

## Episode 120 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/Music overlay*

Hi and welcome to Episode 120 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 many diets have you been on? When was the first one? Can you *name* all the different diets? Can you *name* all the different diets throughout your life so far? And, at times when you look back and you can consider, "Well obviously they don't work if I keep going on them." Do you still try again and wonder, "Why the hell do I keep doing it (*laughs*)"? Well, if you can relate to that, *all* of that, then you will really appreciate this episode's letter. This person has tried diets for many, many years and yet finds herself going back on them *at times* and wonders why. And also, at the same time, wonders what's next. Like, how can I actually move forward without dieting and deal with this world that is just not accepting her body as it is today.

This episode of the Love, Food podcast is brought to you by my PCOS and Food Peace course. So, PCOS, or Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome is one of those conditions where food and weight are *totally* put as the blame for the cause and the way to treat and prevent this condition, which is total bullshit because (*laughs*) anybody that I've ever talked to with PCOS has tried every diet under the sun to try to treat it and they still feel like crap so I developed this PCOS and Food Peace course which is a twelve step system that is um videos and all of these modules that you can download and take with you forever and ever along with a workbook and many other types of bonuses. But anyway, it's this twelve-step system that I put together that I developed as I worked with hundreds of people with PCOS who were *not* wanting to diet or maybe they were trying to recover from an eating disorder and dieting—you can't do that when you have experienced an eating disorder and so how do they treat your PCOS? Well, after a number of years and hundreds of clients, I feel like we finally made something that is like a path and a way to um move towards food peace *and* feeling more at home in your own skin. I don't think the world makes it easy for those with PCOS, especially those with PCOS who are at higher weights. I feel like the constant message is, "You need to weight less. You need to eat less. You need to exercise more" and I don't think that is the answer and this PCOS and Food Peace course is made for you, so if you'd like all of the details, you can go to [pcosandfoodpeace.com](http://pcosandfoodpeace.com). It's all outlined for you and I look forward to hearing any questions that you may have about it. If you enjoy this episode, I would love it if you could leave a rating, review, subscribe, or share the episode. Doing any of those acts of kindness really helps more people find the show and I

appreciate in advance anything you can do in that regard because, like I always say, everyone deserves to feel at home in their own skin today. Alright, enough of all of that. Let's get to this episode's letter.

*Transition/Music Overlay*

Dear Food,

You and I have had a difficult relationship for a very long time. I am only 21 years old, in the middle of working hard to be successful in my college career and other life goals, but I can't ignore my fear and addiction to you that has always followed me like a creeping shadow. I was unhappy with my body from an early age; I recall looking back in my diary and complaining about my size (I was at a healthy weight at that time) when I was 7; even back then I attributed my problems to you, though I continued to look forward to the junk food I was allowed to consume at parties or weekend restaurant trips. Puberty hit me like a truck and I grew too quickly, gaining stretch marks all over my thighs, hips and breasts. I blamed you for that too. As a teen, I gradually started putting on the weight, and suffering from mysterious little things that I just thought were a part of being a growing woman. My periods were irregular and heavy; I had borderline high cholesterol and was diagnosed with prediabetes in high school. I had such low energy and craved a nap every single day. I suffered from terrible panic disorder and depression, and was put on medication that I continue to take for almost 6 years now. My acne was so bad that it made my skin itchy and red, and I spent over eight years trying what I have totaled to be at least 10 different topical and medicinal treatments for my problems. Eventually, my dermatologist's assistant (a woman) suggested I had PCOS. I did the blood work and consulted with my gynecologist; turns out they were right.

I got the news of my diagnosis over a phone call. I was immediately put on birth control to manage my periods, with a promise that none of these medications would affect my steadily rising weight. I sought out the help of my GP multiple times with what to do about my weight gain and other symptoms. I thought I would find a woman who understood what was wrong with me and how to help me. What I found was someone who just agreed to whatever I suggested I try for myself, whether it be medications, diets, or somewhat suspicious natural treatments that I was so desperate to trust that I tried them anyway.

Needless to say, Food, you and I both know none of it worked. I tried restricting my consumption of you to only about X calories a day, for almost two months. I tried X diet. I hit the gym hard X times a week, following the instructions of other women online who said they "cured" their PCOS. I tried quitting my birth control even if it meant painful periods. I have even had my family involved in helping me; my sister-in-law recommended the X diet and running as much as possible; my brother helped me meal plan for weeks. My weight has stayed the highest it's been. I am miserable at parties; seeing my skinny friends eat pizza and chips and soda while still staying slim makes me so upset I want to peel myself out of my own skin if it means I don't have to be in this body. If I enjoy even a little bit of you, I feel immediately riddled with guilt and

shame. If I indulge a little bit I use it as an excuse to indulge a lot. Then I beat myself up, cry myself to sleep, and get up and hit the diet hard again.

I have finally admitted to myself that none of these diets are working, and it isn't my fault or necessarily yours either, Food. PCOS was not something I got by eating one too many Oreos at sleepovers as a kid; it was genetic, something out of my control. The thing is though, even though part of me knows this is true, I still hate my body, and I hate what you do to it. I hate that I feel like I can't escape your influence. And I hate that I hate the way I am.

Will our relationship ever improve? Will I ever find the right combination of you that benefits my body the most? Will I be able to realize the difference between dieting or a final lifestyle change? And lastly, will I ever be happy with you around?

Sincerely,  
-Struggling for Life

### *Transition*

Hey letter writer. I am just so glad that you wrote and that you described your experiences. Like you said, experiencing PCOS is not your fault. It is not your fault. If you the listener don't have PCOS, but maybe you have prediabetes or diabetes. Also, not your fault. These are genetic conditions. Yes, we see them mapped out so well in family trees. These have a genetic connection. Specifically, PCOS has a genetic and an environmental component. And no, the Oreos you ate at a sleepover when you were little did not cause it. Nor did the Oreos or any other food behavior or movement behavior cause it. We really don't know the whole basis behind it besides knowing there's a genetic component. Because it's genetic, it can't be cured. And like you letter writer, I am so pissed at those in the media or people who are just out there flapping their gums saying that they cured their PCOS because it's not curable. And telling people you can cure it, is so darn harmful. It is so very harmful—because um if there's this like belief that it can be cured, then I can appreciate for you letter writer or anyone listening that you may think then that “I'm just not trying hard enough”—No, people that say it's cured, it's not actually correct. Um, and I know people who may forward this episode to someone who says they are cured who may have something to say about it and I say bring it on because really it cannot be cured because it is a genetic condition.

There are ways people can lower some of the parts of PCOS. Maybe they can begin to ovulate or they may notice their cholesterol panel lowering by doing um diets or doing something for a short amount of time. And, that's something that, of course, people can diet three months or six months and show that it promotes a change that looks like a healthy behavior or healthy behavior change rather, and what research and the majority of people experience is after about two to three months, that things like cholesterol, blood sugar, insulin, ovulation---those all go back to where they were before. And it's because that momentarily kind of change—whether you continue you it or not, it doesn't really matter—research shows that it's not going to really work long-term.

And I'm all about long-term data. I don't care what a diet does in the short-term. I don't care what it does in a year's time. I want to look at two to five years out.

And, like this letter writer, like how you're describing—your description of your relationship with food with a chronic condition that's often blamed on food choices, is that it looks really messy if we keep hating ourselves and blaming ourselves and blaming Food. In the end, it doesn't help *anything*.

So, I hope this discussion gives you some nuggets to work toward. From reading your letter, I get the picture that your struggle with food, anxiety, low energy, and your experiences with your skin—those are all related to just the PCOS. And, your experience in your body, specifically the negative body image along with that struggle with food—I put the blame on our fat phobic world. It's so important, especially where you are letter writer, or one who can identify with this experience, to name who the fault goes towards because I think the natural inclination is for us to blame ourselves for the diet not working or for our body not looking the way it's supposed to or we can't enjoy food when we go out to eat, to blame ourselves. But really, blames goes to the fat phobic, like society and culture at large.

Most women have been dieting in some shape or form or coming off a diet or preparing to go back on a diet for as long as they can remember. I believe we live in a culture that has trained us to distrust our bodies and think we need to follow orders to pick out different options, that we can't trust ourselves. I think we get this picture that we should be eating this or we should not be eating that or we must not eat after 7 or whatever. All these "should" lead most of us toward shame and guilt and distrusting our own innate wisdom. We were all born, you included, knowing how to eat and how much. All those diets, coming from fat phobic culture, has disconnected you from that.

Sometimes people tell me that when they start a diet, it feels so good in the beginning and it also feels like energizing and like, "Oh my gosh, it's finally going to be the one that's going to work." Totally. Diets do that. Like preparing for them, starting them, and even communicating with other people going on them—it feels so amazing. Just the decision to start a diet can even relax and calm us. I think for many people, they relate to the experience of their head is actually clear for the first time in a very long time when they start a diet. And I feel like they get like a buzz, almost like someone's been drinking the wine, like a buzz of excitement and high fives from friends. That—all of that—is diet seduction.

And I think it's important for us, right now, to call it a fantasy. It's just your fantasy. Of finally fitting in and having a body that our culture deems acceptable. God, that is so fucked up. And the reality is, diets are short-term. They are not sustainable, for most people. There may be one person you know or there may be a listener who's been able to keep weight off for a very long time, but the reality is, research shows that we regain 1/3 to 2/3 of the weight within the first year of dieting whether we continue on the diet or not. And most—most people will regain all their

weight at the five year mark. Even more, research shows that people will regain 1/3 to 2/3 more weight than they lost to begin with. Just by going on a diet. Seriously, diets predict weight gain. That's what research is showing now.

So, why do you blame yourself for the diet ending? If diets don't work for most people, why do doctors and my fellow dietitians recommend them? If diets are actually harmful long-term, promoting weight cycling, higher insulin levels, higher triglycerides, higher blood sugars, depression, and negative body image, why are they recommended to improve health? I think it's a really important question and has a really nasty answer. The world is so fat phobic that it cannot wrap its head around the notion that weight loss is not a behavior. And medical science has yet to find *one* diet that works. There is not *one* to promote health and promote maintenance long-term for most people.

Even more, this mind control is rooted in white supremacy and misogyny. That's right. This mind control is rooted in white supremacy and misogyny. I know that's a big leap *and* really, if you peel back the layers, it's a modernized version of that. And you and I, I know we see it. And I think this is why for you, letter writer, this is the part of why you're feeling so stuck. You and I see how people of size are treated in our world. Chairs don't fit. Airplanes won't accommodate. And culture hasn't provided equal treatment in academia, the military, or employment. Unless you live in the state of Michigan, like literally a person can like be super qualified for the job and the most qualified but are told that they are too fat and that is why they're not going to get hired. Unless you're in the state of Michigan, that is perfectly legal. *How* messed up is that? That is ridiculous and not okay. And again, it's like modernized white supremacy and misogyny.

This constant discrimination, letter writer, it sends *anyone* trying to find a way to fit in, to feel safe, right? For ease in a world that says that your body is not acceptable. And, here's the kicker, I notice that a fat body dieting is complying with the orders: "Eat this, not that. Do all that it takes to weigh less. Even if it hurts." And each time you comply with the orders, the fantasy of equal treatment and a better life fill your head.

I think it's really important to not blame yourself for this. And that's where I see you. You're in this place of like, "Ok I get that diets don't work. That it's not my fault. It's not Food's fault. And that the world is messed up. Yet, I can't like feel at home in my own skin." And so, there's a part of you that's still wanting to comply because you're just like wanting to live with dignity. And again, I don't want you to blame yourself for being in this head space. Not only is it super common and *I know* there's another listener or two that can *totally* relate to this. Actually, there's going to be more than that. Umm, I think it's just how we're trained. It's the tool we use to, like, survive. And, honestly, like this is a way to survive the trauma that is living in a world that is not making you feel at home in your skin. I call this, and I think it's important to name these things. Naming it takes it off your shoulders. It takes that shame cloak off of you and puts it where it needs to go. So what I name it is the Should Eat Fantasy Compliance. This is the reason why you keep getting like sucked back into diet culture. You are just doing what you are told while

craving equality and decency. And they're really like normal cravings, right? Unfortunately, the Should Eat Fantasy Compliance distracts us *all* from the facts. That diets don't work for most people and they are harmful. It also distracts us from the bigotry that comes from weight stigma, racism, and gender inequality.

And when you wrote this letter, letter writer, I don't know if you were connecting with that part. That what is so hard is this like institutional bias and oppression that you're trying to life off with just your hands. It's like trying to lift a, like a semi-truck or even like a shipping like boat that's holding thousands of those semi-trucks. You know, you're trying to lift it off just with your own hands and it's going to take *all* of us as a community working together to help dismantle it one by one, probably item by item in each truck then one truck at a time then finally, we can burn that boat down (*laughs*) and move on (*pause*) to calmer waters. I think I took that metaphor pretty far but anyway, I do stand with you to radically reject diets and reconnect with your own innate wisdom for health.

I-I lack some things, though to help. You know, I live in a body that's super privileged and it's not lost on me. As a white person that's gender conforming and also um in a thin body, you know, I've always experienced thin privilege. And I'm trying really hard to um notice that my experiences are through my own lenses. And I also want you to know that I'm an ally with you and I'm always learning and unlearning to try to find ways to better do that. One of the things that I would encourage you, letter writer, or anyone listening, who is in a similar place, where you're acknowledging that diets don't work. I've tried them enough. And, Food, it's not your fault either. And, it's not my fault. But yet, I still want to give it a good 'ole college try. To name what's really the harmful part and this harmful part of our culture is called the Should Eat Fantasy Compliance and because we are aware, and we've seen it and we can't unsee it, we need to band together and find as any allies as we can.

What I've been able to connect in the fat activism culture is that social media has been a game changer. So many people that I've talked to that were involved in fat activism in the 80s and 90s, talked about how it was so isolating in certain parts, and how now with Instagram and just like social media in general, that there are places to connect. And I would encourage you to do that. Connect as much as possible.

I have, um, in the show notes, a resource for you that was put together by Meredith Noble. She is a fat activist and also has been on the podcast and she made a resource of accounts on Instagram that show diverse body types and they're not necessarily models, they're just people that are like doing everyday things and look different and different walks of life and different intersections. And I'll put a link to that in the show notes. I'd think you'd find it helpful and also, the thing that I love about it, is it gives you a place to start to, while you're naming what actually is the harmful part—that Should Eat Fantasy Compliance—connecting with people who are like aware of that. They've seen it too and you can continue to build your community.

The other recommendation I have for you, letter writer, is to check out as much as possible, the blog post I've written along with Kimberly Singh, the nutrition grad student who's been working with me for a couple of years now, who also experiences PCOS. We've put together quite a number of articles to help you to know how to promote health with PCOS and some tools that you may find more helpful cause they're at least different (*laughs*) than the tools you've gotten. And all the tools are written with uh an intention of not being about weight loss. It's not like they prevent it, but they just—that's just not the um method to know whether or not it works. The way that Kimberly and I are working with people with PCOS is, "Is it helping you to feel more energized? Are you ovulating? Is cholesterol coming down?" And then also, we want you to feel more at home in your own skin *today* because that is your birthright. And so our articles—our intention is to like really stir that part up and allow you to have access to that kind of empowerment. And so you can get to those by going to [juliedillonrd.com/blog](http://juliedillonrd.com/blog).

Then the last resource is my PCOS and Food Peace course. I know I talk about it all time but I just wanted to put it out there as another option and you can get to it by going to [pcosandfoodpeace.com](http://pcosandfoodpeace.com).

Alright, well I see Food has written back. Letter writer, I am rooting for you and just know that I am with you every step of the way. You've been given some of the shittiest tools out there and I know the world collectively doesn't seem to see its bias, its hatred, its bigotry and how much it's harming you, but just know, *I* see it. And many others see it and we welcome you with open arms. Well, until next time, take care,

*Transition/Music Overlay*

Dear Struggling for Life,

Your life journey has just begun. Yet you have already faced more challenges than any human should have to go through. As your body became aware of its chronic illness, you were armed with ineffective, defective, and destructive tools. We wish the world was aware of it's constant harm and bigotry. Know you are enough. Just as you are. You don't need to keep torturing yourself to prove you deserve dignity and equality. And, at the same time, we appreciate why you comply to get it. Surround yourself with others who understand and connect with empowering tools. Removing the shame will allow the world to see your face for the very first time.

Love,

Food

*Transition*

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-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](http://juliedillonrd.com/signup), and I look forward to seeing you here next week for another episode of the Love, Food podcast. Take care.