. We think it is getting in the way of healing, and your true self healing will take time. Yet it is good, important work. Be patient as you uncover the cuts and bruises and burns from diet trauma. Be tender with yourself as you make missteps, and keep in mind the person who is setting the table with special plates and linens, joyfully preparing and enjoying a meal. That person is you. 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.