

Balance365 Episode 116 Transcript

ANNIE BREES

Welcome to Balance365 Life Radio, a podcast that delivers honest conversations about food, fitness, weight and wellness. I'm your host Annie Brees along with co founder Jennifer Campbell. Together we have a team of personal trainers and nutritionists who coach thousands of women daily and are on a mission to help women feel happy, healthy and confident in their bodies on their own terms. Join us here every week as we discuss hot topics pertaining to our physical, mental and emotional well being with amazing guests. Enjoy.

ANNIE

Jen, hello, hello. How are you?

JEN CAMPBELL

Good. How are you?

ANNIE

I am great. We are back with another episode about, this is an interesting topic, Jen. Why weight loss plans fail parents.

JEN

Yeah, you know what, when I first started writing and researching this, I said moms, and then I started reading so much about men and boys. I was like, "Okay, this is a parent issue." And we, including me, and we've talked about this in podcasts, we really have to stop this mom blaming that we do.

ANNIE

Well, and I mean, we often use moms because we're moms.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

It's not because we're trying to put all the responsibility or the blame on moms.

JEN

Yes, but this is, this is parents, we're talking parents, maybe you're a single parent, maybe you are two moms or two dads, or mom and dad or whatever it is. But this is why weight loss plans fail. This is not a mom shaming episode.

ANNIE

We would never never. We've been on the receiving end of mom shaming too many times to do that to another woman. But really, we wanted to talk about this because I don't know, correct me if I'm wrong, this is just something I've seen and heard in my own experiences that women think that they can like diet their way down, and then they can be a good role model, or men, too, like, "I can do these things, but I don't want my kid to do them."

JEN

Yeah, there's, you know, there's all kinds of body image crap tied up with dieting, but we've heard so many times that from women, that a lot of their dieting behaviors come from wanting to be a good mom and not wanting to be the fat mom. And it's super sad. And there's a lot to unpack there. But this is just another reason women keep dieting.

ANNIE

Yeah, and I think we've shared plenty of alternatives to dieting. Why dieting doesn't work, why it's not helpful, but we're gonna dive into why they're failing parents.

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

Okay. So I mean, obviously, first of all, they're rarely realistic and sustainable. But a lot of times they just, it's too much weird food.

JEN

Right. So typical grocery store list for me, pasta sauce, four loaves of bread, whatever fruits and vegetables are on sale, a couple frozen pizzas, chicken, chicken nuggets, milk, coffee -

ANNIE

The usual.

JEN

The usual. I feel like that's on a lot of people's lists every week. When you're dieting, your list might be kale, cauliflower, so you can take it home and grind it up and mix it with some other things and make a pizza crust out of it. [Laughs] Coconut oil, nutritional yeast, almond flour, quinoa bread. I am saying these because they're literally things that I have bought.

ANNIE

Same.

JEN

Quinoa bread.

ANNIE

Which, there's nothing wrong with these foods, right?

JEN

No, they're just weird.

ANNIE

They're weird if you're not normally eating those, like, clearly your regular grocery list is just not aligned with your diet grocery list, right?

JEN

Yeah. Spirulina.

ANNIE

[Laughs]

JEN

Is that how you say it? [Laughs] Agave syrup.

ANNIE

[Laughs]

JEN

Stevia. And then you bake with it and your kids are like, this is disgusting. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yeah, I'm trying to think of the things that I have bought, that I ultimately didn't end up using or eating or I wasn't even sure how to use them or they were just so foreign to me, there was such a stretch from what I normally ate, that I just couldn't do it.

JEN

And we all have a shelf in our pantry where these foods go to die, or go bad, or whatever, because we're not eating them because nobody likes them. Or knows how to cook them or like it's just, it's a total disaster and so many diets or meal plans or whatever, just have weird foods that aren't in our, that aren't actually, you know, part of our day to day life. And the funny thing is that you and I know you don't have to incorporate all these weird foods to be healthy.

ANNIE

No You know, we're gonna get some mail about these weird foods, right?

JEN

I know. "I love spirulina. What are you talking about?" Or whatever it's called.

ANNIE

"I love my cauliflower pizza crust," which is great if you love it, go for it, dive in, eat it, own it, but the contrast is really what we're highlighting.

JEN

Yeah, that for me, you know, when I think about when I was doing all these things, they weren't sustainable behaviors. Definitely not after I became a parent, because I don't have time to make cauliflower pizza crusts every night for supper. It's just...and I don't like kale. And I don't know what nutritional yeast is. And I used almond flour once to make some really dry, low carb cinnamon buns that tasted awful. And then I don't know, does flour go bad? Because I never used it again. So, Or I buy \$7 quinoa bread.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

Like, \$7 for a loaf of bread, because I was, and all of this comes, like, you're terrified, you're trying to be healthy but then the other side, you actually become terrified to eat regular bread, regular flour. Put a little salt on your popcorn. You know?

ANNIE

And what's heartbreaking is so many people think that that is what is needed to achieve their goals, that they need to eat off of this quote unquote as it says in your outline, "weird ass diet foods." [Laughs] Because that was me too. I thought everything needed to be whole foods. And if you can't, the whole if you can't pronounce it, which we can't pronounce half these words. If you can't pronounce the ingredient list, you shouldn't eat it, and eating clean, and all these rules about food, right, which is why they don't work. It's too many rules.

JEN

Yes. Yeah. So that's kind of next point under here is weight loss plans have too many rules and that's going to fail parents. Don't eat carbs. Don't eat carbs with fat. Don't eat at all. Quit sugar, count every macro that passes your lips. Eat clean, make sure your food is clean. Only have dessert at breakfast time. There's just, there's all these weird rules that go along with weird food and they don't work for family life. And if they don't work, it's not sustainable, and it will fail you.

ANNIE

And it's not your only option. Right? Which is part of the problem again, people think they need to abide by these rules and that's how you get the results and we're over here like, "Actually no. If that doesn't work for you join the club."

JEN

Yes. Also diets rely on you being a robot with no life. So, you start your new diet on Monday and by Thursday, the school is calling to come pick up your puking kid and by Saturday, you've got two children down with 100 degree fevers and you can't stop coughing. Your diet is over at that point. [Laughs] Or COVID-19 hits, or you have 16 soccer practices and nine games in a week,

or you have friends and you want to go to their houses and eat the foods they're serving. Or you're tired and you want to order some pizza, etc. Like, the diets just are so strict, they don't take into account your humanity and there is no, when you have kids, your humanity is there. It's not just about you. It's about the little people in your life too. And life becomes just more unpredictable at that point.

ANNIE

Yeah, and also on a slightly different way, diets expect you to be robotic is the narrative that we don't emotionally eat, we don't eat any different when we're in social settings, we don't like, we don't eat for joy, we don't eat for comfort, like, we don't ever do those things because food is just fuel and you stick to the plan. Keep your head down and you just gotta stick to it and I'm like, I hear that list. I'm like, "Where's the joy? Where is the joy and the fun in food?" Because joy, food is connection, food is comfort, food can be entertainment. Now when we swing the pendulum too far to one side and overuse those things, then it can be problematic but you don't have to be this like, emotionless robot that has no thoughts, no feelings around food.

JEN

Yeah, and it doesn't work. And you can't rely on the same strategies you used at 21 to lose weight as today. If you're a parent, period. And did those strategies even work at 21? Right? Like most of us were miserable at 21 on the diets that we kept trying to stick to, but maybe they were a bit easier to stick to at 21 than at, you know, whatever age you are now being a parent, because you just had less going on in your life. So yeah, so, that's number one. They are rarely realistic or sustainable. Too much weird food, too many rules, and they rely on you being a robot.

ANNIE

Yes. Okay. What's number two?

JEN

Diets make health about food and body size. And health is actually about physical, yes, emotional health, social health, spiritual health. Health is about feeling well and stress on the word "feeling" here. And we have to start trusting that what feels healthy is healthy. So how does it feel to never have cake at your child's birthday party? Or how does it feel to step on the scale in the morning and shame yourself for being four pounds up? How does it feel to be thinking about your food and body all day long? And so we want to challenge you to expand your definition of health beyond size and weight.

ANNIE

Yeah, it's not uncommon to see people...So, I think of that as this connected puzzle. And if you pull on one side of this puzzle, too hard in the physical, which is where often we see it, you're gunning so hard to achieve this physical picture of health, that your emotional, your mental, your spiritual, your social wellness collapse.

JEN

Yeah. And I even, you know, I think sometimes we are lying to ourselves even about the physical health side of it. And that's just because a lot of us have this conditioning that thinner equals healthier. And so our pursuit of fitness warps into this pursuit of health, but really, it's about thinness. And if we were actually obsessed with our health, then when we get up in the morning, the first thing we do when we run, like, running to the bathroom to jump on the scale, it would also be to pull out a blood pressure cuff to quickly take your blood pressure. And you know, because there's so many different markers of health, so you know, sometimes when I'm talking to women, I'm like, "Don't tell me you're not obsessed with health, you're obsessed with fitness, and that's why your weight has become the focal point of your life." But I think we dress it up and call it health because that makes us feel better because it's hard. It's difficult to come to that realization that, "Oh my gosh, this isn't about health at all right?"

ANNIE

No. And we live in a culture that applauds the pursuit of health. Like, "Oh my gosh, she's so healthy."

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Like, "Oh, you're so disciplined." I also think back to Traci Mann who talked about healthy behaviors might not result in weight loss, but they will improve your health.

JEN

Yes. And she's a food psychologist at the University of Minnesota. And she's been on our podcast. And has a book. Very, very smart woman. Yeah, and she's very messy middle like us as well. But it is sort of this idea that being obsessed with your weight or your health actually leads you to be less healthy.

ANNIE

Yeah. And we've seen that time and time again, where people spiral into an obsession and it's never enough. That's an exhausting place to be.

JEN

Yeah, and I don't want to give the wrong idea that we're saying nutrition is not important. I think Nutrition is very important. And our family values, you know, good, healthy, balanced nutrition, but it's also a sliver of your health, right? It's just one aspect of your health. And actually nutrition and balanced nutrition can be very simple once you figure it out some some of the above points that we're talking about that your emotional health is just as important to your social health, your spiritual health, etc.

ANNIE

And I like what you said, Jen. What feels healthy?

JEN

Yeah, and we don't mean feels comfortable. Like, we're not saying healthy behaviors never take any work or feel uncomfortable. It's that when you feel healthy, when you have energy. I had a woman message me a couple months ago on Instagram and tell me about the new diet she's doing and all of her friends are doing it and it's supposedly, you know, this amazing, healthy new diet, but she feels awful and has no energy and can't get off the couch during the day to play with her kids. And I'm like, does that sound like health to you? Because we've, like, have we also gone that far that we've tied health to actually feeling awful and suffering? You know what I mean?

ANNIE

Yeah, well, I think we for sure have. [Laughs]

JEN

Yeah. [Laughs]

ANNIE

I mean, not you and me. But in general, the population in general assumes that if you're not suffering, then you're not working hard enough.

JEN

Yeah. And ultimately, I think you need to marry again, back to like marrying that balance between and trying to recognize and differentiate between things that cause you pain and suffering. And things that simply are just uncomfortable for you.

ANNIE

Or hard.

JEN

Yeah, like, it's not always comfortable for me to go work out, or it's not always comfortable for me when I'm eating a really delicious meal to listen to my satiety cues and to stop eating, like, that sometimes causes me some discomfort, but I choose it anyways. Because ultimately it's part of, for me, part of my wellness vision, and it's not that I never overeat. I do sometimes overeat, but most of the time I listen to my satiety cues and I'm done eating, but sometimes I do have that inner child in me that's like, "I wanna keep eating." And I choose not to, that's uncomfortable, but it doesn't cause me pain and suffering.

ANNIE

Yeah, I like that. Okay. Point 3.

JEN

3 is the most important, and it's that weight loss plans actually fail your whole family on like an identity level, like, the kind of parent you want to be does not lie in introducing fad dieting practices to your family. And the outcome for, we know the outcome for adults is not great. Lots

of pain and suffering. But we also know the outcome for children raised in families that use restrictive dieting practices, is pretty grim. And there are lots of studies to show that. One is about 46% of nine to 11 year olds report that they are sometimes or very often on a diet and 82% of them report that their families are sometimes or very often on a diet. And I really like this study, because I think a lot of parents tell themselves that their children don't pick up on their restrictive dieting practices or aren't affected by them. Or maybe they don't even know. I mean, there's lots of families out there, like, I mean, we were one of them, that didn't know our restrictive dieting practices could have harmful effects and we didn't know that until we started seeing the effects in our kids, which I've shared on this podcast many times for anyone listening. You are not alone. I've been there. We've seen lots of food stuff with our kids because of how restrictive I was. But yeah, it totally, totally affects kids and from a very young age.

ANNIE

We know this because the studies and the statistics which I think you have some more of about, girls dieting?

JEN

Yeah, well or I mean lots of these stats are separated between girls and boys. So there is 62% of teenage girls are trying to lose weight, 29% of teenage boys are trying to lose weight. 59% of teenage girls say they are actively dieting, and 28% of teenage boys say they are actively dieting. 58% of teenage girls say the reason they exercise is to try and control their weight and 51% of teenage boys say the reason they exercise is to try and control their weight. There are other studies, there's a really large study of 14 and 15 year old, or 14 year old girls and boys that found dieting was the most important predictor of developing an eating disorder compared to those teenagers who do not diet. So the teens who were dieting moderately were five times more likely to develop an eating disorder than the teenagers who didn't diet, and those who were restricting extremely were 18 times more likely to develop an eating disorder than the teens who didn't diet, which we see in adults too, though.

ANNIE

Absolutely. But unfortunately, it's possible and likely that diets do develop into full blown eating disorders.

JEN

Yeah. And we also know this is another real shock to a lot of people. And I don't love sharing this stat because I feel like it can just flare up people's kind of fat phobia. But anyways, adolescents who start dieting are 324% more likely to become obese as adults than adolescents who don't diet and I don't share that to say that there's anything wrong with any body size, but just that our goal for women in Balance365 is to find a healthy weight that's comfortable for them and the weight that they always would have been had they never had their eating behaviors hijacked as a kid. Does that make sense, Annie, when I say it like that?

ANNIE

Yeah it does. And we've talked about this a little bit on the Weight Watchers...Weight Watchers launched their app for kids. It is kind of a tricky conversation. But it's really just to hammer the point that these diets are running kind of interference with our behaviors, and they're not helpful.

JEN

Yeah, so I think everybody deserves to be their natural body weight. And that, of course, lies in a range. And we have to acknowledge that there are people in our society of course, that are underweight because they're restricting all the time. I was one of them. And I couldn't maintain it obviously, and I was constantly yo-yoing and gaining weight and losing weight and gaining weight, losing weight because I was trying to, my whole life revolved around trying to be this super low weight that was underweight for my natural body size. And there's the other side of the coin that there are people in our society who are overweight. Meaning, I don't mean that on the BMI scale overweight, I mean that they are over a weight that is healthy and comfortable for their natural body type. And if that's you, if that's something you're trying to assess, because some people, some people intuitively know it. I've been there. I've been at a weight that I intuitively knew was just too heavy for my frame. And I was super uncomfortable. But then there's other people who think they're overweight, but they're not. [Laughs] I've also been that person. That was like, "I'm overweight." But what did that even mean? Right? It meant, I'm not underweight right now. That's what it meant for me. And so we have a podcast on that actually, 11 questions to ask yourself to start thinking about if you're even overweight. And when we talk about weight loss and Balance365 and the types of women that we work with and that we can best work with it's, it's actually like ideally, we want to work with women who are working towards finding that healthy body weight, right? It doesn't matter where she starts, it's where she wants to end up, and those that weight...In our program, though, the behaviors we incorporate are not driven by becoming a particular weight. Your weight becomes a byproduct of you living your best life and incorporating behaviors that you love and want to keep forever and that is such a mindset shift. Right? It's such a flip.

ANNIE

It is. I was thinking, too, as you're talking, Jen, that we don't prescribe weights or our goals for any woman's body, we offer some questions and considerations to take into account to help women determine that for themselves. But also, you're talking to, sharing all these kind of things as you said, grim statistics about children. And I just want to circle back to that, that if you are currently a parent who's dieting, and you heard those and it was kind of a gut punch, like, "Oh, gosh, you know, maybe they are picking up on it, or maybe it has more impact on my kids than I want it to acknowledge." It's never too late. Even if your kids are grown and out of the house, it's never too late to start kind of repairing your relationship with food and fitness and having more sustainable balanced practices around both. Or having conversation, age appropriate conversations.

JEN

Right.

ANNIE

About this.

JEN

And I've shared in our podcasts on feeding children, our journey as a family and what that looked like and the gut punch I had when I realized my five year old was dieting, or like, or I had my five year old on a diet, I should say, and he was hiding food in his room. Because his mother was terrifying. [Laughs] And he was scared, and already at that age, I had him kind of morally, feeling judgment around what he wanted to eat. And so I've been there and it's really scary, and it's a lot of unlearning, and it's a lot of discomfort and it's a lot of trusting because you are trusting that what all these diet, what all these experts are telling you about, you know, child development and healthy relationship with food. Like, you don't even know what that is as an adult, and yet you're trying to help your child discover it. And you're sort of figuring out that together with your children and so I get it. I've been there. No shame. We all grew up in the same diet culture here.

ANNIE

Yeah, and I think, you know, if your kids are a little bit older, having those conversations like, "Hey, I struggle with this, too." We talked about this in the Hillary McBride episode that essentially kids don't need us to be perfect. They just they need more honest, like, open conversation.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Like, again, age appropriate, these are not conversations I'm trying to have with my five year old or three year old, like, "Mom's really struggling with her food." [Laughs] But you know, if you've got a, you know, 18 19, 20 year old and maybe you see some stuff, some behaviors that are like, "Oh, wait, what is that? What's that about? Where'd you learn that?" Or, "Where'd he learn that?" You know, ask questions, get curious. You don't have to have all the right answers. You can just open the conversation about it.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Yeah. Great. Anything else to add, Jen?

JEN

No, I don't think so. I think we covered it.

ANNIE

Covered the weird ass food.

BOTH
[Laugh]

ANNIE

The rules, too many rules. Different foods. They rely on you being a robot with no life. And inevitably, kids get sick. You have soccer games, you have stuff that comes up. You want to go on vacation.

JEN

Yeah, the way you eat needs to be flexible and able to be taken on the go with your family.

ANNIE

Yeah, exactly. And then, our last second point was they make health about food and body size and we just spent some time talking about how health is more than just the physical, but it's also emotional, social, spiritual. Thinking about how to feel well, not comfortable, not cozy and comfortable all the time, but well. And then lastly, failing the whole family because of how all of those first two points trickle down and impact your kids.

JEN

Which ultimately fails, I think. I don't want to speak for anyone else. But my vision for myself as a parent is not that life.

ANNIE
Right.

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
Okay, great. That's good stuff, Jen.

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
Thank you.

JEN
Thank you.

ANNIE
We'll talk soon.

JEN

Okay, bye

ANNIE

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