

Episode 111 Transcription

Say goodbye to the food police and hello to peace. Welcome to the Love, Food Podcast, hosted by dietitian and food behavior expert Julie Duffy Dillon. This authentically engineered series is in the form of a love letter welcoming you to reconnect with food. Now pour a cup of coffee, or a margarita, and let's begin.

Transition

Hi and welcome to Episode 111 of the Love, Food podcast. I'm Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. I'm so glad you're here. Thank you for connecting today. How's your relationship with food going today? Is it pretty complicated? Well, you're in the right place. Certainly, many people listen to this show who've had a complicated relationship with food for a very long time. I'm wondering if that's you. Well, I have a letter today from someone who has had a complicated relationship with food since she was a child and now that she's a grown up, she's noticed by looking back, you know, taking a bird's eye view or taking a step back, that certain times leads to certain eating behaviors and having that information is *super* powerful, but also, really scary when you know those types of situations are gonna happen again. I can't wait to share this letter with you because, although this person's like transitions are going to be unique to this person, that experience, kinda having those wise nuggets of information, are really common to have and the more of those nuggets you have, I think the more insight you'll have into what you actually need. I think our relationship with food is a *wonderful* window into things like our unmet needs.

Before we get to this episode's letter, a word from our sponsor.

Transition

This episode is brought to you by my *Fat Positive Dietitian* t-shirt and, um, other things (*laughs*) so... I went to a couple of conferences in the fall of 2017, namely the Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo. It's like the Super Bowl for dietitians and then also the Binge Eating Disorder Association conference. Wearing a fat pa--, fat positive dietitian t-shirt, I had so many of you ask where you could get one. If you're listening and you're not a dietitian, some insight to give you, is there's a lot of dietitians *also* struggling with a relationship with food so they listen to this podcast and/or they want to learn some more ways to help people with their relationship with food so they listen too. So, if you are one of those listeners, or you have a dietitian who you would love to *gift* a *Fat Positive Dietitian* t-shirt, check out my line of *Fat Positive* items. You can get to it by going to teespring.com/fatpositivedietitian2018. All the proceeds *from* this line help benefit Love, Food. It's a labor of love *and* it's not free. I always want to allow this Love, Food podcast to stay free, so things like this allow me to keep the show going and going and going (*laughs*). So, if you *do* enjoy this episode of a Love, Food podcast, I'd really appreciate it if you could leave me a rating or review. Doing so, helps more people *find* this podcast and you

can also share it with a friend. You know, there's so many times when I'm listening to a podcast and right in the middle of the episode, I just push the share button..I believe it's three little dots on the bottom there. I push that and I push share and it allows me to just text it or e-mail it to--, e-mail the episode, rather, to a friend and by doing things like that, it helps more people find the show. There's something with the algorithm in iTunes, so anytime you can share it or subscribe, or ev-, leave a review, it helps more people find the show. The reason why I'm so passionate about asking you for these reviews is because I want *everyone* to feel at home in their own skin so let's help other people find access to food peace. Alright, enough of that. Let's get to this episode's letter.

Transition

Dear Food,

For as long as I can remember, I have had a difficult relationship with you.

When I was a child, my parents praised me for not being fussy, but also disapproved of me not liking certain dishes. This taught me to appreciate many different cuisines, but also tied my sense of self-worth to eating whatever was on my plate.

My father has always been overweight. I've watched him multiple times trying to restrict his intake *of you* in the attempt to lose some weight, and eventually gain it all back, and more. He also had a passion for stealing my food. If I got up to go to the bathroom during a family meal, I would come back and find him stealing you off my plate. One time, he found 5 delicious chocolate bars I received for Christmas and ate them all. I was 9, dreamt of becoming the new Willy Wonka, and would eat *only* one small square of those bars a day to make them last and *really* understand their flavor- stealing them, he *hurt* my feelings.

In the family, we said he just couldn't control himself, and eventually my mum and I started hiding our treats from him because, if he found them, he would finish them in one go, leaving none for us.

Twelve years ago, my father developed some path--, some pathologies that are partly related to his lack of good nutrition and physical activity and to his love for tobacco: chronic arthritis, high blood pressure, bad circulation, prostate cancer, and eventually respiratory distress. He is currently hospitalized and disabled.

My teenage years and college years have been marked by the idea that I had to have self control around you, Food, or I would get cancer like my father did. Of course, *because* you were taken away from me and also *tied* to my self-worth, you were also special to me, and I used you to soothe my anxiety.

I was 15 when I went on my first diet. I stopped eating all complex carbohydrates and lost a bunch of weight. I gained it back during my high school diploma, eating out of stress and not exercising much. When I moved out to attend college, all of a sudden I had my space and did not have to hide you, Food. I also had no idea how to act around you. I would binge on biscuits, almonds, fruit, salted peanuts. I felt fat, out of control, disgusting. Then I took up running. I trained for a 10K race, then for a marathon. I loved it at first, but then I started restricting my calories. I developed a yeast infection and a doctor advised me to cut out x and x, although I should've probably looked more into stress management. I lost more weight, but still had an average build - especially for Italian standards, since many Italian women are very thin - so nobody got worried.

I then moved to the UK, where I took up weightlifting, and that's when things started spiraling downwards at a faster speed. I manically counted calories, was obsessed with gaining muscle but feared gaining fat. I started bingeing more often. When my boyfriend broke up with me, I upped my training to 7 days a week, restricted my intake even more, and ended up with a toned body, but that came at a price. My periods stopped, my hair started falling out, I could not sleep, I was anxious and depressed.

I realized I was going to truly hurt myself that way. I bought the book *Intuitive Eating* and I stopped counting calories. I stopped going to the gym because it started giving me anxiety. I moved back to Italy. I gained weight and lost muscle, and this scared me. I started dieting again, got obsessed again, gave intuitive eating another try. I was on this cycle 4 months on, 4 months off, for 2 years.

Now, I am *done*. As of 3 months ago, I am living abroad again and I am really focusing on my relationship with you. I stopped counting calories, over-exercising, and I haven't been bingeing or compulsively overeating. I welcome you with a smile and say goodbye with a smile when I have had enough of you instead of stuffing my face in horror. I took up an almost daily yoga practice and I focus on well-being rather than on aesthetic or performance goals. On the days I feel out of touch with myself or with you, I journal. I feel we are *really* starting to get along, Food.

But, here's the problem: I'm scared of going home. I'm afraid that when I'm back to Italy, I will start eating or starving my emotions away again. I'm scared I won't be able to cope with my father's illness and with my own insecurities. I'm afraid I'll end up on that "food trance" that kicks in when I'm under stress and can last for months, in which I just *devour* anything I see and then desperately try to burn it off. I like my body so much now, Food, although it is no different than 4 months ago, just because you and I can now have a normal conversation. I can't give that up now, I can't lose you again.

I thought of going back to therapy, but not knowing where my job and studies will take me, I'm afraid I'll have to interrupt the relationship with my therapist *again*, and I don't want to go through that.

Food, you've been around for a while. You've seen it all. Please, give me some advice.

With love,

Scared but Hopeful

Transition

Hey there, Scared but Hopeful. Thank you so much for your note and I have to tell you, brave one, *you* are so insightful. Something that is so tough about having gathered that amazing insight is it can leave us feeling super vulnerable. We can see a few steps ahead and see what could possibly be around the corner and, gosh, that's so scary, *so* very scary. Because you've been through it. You've been through the wringer--with diets, with your relationship with food, how you experience illness and your body image and, holy shit, you *see (laughs)* the- the stuff that could happen *again* and, if you're willing, and I--it seems like you are, but if you're willing, I would encourage you to stay in that vulnerable space. Because staying in that vulnerable space allows you to know that there are some predictable outcomes in certain life situations for *you*—*and* there's probably someone listening, it may be you, that has a very similar trouble with shifts in her life. You describe it as a food trance *and* some people may call it the same thing or they may refer to it as this zone or checking out, disconnecting, or numbing out. It also could be just a way to distract and all of those things are correct. There could be so many different ways to talk about it, but for you, letter writer, when you're in these tough spots in your life, food has been a wonderful, reliable, consistent, distractor *and* I get the sense that you've outgrown that need. You don't want to use it anymore and that's why if you're able to stick with that vulnerable space of knowing that's how, in the past, that's the pattern that has developed, I think it could be really an interesting experiment for you because I think it will tap into your own innate wisdom that *I* don't have, no therapist will have, just *you* will have, on what to do next.

I believe that when we have a complicated relationship with food, whether it's restricting, bingeing, purging, over exercising, whether it's having tons of bad body thoughts...any of those, I think they come in at certain times. I think they come in at really important times and I think they're there to symbolize some kind of unmet need. So, as you're preparing to make a transition, moving back home again, *I* would consider when you feel the trance coming closer, when you feel the craving to make some jabs on your body or you feel *any* of the other kind of behaviors that you know are slippery for you, to stop, to let yourself pause and ask yourself what's going on right now and it may be something obvious like obviously I'm packing my apartment up to get ready to move or making some decision but it may not always be that

obvious *and* then ask yourself, “What am I feeling right now?” or “What am I experiencing?” or “What am I picturing?” kinda depends on how your brain’s wired for that one. And then when I’m in this place, experiencing that, feeling that, thinking that, what do I—what do I *need*? Because I think there’s an unmet need there. We *all* have stress in-in transitions. We all experience stress with chronic illness and there’s needs that we all need to *meet* during those times. And like I said, I think food kinda helped numb you out *and* distract you because that was some really challenging shit you had to go through. And we’re all gonna have more challenging shit ahead, right (*laughs*) so, in those moments, only *you* will have that answer to what is the unmet need. And the unmet need may be support. It may be comfort, acceptance, peace, and as you discover what that unmet need may be, I would look to your past and try to connect some dots on how you’ve met that unmet need before. You know there may have been a way like seeing a therapist *or* calling a friend. There could be a bunch of different things that you’ve done. Maybe it’s even listening to music or draw or um, I don’t know, so many different things, (*laughs*) climbed a tree. I-I could go on and on. There’s so many different things that *may* help you meet that need. I know yoga’s been something that’s given you a lot as well as your therapist, so maybe those are good places to start. You know, all those questions *I* just went through, you know, what do you need right now? How’ve you met that need in the past? Those are techniques that I learned from a fellow dietitian. Her name’s Dr. Barbara Birsinger, in case you’re wondering where I got it from. I didn’t invent it and she’s someone that uses that in this method called food decoding. *Super* exciting tool and some--there are some practitioners like myself who use it with clients individually when we’re meeting one on one. But those are kinda the simple quick and dirty kinda questions you can ask—to do it on your own. And I wonder what *is* that unmet need?

So, I feel like while we’re in this place, I need to do *just* a little bit of fact-checking. I’m not a journalist, but, you know, when you put in your note, um, it’s definitely *your* lived experience and I always want to respect that. And you mentioned some of the things that your dad is experiencing with his health, which I’m so sorry you’re experiencing that. Chronic illness is such a tough experience on...*everyone*, not just the person experiencing it so I’m so very sorry that you’re experiencing that. *And* you mentioned the connection that you have with his size with things like prostate ca-cancer, arthritis, high blood pressure *and* you probably could see this coming, but if you’re *not* seeing it coming, I just wanna throw a little wrench in there. Linda Bacon is someone who has said in the past that saying our weight causes all those conditions is like saying cancer is caused by yellow teeth. Certainly, people who smoke have yellow teeth because of inhaling the smoke *and* lung cancer has been connected to smoking but the yellow teeth really have nothing to do with the cause, there’s just a relationship there and I would encourage you and anyone listening that’s connected body size to health, to think of it like the yellow teeth. You know, the size, there may be a relationship and I think it’s a lot like the yellow teeth. You know, sometimes there’s a condition going on, maybe it’s marginalization, poverty, it’s trauma. There’s many different reasons why people are experiencing hardships especially

walking this earth in a larger body. That *may* explain those conditions and certainly all of those conditions you described can also exist in people in smaller bodies, so I *just* want to throw a wrench in it because you and anyone listening, just because you may be in a larger body, that doesn't *mean* it's gonna cause disease. There may be a relationship there, we haven't fully explored that in research because there's been *too* much correlation equaling causation with size and weight research. But, just remember, it's kinda like the yellow teeth.

So, moving on, one of the last things I wanna mention, you said, you know, your therapist *really* helped you in the past and something that's so tough to experience is terminating your relationship with your therapist. I'm kinda smiling right now, not because it's pleasant because I've experienced the same thing. It's so hard to do that, but people move on. They get as much as they can from a therapist or they move, or the therapist is no longer working, something like that and we need to terminate the relationship and oh that is so tough and it's part of normal relationships. Relationships end sometimes and, you know, I have a feeling your therapist would be willing to work with you even if it's for a few sessions. Something that I know some therapists do that is amazing is they'll record some audio mediations, some guided imagery that clients can take with them so *maybe* if there's certain things that you know, certain unmet needs that you may have with this transition moving home, maybe you guys could even come up with your own guided imagery. How cool would that be? So then you can just use it in those times to help you meet those needs *and* there may be longer time periods than you're thinking so you can see that--that therapist and I know even just one or two sessions, may be enough to help make the transition that much better.

The other option, because we live in this world where we have online access to programs and support systems, is I would point you in the direction of some online providers. There's two, in particular, actually no, *three* in particular that I would recommend. One is Christy Harrison. She has an intuitive eating fundamentals course. Also, Erica Leon has an intuitive eating 101 course. And Paige Smathers also has her *own* intuitive eating course. So, there's three different dietitians who *really* get the *whole* intuitive eating and making peace with food and recovering, like they get that *whole* piece and they can help support you through their own course and the supports that are a part of their course. So we'll put, um, links to all those in the show notes, just so you can peruse them and anyone listening in case you're curious about them. They're excellent and they are providers that I trust too. So, I hope those help.

Alright, letter writer, I see food has written back, but, you know what, I would *love* for you to keep in touch. Let us know how the transition is going. Let us know what unmet needs you find and discover and what actually helps you in those moments. I'll be sending you positive vibes along the way that things go smoothly and, keep in mind, that I know you feel like you have to have self-control, that you feel like you have to have your shit together, you don't have to have your shit together. We *all* don't have our shit together. It's all smoke and mirrors (*laughs*),

honestly, so even in those transitions when it gets messy, remember you are just as worthy and you are just as deserving as-of food and nourishment, figuratively and literally.

Alright, before we sign off, this episode of the Love, Food podcast was brought to you by my *Fat Positive Dietitian* t-shirt series. You can get to the product and all the different options by going to teespring.com/fatpositivedietitian2018. If you enjoyed this episode of the Love, Food podcast, I would appreciate a rating and review. You can click on it now in iTunes and just scroll down a little bit and you'll see a spot to do that or you can click on the show notes and we'll take you right there.

Alright, like I said le-letter writer, keep in touch and take care.

Transition

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Dear Scared but Hopeful,

Our relationship has felt like a labyrinth---twisted, dead ends that self-correct by trying again and solutions by the bigger picture. Transitions have complicated our relationship and we see more changes ahead. It's *ok* to get messy on this part of the journey and we, Food, believe the mess provides insight to your own innate wisdom. At the bumps in the road, pause. Consider what you need and practice compassion when answers are tough to understand. Brave one, we know you're fearing change le-yet all you need to continue on your food peace journey is already within you.

Love,

Food

Transition

Music Overlay

Thank you for listening. I am Julie Duffy Dillon and this is the Love, Food podcast. Do you want access to more food peace? Jump on over to my website and join my e-mail list. There, I share exclusive content that I don't share anywhere else. Get access to these tips and strategies by going to juliedillonrd.com/signup, and I look forward to seeing you here next week for another episode of the Love, Food podcast. Take care.