

Episode 122 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 122 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.

I wonder how often you think about food. I know for many people who experience an eating disorder or trying to recover from diet culture, they think about food *all* the time. And I wonder if you do too? You know, I feel like as humans, we're designed to think about food sometimes. I know we make at least 200 food decisions a day. That's a lot (*laughs*). *And*, we're also wired to think about food um throughout the day because we need to eat more than once *and* we're also designed to think about food in a way of like preparation. But we're not wired to be thinking about it all the time. And our body, when it's thinking about it *all* the time, and we have a fancy word for that—called food preoccupation. When we're experiencing food preoccupation, it can *really* get in the way of relationships and connecting to joy and otherwise just living a life. For many people I talk to, this food preoccupation what—is what really gets them to feel this yearning to be a “normal” eater. Do you want that too? Do you just want to eat normally? And just think about it every so often and just as often as you need—not *all* the frickin time?

Well, I have a letter from someone who is experiencing this. She thinks about food *all* the time, whether it's planning a meal for her family or preparing for a binge. *It feels like she is always thinking about food.*

In today's episode, we get to hear from dietitian, Heidi Schauster, who just released an *amazing* book that I highly recommend. It's called *Nourish: How to Heal Your Relationship with Food, Body, and Self* and she shares some important wisdom about her own complicated relationship with food and how to help this letter writer to make amends and maybe connect to what her normal is supposed to be.

Before we get to that, a word from our sponsor:

This episode of the Love, Food podcast is brought to you by my PCOS and Food Peace course. If you experience PCOS, you may have been told that you cannot do Intuitive Eating, or you always have to diet and that is just not the case. I have a twelve-step system that I take people through when I work with them individually and now I've put it in a course so now anybody can have access to it. If you want to find out details, just go to pcosandfoodpeace.com And, also, I haven't really announced it to anywhere else, but I have also released PCOS and Food Peace course just for dietitians so if you're a dietitian and you know diets don't work and you want to

be better prepared to help those who are in the throes of eating disorder recovery or dieting recovery *and* affected by PCOS, well I have got you covered. If you want to find out all the details about the course just for dietitians, go to pcosandfoodpeace.com/dietitians. If you enjoy this episode of the Love, Food podcast, I would love it if you could leave a rating, review, subscribe or share the episode. Doing any of these acts of kindness really helps the show grow. It helps more people find it. And, you know, if more people find the show then we really can see the experience of more people feeling at home in their own skin today. And you know, I know if more people felt that way, this world would be a lot more peaceful, less chaotic and um I think we'd get a lot more shit done. So, thank you in advance for any of those acts of kindness. Alright, enough of all that. Let's get to this episode's letter.

Transition

Dear Food,

I am about to turn 40 and I have struggled with eating disorders in some form since I was 14. Firstly, anorexia then bulimia and now binge eating.

I am currently at my highest weight- I actually weigh more than when I was 9 months pregnant with my first son. I am uncomfortable at this size- both physically and emotionally.

Growing up, my mum was quite strict with you. Everything in the house was low fat, low salt, low sugar, only whole grain, etc.

My mum is always on some form of diet and always has the latest diet books lying around the house. I believe my sister struggles with a restrictive eating disorder but both she and my mum are in denial about it- my mum simply says she is a "healthy eater" or a "picky eater" and praises her all the time for how "healthy" (in other words...thin) she is.

I limit the time I spend with them both because I am so triggered by them. My mum because she's always talking about diets or telling me how "good" or "bad" she's been (which is always related to how she's been eating) and my sister because just seeing her reminds me of how my body used to look and how disgusting my body is now.

I have read a lot about Intuitive Eating and Health At Every Size. Although I have tried to remove the good/bad labels from you, I find that certain types of you still have a "shine" and I feel myself drawn to them. I have tried stocking up my house and telling myself I can have them whenever I really want them and that I don't have to eat them all NOW but I still end up eating them all anyway just because they're there, calling me, not because I'm actually hungry.

When I'm in a particularly bad period, I can go weeks without eating any fruits or vegetables. It's like I have to eat everything and the more unhealthy you are, the better. I have 2 sons and I find these times extremely difficult because I know I have to feed them properly and set a good example to them with eating (something I never had growing up).

I have tried tuning into my hunger and fullness cues but I am always compelled to keep eating until everything is gone...even if I feel sick doing so. I often go to bed with a sore belly and feeling so full that I can barely move.

I think about you all day- whether I'm planning meals for my family or planning a binge. The only time I don't think about you is when I am completely stuffed and feeling sick.

I really wish I could improve my relationship with you. I wish I could eat like a "normal" person and not have every thought consumed by you and my body. I know I use you as a coping mechanism, but I just don't know what else to do. You've always been there for me, even if I hate you for doing so.

I look forward to hearing your advice.

Love

Losing the battle of the binge

Transition

Hey there letter writer. Thanks for the note. And wow, what a really exhausting experience with food you've had and I hope that the conversation that I have coming up next is something you find helpful. I'm actually going to be giving a call to fellow dietitian Heidi Schauster. And she is someone that has experienced a similar relationship with food and also has now become an eating disorder dietitian. So I think she's going to have some really special insight. So, let's give her a call.

Transition

Heidi: Hello?

Julie: Hey Heidi! It's Julie Duffy Dillon. How are you?

H: Hi Julie! I'm well! How are you?

J: Great! And so glad to be talking to you. I have really enjoyed reading your book so when I got a letter from this letter writer, I thought of you. I thought you would have a lot of insight for this person, especially again, reading your book and about your own experiences and so um I'm really excited to talk to you. Have you had a chance to read the letter yet?

H: I have Julie. Thank you so much for having me...

J: You're welcome

H: ...on your show and I um, I'm delighted to address the letter because I feel like it's the kind of person that I wrote the book for.

J: Oh good, good. Well, so when you read it, what was your like general impression of like what this person's experiencing?

H: Well, I think they're experiencing a lot. I think they are, you know, they have a long and complicated relationship food um, as many of us do. Um, it's hard not to kind of growing up in our culture today. Um, she has sort of a diet mentality that's ingrained from, you know, early on from her mom it sounds like it and perhaps even generations before that. Um, food is really charged for her. Something I noticed, and she's got what I call kind of a chaotic relationship with food where she goes back and forth between bingeing and she doesn't talk a lot about restriction but I kind of think of someone who struggles with binge eating as restricting somewhere on the end of that whether it's a mindset or an actual, you know, food restriction. Um so there's just that—and there's a lot of preoccupation with food there too.

J: Yes, yes!

H: I heard a lot of preoccupation which is also like a little clue to me that she may be restricting her food intake because we tend to fixate and get preoccupied on food when we're not getting enough, um, on a regular basis so...

J: Yeah, I agree and that food preoccupation, I think for this letter writer, and anyone who is listening who can identify with this person, which again, you and I, we definitely—this is a really common kind of relationship with food--how their describing it and that food preoccupation is kind of a clue to me too that there's restriction. So for you, Heidi, do you get to meet with people who often will easily identify—"Yeah, I binge" but really not addressing that they're restricting too?

H: Absolutely. Yes. Um they might not feel like they're dieting or restricting their food in any way um and like I said, sometimes they really are, and I have to—we do some education about well how much is a normal amount of food...

J: mmhmm

H: ...to be eating um but often it's not so much they really are heavily restricting, but they have that restricted mindset um that they're carrying around with them like this idea that eating X foods are wrong and so therefore those foods become more charged and more likely to become binge foods because they are "bad." Um so sometimes it's just a mindset that um that's kind of a set up for a binge um and yeah it sounds a little bit like the person who wrote the letter also—she mentioned that she uses food as a coping mechanism um so you know, there is probably this use of food to kind of deal with emotional overwhelm. Um I heard—I felt like a little bit of that in the reading of it, although it wasn't really clearly stated...

J: Mmhm

H: ..but I think we often use food as um a way to kind of self-regulate um so to speak even thought it's not very effective but in the moment, it might feel like it is. So, I wondered a little bit about that as well.

J: Yeah, I was kind of seeing between the lines I guess (*laughs*) in a way—that kind of experience too and um I really appreciate the word you used like, charged—that’s a really helpful word in this situation because um how you’re—how you’re laying out how restriction is not just like literally not eating but how we’re thinking about food and the mentality behind it and even how this person was talking about the really common method of stocking your house with the foods that you feel—the foods that you feel like um triggered by or like not safe around. It almost was like this sense of “I have to hurry up and get done with these foods” you know (*laughs*) and just binge on them or, you know get used to them so I don’t need them anymore and to feel so much shame about them. And in a way, I’m like, I can see how that really didn’t “work” because it was so charged, like you said. Like it still had diet mentality to it.

H: Right and it’s so hard to like, to take the charge out of food...

J: Mmhm

H: ...when food has been charged. I mean, I think that’s often work that takes a little while um where someone might, you know, cookies have become, you know, cookies with a capital C um but they have to actually get to a point where they can keep them in their house and you know not binge on them and that’s not something that generally happens overnight where, you know, they all of a sudden take the charge out of food and it’s totally neutral but it’s kind of a process of often trial and error, often you know sort of figuring out well what’s manageable, what experiments can we do to make the food feel a little bit more “legal” to eat but it’s a tricky process. I don’t know if you’ve experienced that, Julie, in your work.

J: Mmhm. Yeah, for sure. So one of the things I always like to know when I talk to someone like you who’s an expert in this area is um what are those first few steps and that’s what you’re—it sounds like you’re starting to like say, you know, it’s hard to figure out what those steps would be. For this letter writer, if you’re like seeing one on one with this person, what are some first steps that you’d recommend?

H: Well that—that’s a great question. One of the things that I write about in my book is that I think that one of the things that we do—and myself as a nutrition therapist—is we try to dive in and change things before we’re even kind of aware of what the patterns are. Um and so ultimately what I would want to do first if I was seeing this particular person as a client who wrote the letter, would be to like really take a look at what’s going on on a day to day basis with they’re food behaviors. Like what choices are they making? What thoughts are coming up when they eat, before they eat, after they eat? Um some of that discussion we might have in session and there might be some self-reflective work that they do on their own. But I’d want to do a lot of investigative work and just really understanding what comes up both emotionally and just environmentally around food, so we even know where to start and where’s that charge coming from. I mean, I think you and I both have a sense that some of the charge just comes from the diet orientation this woman grew up in um given that her mother was always on diets and still on diets um but some of it also comes from maybe the choices that she’s making um in her day um some of the thoughts that come in and all of those can be worked on but they’re—it’s so hard to

work on them all at once that we might pick one thing like one intrusive thought that comes up, for example, to work on first. So, investigative work without trying to change anything, I think is so important and that's what I would start with.

J: Mmm. Oh yeah. That's important I think like the way that this letter writer sounds, is very chaotic and overwhelming and I can only appreciate how exhausting that must be to have that kind of commotion all the time around food which we have to think about a bazillion times a day and um what an important skill to be able to like step back and just notice what's going on and try hard to not judge and notice what's making um—I always think of eating behavior on like a pendulum—so like what's making the pendulum swing so violently and chaotically—and pick one thing at a time. And just let yourself have that space to do it and um you know I guess this is a time where I feel like everyone—I wish everyone could work with a dietitian but this person in particular, if they gave themselves permission to I don't know, spend the next 6 months to a year working with a dietitian to like take those steps back because it may take another person to be able to like hold your hand, figuratively, through that, to take all of those notes and just like notice the messages. So um one thing I'll put in the show notes is a link to finding a dietitian that's specializes in eating disorders, you know, if you want to find someone near you if you're listening and can identify with this letter or you're the letter writer. Um maybe that's something that could help with that process of like investigation like you said.

H: Yes, you know I think that the key is finding someone who really has experience working with disordered eating because um unfortunately, sometimes even those of us who are registered dietitians can do more damage than um than good when we don't have that orientation um and we're still kind of operating from a like mind-driven place with food. Like she doesn't need someone to tell her what to eat or um which foods are healthier or less healthy. That's the last thing that she needs. She really needs someone to just help her tune into her own body's wisdom and learn to trust her body again and trust her signals again, which um, you know, she mentioned feel really out of whack um and that's, you know, um unfortunately that's probably a longer process. It's not a quick fix, but like really getting back to a more connected um relationship with food and her body will definitely take some time, you know, given how long she's been struggling with this. But, someone that has that experience and can actually come at it from a sort of internally driven focus versus externally driven focus um would be really important.

J: Yeah, maybe the cue would be if you um are meeting with someone and they are saying just don't eat this, don't eat that or here's a meal plan to follow or if this person's trying to do this work on their own, if they're thinking more like, I need to fix my food or fix me, that's how you know you're going down the wrong path (*laughs*). It's something different and instead of let's investigate, let's turn over every rock and take our time and try really hard to not judge it and just see what happens, so then there's actually space to actually heal instead of just this like—I don't know, I kind of picture this hamster wheel just not really going anywhere. You can just stay stuck on that for a really long time so um, well Heidi, we have something as a part of this show called the Food Peace Syllabus and if you're new to the podcast, it's a list of like books and podcasts and blog posts and anything under the sun that we have found that helps to further

cultivate a healthy relationship with food and body and if you want your own copy of it, you can get it at juliedillonrd.com and Heidi, do you want to add anything to it?

H: Yeah, well I certainly would love to add my book to it because I wrote the book *Nourish: How to Heal Your Relationship with Food, Body, and Self* specifically for um someone like the person who wrote this letter who—and it could be for someone who is recovering from disordered eating but also for someone who just has a funky relationship with food and wants to understand it more. Um I, you know, I wrote it because there aren't a whole lot of nutrition books out there that really help people understand how to eat from an internally driven way um and a nondieting oriented kind of way. So that's why I wrote *Nourish* so I'd love to add that to your syllabus. Um and you're welcome to also add my blog as well which is at anourishingword.com.

J: Awesome! We will do that! We will put all of those in the show notes. Yeah, your book was excellent! You know, I-I find uh I don't know, a lot of books come my way that are um supposed to be helping someone's relationship with food and their body but they still have like a um must pursue weight loss or we must fix our bodies or doing something is wrong and I was not getting that in your book (*laughs*). I was so happy! I was so um relieved in a way, which I don't know—I wish I didn't have that relieved feeling—it should happen more often, but I was relieved to see that it was about healing while promoting health, you know, and it's um—like you said, internally-driven rather than here's this sheet to follow (*laughs*), you know?

H: Right. And I should mention too that it has a lot of resources in it too. Probably a bunch that are already on your Food Peace Syllabus, but it, it has a lot of resources so that people can read more, investigate more...

J: Awesome..

H:... so yeah, I wrote it based on the 20 years that I've been doing work with disordered eating and so with my own history of recovery in mind, and um, it's a ten step process but it's not linear. The steps are not linear at all and um they're not meant to be an overnight fix in anyway um certainly like you said, it requires healing um which is not generally something that you can just say ok something's broken, I'm going to just fix it. If anything, what I'm trying to communicate is that you're not broken, there's actually nothing wrong with your body um they're like learning to actually accept and take care of your body is part of the work. Wherever it is at right now. So it's a little different approach.

J: It is and I think even just being able to name and kind of like peel off that our bodies are not the ones that are like malfunctioning (*laughs*) you know? That it's this culture and like naming that. I feel like it's a really feminist kind of approach and it's something that I have found to be helpful and just trying to survive in this like dieting culture is to like name it when I see it and so I feel like it takes it so it's not that I'm doing anything wrong or anyone else, that it's societal like systemic oppressions and you know, they're not for us to carry. So, um, I really appreciate

your insight and Heidi, if someone wants to know more about your work, is your blog the best way to connect with you or do you have another way that's the best way to connect with you?

H: Probably the best way to connect with me is through my website um which the blog is there um you can purchase the book there as well um and that's www.anourshingword.com so it's w-o-r-d.com and the book's available at you know Amazon, Barnes & Noble and all of that but if you want more information and resources um probably my website's the best way to be in touch.

J: Ok awesome. Well, thank you so much, Heidi. I appreciate your insight.

H: Thank you so much for talking with me, Julie. It's been a delight.

Well there, letter writer, I hope that my conversation with Heidi was helpful. And by the way, I was totally mispronouncing Heidi's last name. It is Schauster—like rhyming with rooster. So, Heidi Schauster. I hope you got something from that discussion. And, I know I learned a lot from her and her book is amazing. And I think for you and anyone listening who can identify what you're going through would get a lot of um space to heal by reading the book's words.

I need to make a special announcement that I haven't let y'all know yet. Um this is actually going to be the end of season 2. Oh, I feel a little like emotional even saying that. I'm going to miss like doing this every week and connecting with all of you but, I will be back. It is June of 2018 and my children are on a break from school because it's summer time and I have a few other projects that I'm working on and I need to devote some head space to them but I'm going to be back in August because, seriously we have so much more work to do. It seems like every step forward, there's another step back and helping heal our relationship with food because of the world's own obsession with dieting ad diet culture so I will be back but in the meantime, there's definitely going to be lots of episodes to catch up on and, you know, iTunes is kind of weird in how it stores the podcasts and so if you're listening on that um—on Apple podcast, you can't get all the episodes. You only can get a hundred of them and there's 122, actually over that because I have some bonus episodes. So, if you want to go back through the whole archive, you can do that by going to juliedillonrd.com/podcast and you will get to all of the episodes and catch up. I will also be um, you know, releasing some things here and there as I'm able to, especially as some of these projects come to fruition and I have more tangible evidence that they are going to be coming to a conclusion and I'm excited to share those with you.

If you enjoyed this episode of the Love, Food podcast, I would love it if you could leave a rating, review, subscribe, or share this episode. Doing any of those acts of kindness always helps the show grow.

This episode of the Love, Food podcast was brought to you by my PCOS and Food Peace course and if you want any of the details, go to pcosandfoodpeace.com. If you're a dietitian and be better prepared to help people do Intuitive Eating work with PCOS, well you're in luck, I also have a course for you. You can get to it by going to pcosandfoodpeace.com/dietitians.

I see food has written back, so until next time, take care.

Transition/Music Overlay

Dear Losing the battle of the binge,

You've gotten a mixed-up message about what we, Food, are here to do with you. We are meant to empower and nourish you. Instead, you were taught to control, fear, and compete with food. Somewhere in those messages, you started to carry the burden of shame. You learned to distrust and disconnect from your body. We believe in healing and it can happen for you. Name what is really going on. Investigate. Why are you getting charged with your food in this moment? Practice not blaming yourself. Try to be patient. This will be hard work and good work.

Love,

Food

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, and I look forward to seeing you here next week for another episode of the Love, Food podcast. Take care.