

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.

Hi and welcome to episode 290 of the Find Your Food voice podcast. I am Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. So glad you could join us today. I have a show that I am so excited about, namely because I learned so much talking to today's guest. Today's guest is Becca King, and Becca, you may know her from Instagram as theadhdnutritionist, and I have gotten a lot of people asking me questions over the last few years about, hey, what if I don't realize I'm hungry, what do I do? And that's been a question that I have been really seeking some supervision on um, as someone who feels embodied and connecting with hunger and fullness. It's not my natural kind of way, and I have long appreciated that everybody has different ways of relating to food. Everyone's going to develop their own food voice. Um, and I needed help to understand different ways of relating to food. And Becca has helped me so much to understand those of you who are ADHD-ers. So Becca shared her own letter to food, and then she stays around to help us understand what that is like and what you can do. So whether you are an ADHD-er or you know someone who is, or you just don't feel as connected to some of the recommendations with intuitive eating, um, I even use the word “feel”, that may not be even the right way to say it. Maybe you don't feel, you don't connect with the message of intuitive eating. Um, this is a show for you, so I hope you enjoy. But before we get to hear Becca's letter and hear from Becca, a quick word from our sponsor.

Julie (ad): If you have a complicated relationship with food, I want to help. I have a number of free downloads that you can get on my website at julieduffydillon.com/voice that can get you started. One in particular is my PCOS Power roadmap. This is the road map that gives you the first three steps to move away from diets and improve health while living with PCOS. If you don't have PCOS, I also have some downloads for you as well. Another popular download is my diet-free doctor visit handout. This is one that you can print out and customize so you can tell your doctor via this handout what your boundaries are in session. The cool part on the flip side is if you planted a seed, which many of you will with this interaction, it has a list of resources in case this doctor is ready to let go of diet culture as well, which we are all rooting for. So there are those two handouts and a number of other downloads you can get there. So the website again is julieduffydillon.com/voice.

Becca: Dear Food, You serve so many purposes in our lives and I'm truly grateful for that. You are a bridge to connecting us with others, you comfort us in times of need, and you nourish our

brains and bodies. It's unfortunate that diet culture has made your sole purpose to fuel us. But you can serve a unique purpose to ADHDers, myself included, by providing us stimulation or dopamine. From crunchy snacks to something sweet, carbs are a quick, readily available (to most) source of stimulation. Using you for this purpose gets shamed too. For many ADHDers diagnosed later in life, you have been there for them whether it's needing chocolate to study in the library or snacking on popcorn so they can sit through a movie, without them realizing the purpose you're serving. I'm hopeful that one day you will not be looked down upon for being a tool for stimulation, but embraced as one of the many tools that ADHDers can utilize in their stimulation toolkit.

Julie: Hey Becca, how are you doing?

Becca: Good, how are you?

Julie: Good. I'm so glad to finally talk to you in real life. Like I know you because of Instagram. I love how Instagram has been the way, now that I haven't been doing like, going to conferences and stuff like, that's how I'm getting to know other professionals. So I'm so glad that you are willing to share your Dear Food letter with us. First of all, that is like a treasure. I so appreciate it, and thanks for sticking around to talk about it and like [inaudible] it along.

Becca: I'm excited. Yeah, I was like, like I haven't written a letter to something in a long time, and I was like, and an inanimate object. So I was like, that I have obviously very deep emotional ties to. But I was like, I was like you can go so many directions with this.

Julie: It could go in so many directions, but the topic of ADHD and nutrition and non diet approaches, intuitive eating, has been something that a lot of people have asked me about, and I don't specialize in helping people living with ADHD um, but a lot of people that I have worked with um, and especially people with PCOS, it's a really common thing to go together, and so I'm like, oh I have questions. And yeah, so um, first off like, tell me about how, how you even learned about like non diet work or intuitive eating um, with your like lived experience. Like how did you come to it?

Becca: I was in grad school for nutrition, and I think it was, I was like, you know there was some dietitians on Instagram back then, it was like 2016 then. Um, and I remember starting to see some dietitians talking about intuitive eating and like, non diet approach to nutrition and I was like, this is really interesting. At the time I was struggling with binge eating, so I was just like this, honestly like this is woo woo, you can't listen to your body and add being on a stimulant medication that suppresses my appetite. I was like, I can't, I can't do that. Like you know, the more and more I got into school and things like that was like, maybe, and just seeing these dietitians be so free and enjoying food and not being meticulous about every single thing that they were putting in their bodies. I was like, I think I'm gonna try that. You know, tried everything. You know, I had tried all the other diets and things that were out there, and so I was like I think I'm just gonna try this and see. And so, and then it was like oh this actually makes way more sense than some other diet, so.

Julie: Right, well and what it sounds like is it like, intuitive eating or like non diet approaches or like, move away from diets, like that permission was appealing like, oh I don't have to restrict, I don't have to diet. But then the tool itself, it sounds like it was a bit clunky, because it's like you said, like your medications that you're using, how it would keep you from really even like feeling hungry, you know, like what was that part like for you?

Becca: It was like it was very confusing. I was like, I just remember a lot of like self talk of like, but if I'm honoring my hunger, how do I honor my hunger if I'm not, if I don't feel hungry?

Julie: I'm not hungry. Yes! I mean, I'm laughing because it's like, well yeah, like what a horrible like, it's like such an assumption that those of us doing non diet work are just like expecting everyone to be able to connect with. And that's pretty shitty.

Becca: Yeah, and people who do, who are ADHDers who do without medication have lower levels of interceptive awareness. So just recognizing body cues even if you're not on a medication can make it really hard to honor your hunger. I always use the example of going to the bathroom is another one. Um, where like a lot of ADHDers feel like I'm gonna wait till you know, it's not intentional but it's like, oh my god I have to go to the bathroom all the sudden, and I need to act on that queue now. Like it's, like but, it just it does, there's no like oh I should probably you know, I should probably go to the bathroom in the next few minutes like, I need to do this right now. And realizing that that in that issue with intercept, interception was for me was like, okay practical hunger just made a lot of sense. Like when I started exploring intuitive eating of like, I might not be hungry but logically I know that if I don't eat lunch or I don't have a snack in the afternoon like, I'm going to binge when my meds wear off in the evening.

Julie: Yeah! Your body's starving.

Becca: Yeah, that's what would happen. And like, learning that, learning that was like okay, I can still eat intuitively. It just means for me eating intuitively is knowing that I need to eat about every 3 to 4 hours. And that can make intuitive eating work for me, it's just bringing that logic piece into my intuition of hey, when I don't eat all day I binge at night, so I need to eat regularly or getting, over time I've gotten you know, a lot more connected to like not just my stomach, but like hey, my mood has shifted or I'm really agitated at like teeny tiny things or you know, I'm really anxious out of nowhere, and then I'll eat and it just goes away and I'm like, okay that was hungry. Okay.

Julie: So is that, so the practical hunger, did it start with like, okay I'm gonna use my rational kind of logical mind um, to set myself up to get enough food, and as you were doing more of that, did some more interceptive awareness start to come about? Is that what you're saying?

Becca: Yeah. Kind of like, just notice more of those little nuances with hunger that aren't "my stomach's growling so I should go get something to eat" of just noticing when there's a small shift, like it sounds crazy but like, I will be on Canva making like an Instagram post, and if I get started getting really agitated, it's like I feel like my internet speed has slowed down, and it has not, and it's just a moment for me to pause and be like hey Becca, when did you last eat? Because you're getting really angry at like, a website, right?

Julie: I'm writing down notes, that is, that's really powerful. Like I think about um, so much of this has, I have a feeling as individual, but is it not, like this is your experience? Are you finding it's really common for other ADHDers?

Becca: I find most of my clients don't experience like, the classic stomach signs of hunger. It's usually like "my mood shifts", like those sorts of things, or even just issues with executive functioning. So like making decisions and being like, you know, waiting until they're starving to eat, and then being like, now I can't decide what to eat because I'm ravenous. Um, so just noticing those things or like, hey my, even though I'm on my medication it's all of a sudden it's really hard to focus and concentrate and those sorts of things. So it definitely is still individualized, I think, of what your signs are, but just knowing what can be signs of hunger and then kind of seeing what pops up frequently for you, and if food actually makes that, whatever that is. It's, had a client who was like, every afternoon I get a headache, and she was like I think it's just because I need more caffeine. And then we switched to like, her afternoon coffee to like a snack and she was like, I guess I was just hungry this whole entire time, and I had no idea. So, helping people connect the dots to something if it's like, hey I get this afternoon headache every day, or I noticed this dip in my energy, you know, around the same time every day of like hey maybe those are signs of hunger for you.

Julie: This is, I'm like, this is gold. I think about people who are listening who are ADHDers. Or maybe have a hunch that they are, like, they haven't been diagnosed um, or just can relate to this. Um, because I think about um, folks buying the intuitive eating book, or reading stuff online about moving away from diets, and not, and feeling really excited for that permission, but then not feeling like the tool is very useful. And of course, like diet culture is really sneaky, how it loves to make us feel so shamy. When we can't do uh, what's on the sheet of paper or the program or the diet or whatever, and um, yeah, like what what have you noticed, what have people told you about like, if they try to make non diet stuff work without your help or just acknowledging how their interceptive awareness is different. Um, what is that like for people?

Becca: Um I think for a lot of people it's, they feel stuck or it's, or they forget that the logic piece of it of like, it's just into, if, if it's intuitive eating it's just listening to my body. And so for them it's like, oh I'm just listening so if I just listen to my body then I don't eat until four o'clock at night. You know? And I'm like wait, but how do we feel when we do that, or you know, does that always result in you not eating all day and then binging at night. What you know, what comes up there for you and kind of thinking about those things.

Julie: Yeah I would imagine there's another kind of round of like, my body just is broken, you know? Um, and instead like, what I hear you talking about though too is like um, kind of taking this different path but it's still going to the same place of relying on your body, and I'm so glad that you mentioned too that like, so many of us just, we have these like assumptions about intuitive eating work, like it's just listening to my body or it's just eating when I'm hungry um, which is of course like, so packaged in like a rigid way. Um, and when I've looked at your content on um, Instagram, you know we, you and I are doing totally like different work in the spheres of non diet work, which probably people outside of non diet work are probably like no you're not, but like we're like focusing a lot of times on different groups of people. Like I help a

lot of people with PCOS, and of course a lot of people with PCOS also are ADHDers. But what I noticed with intuitive eating work when I started to like incorporate it into my practice um, people with pcos like, already knew that diets didn't work, that focusing on the scale was just a shit show and gonna be harmful, and you know was just collectively contributing to oppression. So I wasn't gonna help someone diet, but I really was like, well then what do people with PCOS do? And so I had to like, just stumble around for a while until I found like, oh I kind of need to like, do some things differently, like add in some tools that some people may call like gentle nutrition maybe, I don't know um, where, and some supplements and some different things with like strategically adding foods and voila, it's like oh, that, that connection with um, permission and relying on the body, again, maybe in a different way, maybe it was a little more planning. Um, it just seemed to make sense and then people were like reporting like, I feel like I'm healing my relationship with food, which is like yes. And so, when I look at your work, I'm like, it seems like you have found a similar kind of like offshoot of like, okay, we're coming against this brick wall, but I think we have some other ways to do it to kind of get you back in the motion of like healing. Is that right?

Becca: Yeah, yeah. I think for people who have, who are ADHDers, it is a lot of making accommodations for things. And I think intuitive eating is a great framework when it comes to eating for that kind of, create space to figure out what works for you without all of that judgment and shame or like, you know, ADHDers struggle to do things in so many other areas of their lives. So when they can't stick to a plan or a program when it comes to eating, there's this even more, there's so much shame that comes with that. And so I think being able to move away from that and then figuring out those accommodations of whether it is, hey I need to set alarms on my phone because I get hyper focused and if I, if it's around the time of lunch, I will plow through lunch and not eat, and all of a sudden it's 4:00. It might be I might need to use some external structures to help, help you know, help me in that sense, or it might be even figuring out things that are easier or lower effort meals, and sometimes they might not be the most perfect balance things but it might be getting in nourishment there. Um, and I think too, eating for stimulation is a really big thing for a lot of ADHDers.

Julie: I would love to hear more about that, because that is something that I feel so not well versed in and don't know a lot about, but I hear people talking about it, and it also sounds really important um, you know, because I'm friends with people with, that are ADHDers, and like also as a clinician like, I want to make sure that I'm not being an asshole by like, like, misidentifying ways to help promote healing for someone, you know.

Becca: Yeah and I think, a doctor had explained it really great with eating for stimulation, like anything that is, you know, a carb or sweet, crunchy, a lot of ADHDers find that stimulating um, carbs to provide our brains dopamine, so that is why a lot of ADHDers really like carbs, because they make you happy, but um, as a doctor had made his comment once of like, you know, if your brain is craving chocolate, like eating a salad isn't gonna do it. And I was like no, that is a very rare thing, I feel like for a doctor to say, like [inaudible] they're normally a little more entrenched in like the dieting world, but I think for a lot of my clients, especially women diagnosed later in life, there's someone who will be, I'm always eating but I'm not hungry and I don't understand, and there's not really like a deeper emotion or some sort of unmet need, it's just like I'm bored, I need something to do with my hands or my mouth sometimes, that's what people will say, and

food is one of, can be one of those ways that um, they get stimulation, so it's just like with other emotions because it feels like boredom a lot of times, I'm like, you know, there's nothing wrong with using food for stimulation, but can we add other tools to that toolkit so that you can you know, think through, like, what do I want to do in this moment, or what's going to be the most helpful thing for me. You know, if sitting in front of the tv for me, I usually need like a fidget or something to like watch tv, and you know, if I sat in front of the tv with a bag of pretzels I would easily just finish the whole thing unintentionally. Because I know that like, it's just a stim, it's just a way for me to get stimulation. So, for me, I like have done little fidgets and things like that for when I'm like, I'm genuinely not hungry and I know that like, if I'm watching tv that I'm not in tune usually my body, and so for me it's like hey, what other things can I access um, in this moment to help with, with that?

Julie: Well you know, it's so interesting to hear that as I think about diet culture and how I've always read about ADHD and food is to like restrict carbs and sugar, which is so, oh my gosh, that sounds like the perfect storm for like, just torture.

Becca: Yeah, a lot about that- yeah, it's really funny. It gets, I think it gets demonized because for so long ADHD was just like, the little boy little, hyperactive boy bouncing off the walls and so sugar and hyperactivity would be one of those things for a while where they're like, oh sugar causes ADHD. And that's, research is very like that's not true. Um, but they're like oh it makes it worse, and it really tends to be more of like peaks and dips in people's blood sugar I've noticed is more of what can cause like more noticeable symptoms with ADHD. And um, and so for me it's not demonizing those foods but again, just like what can we pair with, with those? So that can be a little bit more balanced nutritionally. But yeah, it's crazy to me. A lot of my clients have tried keto or something like that, and then it's just that the pendulum at some point swings really back to overeating or binging when they finally have carbs again. And they're like it, didn't work, or it was just I really couldn't do it. And I was like, I completely understand. I've never even like, that's not, it's not even something that's appealed to me is wanting to try, I was like why would you want to do that? Like, why would you want to cut out carbs, I don't like, understand.

Julie: Well, I mean I think that's like what diet culture like, part of its lies though is like, you don't have, you being like this collective for all of us, like you don't have control, you don't have willpower. Your one thing that you are craving is the thing that's ruining it, you know? And um, I'm just thinking about someone who cut out carbs or sugar, both or whatever. Um, and is needing stimulation like, that would just be so like, uncomfortable and then of course, yeah, then like the body's starving for carbohydrates, and that needing that dopamine because you know, we're human, um, how that would be the perfect recipe for like these out of control experiences. I even hesitate to call them binging because like, yeah, you're like starving. So like, it seems like that's just your body trying to save you, you know?

Becca: And when I started intuitive eating, and I was struggling with binge eating, especially like when my meds would wear off, that was like the self-talk that I had had with myself to be, to be kinder to myself. Like, hey, if you're this hungry when your meds are wearing off, you need to be adding more to what you're eating throughout the day, whether that's more snack or you know, having a larger lunch or a larger breakfast, whatever it is. It just for me, it was like, okay, I'm not going to beat myself up for this happening. What, you know, what was my day like? And

sometimes it's like, oh, you binged because you just had a salad and apple, you know, you had a salad with some chicken on it and an apple. Yeah, that's not good. You need more than that, and like that's okay like, and learning that like, you need cards at all of your meals, Becca, like it's, it's yeah, [inaudible] that way.

Julie: Yeah. Well so what do you, what do you wish every healthcare provider who's teaching intuitive eating or in the non-diet space, what do you wish they knew about ADHD?

Becca: That ADHDers often struggle with the how to do things. Um, and so a lot of times, especially like eating disorder treatment and things like that, it gets looked at as like non-compliance you're just not trying, and if you don't understand a lot of times that's how it can come off of like, oh yeah they just don't want to follow, if I happen to have a meal plan, or I gave you these recipes and they didn't make them and it's like, then maybe the recipes had too many steps or too many ingredients, and it was overwhelming for them. And so a lot of times it's asking them how or working with them on the how piece I find is most helpful for most a lot of my clients. It's not a knowledge deficit usually um, when it comes to what they need, they're like I know what I need to be doing, tell them how to get there, and so working with them and identifying what's preventing them from doing the thing can be the most helpful of like, is it you know I can't get myself started on this task. I don't know how to get started, or you know, there's too many steps that I get really overwhelmed and shut down. Um, or like, I just some people call it like I don't have the spoons to do that.

Julie: Yeah, I hear that a lot, for sure.

Becca: So um, I think that would be like the biggest thing if, if you're working with clients is really, it's more of a how than like, that they just don't want to do things and try and help them figure out what accommodations they might need to make how as easy as possible.

Julie: Right. And I, you know, any clinician and there's a number of clinicians that like to listen to this show and like, if we're saying that we're noncompliant, like I hope there's a pause, because it may be that like the tool that you're offering is just not a good fit. You know, like we have a role in this relationship, and yeah it may not be a good fit. So um, that's really helpful. And so what about someone listening who is an ADHDer or suspects they are um, what would you hope that they knew about like, healing their relationship with food?

Becca: I think one of the most powerful things, and one of my clients said it the other day, is that it really does, you know, healing that relationship and being more mindful with food really starts to transfer to other areas of their lives. And I think that that's really powerful when you have ADHD. It impacts every area of your life, and so a lot of things that to someone who doesn't have ADHD, those, a lot of things that are easy are very hard for ADHDers, and we can excel at super complicated tasks, but you know the day to day, or things like that can be really, you know doing the dishes, keeping up with laundry, remembering to pay your bills, like just things that are you know the, the boring aspects of life really. Um, those things can be really hard and I think intuitive eating can just, it makes just, makes life a lot easier when you have ADHD to not have to have a big chunk of your brain um, taken up by diet culture and giving yourself the permission to be able to eat in a way that works for you and that can look different for everyone. And I think

that's the beauty of intuitive eating is like, you know you can still do it if you take ADHD medication. I actually know a lot of dietitians who are ADHDers and are in the non diet space too, and I'm like it's so cool because when people are like, you can't do that, I'm like, if you only knew.

Julie: I know! Exactly, we have some intel that there are some people doing this who are teaching it, so yes you can.

Becca: And it's like it's doable and I think it's, it's figuring out how you want your relationship with food to look, and figuring out how to make that work for you, and yeah, yeah. And sometimes it takes a little bit longer, you know.

Julie: I bet. And I love how you have given um, people in the non-diet space who are clinicians or people who are exploring that as a way to help the relationship with food to like, pause and consider like, hey, this tool is um, can have many different facets to it besides just this, like, I'm hungry or I'm not hungry. So, then it's accessible to more people. I mean, I think about how this can relate to people who aren't ADHDers, but just people who are not connecting with it, like how we may need to, I don't know, yeah, pause and consider like, how can we make this work for you? And um, that's so helpful to hear about like, struggling with the how, and I'm thinking about many people I've worked with over the years, I'm like, wow, I don't think I provided what they were really needing, and you know, there was too many steps, and and, and relying about how I see the world in my relationship with food, and how that was an assumption that, you know, as a clinician that was not helpful, so we can only do better moving forward. But I just wanted to acknowledge that, well and so, as you're kind of winding down, I definitely kept you longer, and I like wanna apologize for taking all of your time, but like I would love for people to find a way to connect with you um, because um, I know you're doing some great work um, where's the best place for people to go to find out more about you?

Becca: Instagram is where I'm most active on social media. So you can find me @adhd.nutritionist at Gmail- not Gmail, that's my email, on Instagram is where I'm most active. So.

Julie: Awesome, and I will put that in the show notes, and thank you so much. This is like, I know before we pushed record, I was like I am selfishly super excited to talk to you, because I'm wanting to increase my knowledge and understanding. So thank you for providing that for me. And I know a listener who's not an ADHDer - I can't talk – a listener who's not an ADHDer is going to benefit, and as well as someone who is, so thank you again and I appreciate it.

Becca: You're welcome. Thank you for having me.

Julie: So there you have it. I hope you enjoyed my conversation with Becca King. Remember you can find her @adhd.nutritionist on Instagram. I have learned so much from her work that she does there, and I have to tell you, after we hung up, well not really hung up, but when we stopped recording we chatted a little bit more, and I learned even more. Like she has so much wonderful insight, and I'm so grateful for her and other people who have really shined a light on, you know, there are many different paths to food peace. This is not a cookie cutter thing. We

need to make sure that no one gets left behind. So if you enjoyed this episode, we are so so happy. And if you are willing, would you leave us a rating or review? I know you hear that all the time, but really for people like me who are an independent podcasting kind of team, it means a lot. It helps more people find the show, and I want everyone to have access to food peace. So leaving a rating, a review, subscribing, or sharing an episode does a really big thing for us. Again, it just helps more people find us.

Julie: Also remember that this episode was brought to you by my PCOS roadmap and other free downloads. You can get to them at julieduffydillon.com/voice. Alright, so I see that food has written back and until next time, take care.

Julie (as food): Dear Becca, We, food, totally agree with you. Healing strategies and therapies are not universal, and it's about time more let this be known. For that, we thank you. We hope every ADHDer holds onto one thing in particular: permission. Permission to use food for stimulation, permission to use convenient food to meet needs, permission to eat outside of hunger, permission to use external ways to be sure you're eating enough. Let's add permission abundantly, and take away judgment and shame. There's no room for that in anyone's relationship with food. 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.