

Balance365 Episode 125 Transcript

ANNIE BREES

Welcome to Balance365 Life Radio, a podcast that delivers honest conversations about food, sickness, 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

Hi, Jen, welcome back to the show. How are you?

JEN CAMPBELL

Good. I got a fresh cup of coffee and I'm ready to go.

ANNIE

I have about a third of a cold cup of coffee, but I'm also ready to go. [Laughs]

JEN

All right, we better be better be fast here before you run out of coffee.

ANNIE

[Laughs] Yeah, and, oh, we better be ready to go because this is a topic. Is weight loss a realistic goal?

JEN

Yeah, it's interesting, complex and maybe a bit heavy for some people listening.

ANNIE

But it's a great question to ask.

JEN

It's something that we should ask ourselves regularly.

ANNIE

Especially if you find yourself always pursuing weight loss as a goal like, which is something we encourage women to do when they join us. Like, really reflect on what do you want? Is it realistic? Is it sustainable? Like, do you really want to commit to the process of weight loss? Like we we pose some questions that don't just assume that this is the answer, right?

JEN

And why? Like, are you...Why, like, is this something you're just always doing? And this is a way you hustle for your worthiness or is this something you want for yourself?

ANNIE

Yeah. So we have some various considerations for you to consider.

BOTH

[Laugh]

ANNIE

Some considerations for you to consider. So profound. But the first one is, is it realistic for you physically?

JEN

Right.

ANNIE

Want to talk to me about that, Jen?

JEN

Right. So just an honest assessment of, are you actually overweight? Or are you perhaps just on the higher end of what is a very healthy body weight for you? If you aren't, then weight loss may not be realistic for you physically, right? And this comes from someone with experience. And I'm just saying this in the most compassionate, loving way, because I've been that person who is pursuing weight loss when I actually didn't have any weight to lose. So what I used to do is, I mean weight loss was just always on my mind. It was a goal that was constant for me 365 days a year, year after year, even when I was at my lowest weight. So the leaner you want to be, the more difficult it's going to get. Because for a lot of us, our bodies don't want to be 14% body fat, right? They don't want to be and so I mean this in a totally loving way. But there's a lot of women out there who are pursuing doing weight loss who have no weight loss to lose. And when I had that realization, it actually is very freeing. It's very like, Oh my gosh,

ANNIE

Right.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

And I think what really needs reflection is overweight compared to what?

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Because, what does overweight mean? We aren't talking about, like, that scale on your doctor's wall or whatever, you know, like -

JEN

Or BMI necessarily. Yeah.

ANNIE

Right. But what we see women do, and I've done this myself, so I understand it, but we see women use for example, their lowest body weight ever, like, that's the goal, and I got to get better, like, that's now the benchmark, or my pre-pregnancy weight, my wedding weight, the weight or the size I was when I graduated high school or graduated college, or my thin friend's weight, right, or the weight of a celebrity that's the same height as me that I think has the same body type who I really like the way she looks, like, are these, you know, is that what our barometer is for how we're gauging are we overweight or not? So can you, can we talk about, a little bit more about what we mean by overweight?

JEN

Yes. So we acknowledge in Balance365 that every individual has their own unique body type. And what is a healthy weight for one woman will not be a healthy weight for the next and a really great example of this is you and me. And you and I are the same height. We are the same age and we both have three kids. But what is healthy for you is not healthy for me and vice versa. You and I have very different body types.

ANNIE

And I have tried to be Jen's size. [Laughs] Just. It doesn't work for me for so many reasons. It would be painful for me to live at Jen's weight. Like, excruciating if not impossible to sustain it.

JEN

Right. And I've been at a higher weight range that felt uncomfortable for me. But that doesn't mean my higher weight range that's uncomfortable for me is a reflection on what is maybe your healthy weight range, right? It's a weight that works really well for you.

ANNIE

Mm hmm.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

And I don't know what you weigh. It doesn't really matter. But I think there's quite a difference in our weights. You know, like, we're not just talking about like 10 pounds. We're talking about, like 30, 40 pounds. [Laughs]

JEN

Yeah, there's a significant difference.

ANNIE

And again, same age. both had three kids, same height, we live similar lifestyles and as far as what we do for a profession and you know, like, we're both in North America. We have so many similarities, but we have very different body types.

JEN

Yeah, and also to note, we didn't say anything, and we won't, but anyone listening, you have your own healthy range. And you gotta find out what that is for you and not compare it to any other woman's.

ANNIE

Yep.

JEN

Yeah. And we refer to this as lifestyle setpoint, which is this weight range that you can healthfully maintain without losing your damn mind.

ANNIE

Which is key. Without losing your mind.

JEN

And we've had Dr. Yoni Friedhoff on our show before. And he's an obesity medicine doctor here in Canada and he uses the term best weight. And that is the weight you're at when you're living the healthiest lifestyle that you can enjoy,

ANNIE

Which I love, that enjoyment is an element to that weight range, to finding that weight range because it has to be, as we've seen, time and time again, if you're not interested in the behaviors that you're using to achieve weight loss or maintain a certain weight, you're not going to sustain it in the long haul.

JEN

Yeah. And then the other option here is in deciding if weight loss is realistic for you is that again, we do all have this healthy range. And I guess I should point out here that Annie and I often talk in terms of ranges. And if you really think about that, it's a bit ridiculous to make a goal weight off one single number, right? Because our weight is never one single thing. We are always in flux. I go up and down a couple pounds every single day, week, month, if it's that time of the month, I could be up 10 pounds. So I have found over the years that my weight fluctuates in about a 10 pound range. And I don't fight that, it's just sort of my natural range of motion for me. What have you found, Annie?

ANNIE

Yeah, I would say about that depending on...I mean, so many factors. What I've eaten, where I'm at my cycle, time of day. When I've gone to the bathroom when I haven't.

JEN

[Laughs]

ANNIE

I mean, it absolutely fluctuates.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

You know, 10 in a given week or month, it could fluctuate 10 pounds, like I wouldn't be shocked.

JEN

Yeah. And so we encourage women, even with the women on weight loss journeys, to think about not having necessarily a goal weight, which we have talked about in many podcasts, there's lots of arguments against having a goal weight, but actually to think about that their weight is just going to shift to a different range, right? It might be in a 10 to 20 pound range right now at a heavier weight as you go on this weight loss journey. It then is just out of, it's just at a different range. And that is just a constant. That is a guarantee, that your weight is always in flux. I noticed that I'm heavier in the winters and a little leaner in the summer. And it's just something that happens. I don't fight it. It's just, I can just keep rolling with it. Yeah, so, what we're saying here is if you are within a healthy weight range, sometimes you're just on the higher end of that. And you might want to move to a lower end of that, which is totally fine. There is no judgment here from me or Annie. We're all about body autonomy and deciding what's right for you. Maybe you're just comfortable at a lower body fat percentage or a bit leaner. And that's why this message is so messy, right? Because we have all this nuance and fine print. But I think objectively assessing this is important. And changing your language around it can be really important right? Like rather than comparing yourself to a BMI chart, rather than, you know, kind of running around and identifying as being overweight, you can just think of this a little more objectively and change your language around it. And so how does someone figure this out? We think... We see the balance365ers, they often intuitively learn this over time. But new listeners here who may have a lengthy dieting or yo-yoing weight history, they might have no idea what a healthy weight is for them, because they've been up and down and up and down. And I know I've had this experience, I was either, in my dieting days, and my yo-yoing weight days, I was either up at my leanest, liveable weight, or I was on the other end of the spectrum and feeling like I had too much weight on my body. There was no middle ground. How about you, Annie?

ANNIE

Same. I think I spent a lot of time thinking that my ideal weight quote unquote, was considerably lower than what is actually a healthy sustainable weight for me, where I can live my life like effortlessly without being hyper focused on food and fitness, right? It's actually about 20 pounds heavier, 25 pounds heavier than what I thought was ideal or what I thought I would be happy at.

JEN

Yeah, and that's similar to me. I am, depending on, you know, where I'm at in that range, I'm 20 to 30 pounds heavier today than my leanest, than the leanest weight I've been,

but just speaking of earlier, as far as are you even overweight, even at my leanness weight, that leanness weight, I was still thinking about more weight loss, which is why I'm like, Hello, the light bulb needs to go off here for a lot of women, right? And health for me was ultimately being this heavier weight, right? Which is a tough pill to swallow for a lot of women who've been sitting in diet culture for most of their lives. So instead of giving you guys rules around what is overweight, we have a list of 12 questions that can help you determine if you might be either on the higher end of your natural weight range. Or perhaps you are overweight, perhaps your body weight is higher than what is healthy for you. And I know, Annie, you've experienced that because you have been a size 24. And now you're a size 12. So you really know what that's like to live at a weight that is higher than what's healthy for you, personally. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Mm-hmm.

JEN

So -

ANNIE

Before you get into these questions, I just want to say that, like, I know people would rather give numbers, right, they want the chart, they want like the rules, the black and white, but I don't think that's helping anyone. And this takes a little bit more work to listen to these questions and reflect on them and come up with your own answers instead of someone just handing you the answers. But these are really important questions that are going to maybe offer some really important information into what decisions you need to make next, if any.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Okay, now you can go. [Laughs]

JEN

And they're just a guide, too, right? These are just a guide. Okay, so number one is do you struggle with an all or nothing mentality and all or nothing behaviors that follow? Number two is do you have chaotic eating habits? Number three, do you have binge eating episodes? Number four, do you graze on food throughout the day? Number five do you frequently eat out of habit rather than due to hunger? Number six do you frequently eat until you are stuffed, like, uncomfortably full? Number six is emotional

eating something you find yourself struggling with? Number seven, do you have poor sleep habits? Number eight, do you eat out regularly? Or do processed or refined foods make up a large part of your diet? Where am I at? Number 10, does life feel very stressful? Number 11, are you mostly sedentary? And number 12, do you feel physically uncomfortable in your body, such as in your ease of movement with everyday tasks?

ANNIE

Right. So if you were listening to Jen, ask those questions and you found yourself nodding along to that list, then you might - fine print might - be at a weight that is higher than your natural healthy weight range. And honestly, like when I look at the list of questions, I mean, it wouldn't be uncommon to find women answering yes to all of them.

JEN

Yeah. And it's just, if you're saying yes to a lot of these questions, then, yeah, maybe weight loss is a realistic goal for you, is what I want to say. But if you're saying no to all these questions I would maybe take a moment to pause. Like, where else is there to go from here? Right? [Laughs] Because a lot of these questions are, what they end up leading to, is overeating patterns, right? Like, this is just an indication of, if you regularly over consume food, right? Like if you're eating quite a bit, not due to hunger. If you don't listen to your body satiety cues and you're often uncomfortably stuffed after you eat a meal. If you use food as a coping mechanism for stress or anxiety, not to say you can never do that, but if that's kind of your regular pattern, if you have poor sleeping habits, your cravings are probably off the charts. Yeah. And then a lot of women again, back to body autonomy, they just intuitively know this because they are physically uncomfortable.

ANNIE

And we don't mean like, you don't necessarily like the way you look, like, that's not, we mean you're struggling to get up and down off the ground to play with your kids. You are winded after going to the playground and in addition to that, you're not okay with that.

JEN

And you're not okay with that.

ANNIE

You're struggling to tie your shoes and you don't want to feel that way. I know that was it for me. I remember having moments where I was out of breath, walking up the stairs carrying my baby, and I was like, I can't do this, like, how am I gonna go for a walk and play with her and run after her and like teach her how to ride a bike and all this stuff if I can barely get up the stairs without being winded. And so for me that was about living in

a body that I felt comfortable in. Like, that could do the things that I wanted to do in life, right? We're not talking about, are you uncomfortable because you just don't like your appearance? That's like, that stuff that has nothing to do with your weight, right?

JEN

Yeah, and for me when I was on the lower or higher end of my of the different weights I've been in my life. When I was at my highest weight, what I noticed was, like tying my shoes or anything where I had to bend over was significantly more difficult for me. And I also had some pain, I have some hip issues. [Laughs] And my pain would flare up more often, when my body was heavier. And it was just something that I intuitively felt like, this is too much weight on my body. But I'd also already accepted at that point that leanness level weight thing I had been trying to do for a very long time was also not healthy for me. And so that's when I thought, I gotta find a middle ground here.

ANNIE

Right. And I also do want to acknowledge weight bias as it comes to the medical field. You know, we've talked about this before on podcasts that it's not uncommon for people who are overweight to go to the doctor and the like cure all is weight loss, right? If you're having knee pain, if you're having hip pain, if you're, I remember being a college athlete and my doctor prescribing walks to help with some cholesterol. I was like, Are you kidding me? I'm a college athlete.

JEN

Right. What do you think a walk is gonna -

ANNIE

Yeah, you have no idea, you just looked at me, you saw my weight and made this like blanket prescription that you probably give to everyone that walks in your office. You have no idea what my lifestyle is. So I don't want to say that like weight loss is the cure all to feeling discomfort in your body. It can and it has in you know, Jen's experience, my experience. I know Michelle, coach Michelle, who's been on our podcast, has talked about her experience with plantar fasciitis and weight loss supporting her managing that pain. So, it's not like we're just saying, Oh, lose weight, and you'll feel comfortable in your body and you know, like, pain will go away.

JEN

Right yeah, it's not a cure all. But these are just things for you to assess and think critically about it. Right? We should think critically, especially when it comes to weight loss, because the message that women get is that we should be trying to do this at all times.

ANNIE

Regardless of if it's necessary or not.

JEN

Right

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

Yeah. And I guess, the reason that I think this is important to talk about is that even when I was very thin, and still trying to lose weight, people were not questioning that around me. Like, I was still getting a lot of applause for that. And even when my BMI like, I was at a point where my BMI was at under weight. And like, it's just very strange to me now to look back and think about how that is so normal in our culture, that even people around me were still applauding me and thinking that was fantastic. I mean, I know BMI is just, it's just a thing. It's not, you know, we don't think everyone needs to compare their bodies to the BMI chart. Because there are going to be people that naturally fall on the underweight category of BMI who are perfectly healthy, but I personally was not perfectly healthy. So. I was very unhealthy. So yeah.

ANNIE

And the other element, just to circle back to those questions is, also the frequency in which you're engaging in those behaviors, right? Like, if you're just emotional eating once in a while, okay, like it might not have a big effect on your health or your weight or whatever. And in fact, we've talked about this and emotionally in podcasts that our expectation is that, it just never not happens. It's like that it's managed, right? And the frequency is at a rate that you're comfortable with. If you are finding yourself doing it more often than you care to, super frequent, daily, multiple times a day then like, yeah, okay, maybe it needs addressed, right? And we don't, we don't know the answer to that question. Like, only you do, right?

JEN

Yes. There's people listening right now that are like, Just tell me the answer.

ANNIE

[Laughs] I know, "What do you guys know?"

JEN

"Stop going on and on."

BOTH
[Laugh]

ANNIE

But this is the work that you need to do, right? Like, we can't answer that, we can help you answer these questions. We can help, like, help you...

JEN

I mean, a lot of women want what you and I have, but this is the work we did, by the way, which is why we're sharing it with all of you. So first consideration, is it realistic for you physically make that decision and then number two, is it realistic for you emotionally? And this is even a messier conversation than the physical one -

ANNIE

Buckle up. [Laughs]

JEN

- because most...[Laughs] Yeah. Most women carry an incredible amount of shame when it comes to body fat. And that means they will treat it like an emergency. And that can be emotionally overwhelming. And if that is something that's very painful for you, we recommend talking to a therapist about that. And so because it's very difficult to determine if it's realistic for you emotionally when you're in a state of panic, because if you're in a state of panic about your body at all times, you're like, of course it's the right time, it has to be, because this is causing me a lot of pain and I need to get out of this pain. Right?

ANNIE

And you're just, you're reacting and you're trying to act your way out of that pain. Right? Versus calm, cool, collected...

JEN

Yes. Which is actually often, that whole state of panic is what keeps people stuck in the diet cycle and keeps them weight cycling and keeps them going from one end of the spectrum to the other. But so, is it always a good time? You know, is it always like, we got to think about this? Should we always have a goal of weight loss? Should that always be the front and center of our lives? And I could give some more extreme examples. Like, what if someone has just lost a partner? Is that a good time to be focused on weight loss? And I know everyone listening would be saying, of course not.

But here's some maybe less extreme examples, is maybe you're just totally overwhelmed from all this pandemic crap going on. And just trying to keep your head above water, or maybe you're struggling with depression or anxiety. Like, it might not be a good time -

ANNIE

Or taking it back to one of the reasons that brought us together initially six years ago is maybe you just had a baby. Right?

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Like now's not the time to focus on -

JEN

It's not the right time.

ANNIE

You know, I don't want to answer that for you. But like, are there other priorities that need to take place of weight loss? Like sleep? Care for yourself, compassion, maybe therapy, maybe rest, whatever that looks like, you know?

JEN

Yeah. And it's really powerful to own these things. Right? And to go, Wait a sec. I don't always have to be thinking about weight loss. That's crazy. This is not a good time.

ANNIE

And on the baby note, I would say just personally, and I've heard this echoed in other women's experiences, that when I was pregnant and early postpartum, I felt so content with my life because that pressure for weight loss was just non-existent. It was like, I just knew, I'm pregnant, I shouldn't be focused on weight loss. I just had a baby, I shouldn't be focused on, and it was so freeing.

JEN

Yeah, I mean, we have women tell us all the time that when they were pregnant, it was the only time they truly felt comfortable and proud of their bodies. And I'm like, That's because we're allowed to not be thinking about weight loss during those nine months of our life. I mean, that can be the case. But I mean, I know a lot of women actually are thinking about weight loss during those nine months, and they have a lot of anxiety

about the weight gain. But for many women, their experiences, it's the only time in their life that they didn't have the pressure to be losing weight, right?

ANNIE

Or they more openly accept that their body changes. And that's supposed to happen. But yet outside of pregnancy, we get upset when our body changes or when we age or when, you know, we can't do the things that maybe we used to do.

JEN

Mm hmm. So understanding that you can have that anytime, actually, because it's actually a mindset and a choice.

ANNIE

Yes.

JEN

Yeah. And then third, is weight loss realistic for you socially? And here's what I mean by that. The way people choose to pursue weight loss is often so ridiculous that they can't even get together with friends because of what that weight loss plan entails. And if you find yourself in that place, I just want you to know, there are other options. You don't have to stay home, avoid restaurants, etc. Or brace yourself or white knuckle through cravings while you're sitting with a group of people. Because there are more sustainable ways to approach weight loss that don't require avoiding being social.

ANNIE

Yeah, I've said this before, I'll say it again. It just breaks my heart that women are suffering unnecessarily to achieve this goal, because it's not the only option and I think back to our interview with Melissa, Balance365 member who talked about going out to dinner with her girlfriends, and couldn't participate in the conversation because she was so focused on the bread basket and saying no to the bread basket. Right? And it's like -

JEN

Yeah, she's having this internal struggle over the bread that's so distracting. She can't even be present in the moment. So, and Annie and I would argue that dieting is never realistic for anyone when it comes to weight loss physically, emotionally, or socially. However, if your approach to weight loss changes, and it's perhaps based around building skills and habits instead of dieting, then it might become more realistic for you physically, emotionally, and socially, right? We had some women going through this COVID thing in Balance365, where it actually did become a good time for them to prioritize some habits and work at some weight loss. Where of course, and then there's

other people where it wasn't, right. Like we also had some frontline workers etc. So this is very individual. But if you're willing to take this habit based approach, this step by step approach, then suddenly weight loss can become more realistic for you because it's adaptable and flexible to many different situations.

ANNIE

And it's not your life's purpose, right?

JEN

Yes, when you're using habits, it's not your life's purpose. It's just something going on in the background while you're living your life.

ANNIE

An enjoyable life. A life that you want to live, right. And those habits take a lot less energy.

JEN

Right.

ANNIE

Than, as Jen said, white knuckling your way, right?

JEN

Yeah. So in summary, we would like you to do an honest assessment on if you're even overweight, because there's a lot of women out there who aren't, but they're still pursuing weight loss at all times. And even if you are overweight, you shouldn't feel morally obligated to be always pursuing weight loss. That's okay. And remember that it's not always a good time, emotionally and mentally. And that if it's not sustainable for you emotionally, mentally, or socially or even physically, for that matter, it's just not worth it.

ANNIE

Yeah. And I would also add that maybe you give some time to these questions, maybe you've already started a weight loss journey. And I don't know, you still might be looking for a range, right, and you might not know that range until you find it. And you might not know that range until you go below it and you're like, Oh, no, too far, you know. [Laughs] Above it, oh, nope, too far. And then you settle in somewhere in the middle. And like, that's okay. Like this is just for lack of a better word, it's just an experiment, right? It's just information, getting to know yourself, getting to know your body, and what feels good for you. And that takes some trial and error sometimes. So if you ask yourself all these questions, and you're still like, I still don't know. And also, it might not be a

number, your weight loss goal or range might not be a number. It might be more like, I feel good right now. Whatever that weight is, wherever that weight falls. Great, right?

JEN

Yeah. And any plan you pursue needs to be sustainable forever, or the weight loss is not going to be sustainable, right? If you're just treating any change you make like there's a finish line and you can't wait to stop doing this thing whether that's like a detox or cleanse or a fast or cutting out carbs. As soon as you reach that finish line and you quit that behavior, the weight will all come back on. Trust us. We've been there. We've coached thousands of women. That is a universal experience.

ANNIE

Yeah, you and I know enough to now know, just, when someone comes to us with like, Yeah, I'm doing this 30 day challenge, this 60 day challenge. We smile and nod. What happens on day 31? Like, have you thought that far?

JEN

[Laughs]

ANNIE

Because I have, I've seen it. [Laughs] You go do it, but I'm just telling you, like, think about day 31, day 32, day 33, day 34. [Laughs] Take that into consideration.

JEN

So, PS, join Balance365.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

[Laughs]

ANNIE

Yeah, if you want to learn a sustainable way to lose weight, you gotta...

JEN

And keep it off and do the true lifestyle change. Not just the marketed lifestyle change by all these diet companies, but an actual shift in lifestyle change for sustainable weight loss. Join us we'd love to have you.

ANNIE

Yeah, of course we would. Okay, this was great, Jen. I think this is such a good holistic approach to looking at is weight loss a realistic goal, looking at physically, emotionally, and socially is all great considerations when evaluating this goal, instead of just assuming.

JEN

Yeah, instead of just opting in.

ANNIE

Yeah, you don't have to opt in and you can choose a different option.

JEN

Yep, we've got options.

ANNIE

We do. Okay, well, thank you, Jen. I appreciate it.

JEN

Thank you.

ANNIE

Thanks for listening and we'll talk soon.

ANNIE

Hey, everyone, if your mind has been blown while listening to this podcast, just wait until you work with us. Let us help you level up your health and wellness habits and your life inside Balance365 coaching. Head over to balance365.co to enroll in next month's coaching round. See you on the inside.