

# Balance365 Episode 129 Transcript

ANNIE BREES (INTRO)

Welcome to Balanced365 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

Hello my friends welcome back to Balance365 Life Radio podcast. Before I tell you about today's amazing guest I want to share a really amazing review that Erin left for us on iTunes. She says, "I was looking for a way to find the right balance for me between weight loss, nutrition, and positivity on a day to day basis in real life without extreme dieting. This is exactly what I needed. You ladies are amazing." And Erin, you my friend are amazing, and to everyone else who has taken the time out of their day to leave us a review on iTunes, thank you so much. If you have downloaded, subscribed, shared, listened to any episode we cannot thank you enough, because my friends, in the world of podcasting, if there are no listeners, there is no point podcasting, so thank you so much for your support. It really means a lot to Jen and myself. Okay, now let me tell you about today's amazing guest. She's super special because she's actually a Balance365 expert coach, which means that she comes on once a month and delivers a body image specific coaching call to all of our Balance365 coaching members. Our members love her. Her name is Deandra Dey, she is a certified clinical counselor in Canada and she believes that we all have the capacity to feel whole and lead fulfilling lives despite the struggles we experience. And on today's episode, Jen, Deandra, and I talk about the connection to self, how to do it, and why it matters. She is full of such great information, my friends, I think you're gonna love it. Enjoy.

ANNIE

Jen, we are back with a special guest on today's episode. I'm so excited because she's actually on our expert panel for Balance365 coaching and she's a friend of yours.

JEN CAMPBELL

Yeah.

ANNIE

Do you want to tell me how you met her?

JEN

Well, we both were on a panel at a conference a year and a half ago, which our friend Julie hosted, called We Won't Bounce Back. And it was based all around like women's issues, especially postpartum body shame. Yeah. And you and I were on an expert panel one night, we watched a documentary and then we, in a big auditorium, and then there was six of us, I think, on the expert panel, conversing with the crowd. So that's how we met. And then we kind of reconnected after you became a mom.

DEANDRA DEY

Yeah, we did. And it was such a great experience to be like, "Oh, this woman's in this city. This is great stuff."

JEN

[Laughs] And I felt the same way. And actually, the first time we got together, I was a bit nervous because as Annie and I know, and you and I've chatted about a lot, is there's very polarizing messages in health and wellness right now on anything around women's health, body image, weight loss, and I thought, "Oh boy, here we go. I'm going to explain what we do. And if she has any moral objections, she'll let me know." And you were like, "No, I totally get it. That's my lived experience." I'm like, "Oh!" [Laughs]

DEANDRA

Yes, it was and you know, to be honest, at first I was like, "Wait, is this like, this is like a wellness plan that's anti diet culture, but is focused on weight loss or could be focused on weight loss and health for women. Wait a second." And for me, it was more like, this is not something I've encountered before.

JEN

Like a clashing of ideals.

DEANDRA

Yeah. And I had to sit with it for a while to be honest, because I mean, that was my lived experience, but having been consuming, like body positivity, like a lot of social media and stuff around that message, but also not necessarily expressing my own lived experience of finding health and wellness and weight loss through this more holistic approach. Because it is controversial. So when you explained it to me, it was like, "Oh, man, yes, Finally."

JEN

"I get it."

DEANDRA

"I get it." And finally somebody putting that message out like, "Hey, it's okay to want to be healthy, and maybe lose weight, and work out and be conscious about your food, but not be like totally bogged down and full of shame associated with that culture."

JEN

Right on. It's the revolution.

DEANDRA

[Laughs]

JEN

So, Deandra is very important, because she's her but also because she's a clinical counselor, and you do work for women. Do you want to expand on that?

DEANDRA

Yeah, I would love to. So my passion for working with women started before I even got my master's. I worked in a program for survivors of domestic violence, and I did a lot of workshop facilitation and work with these women around self esteem, self worth, and connection to themselves, and I do a lot of group work, which is so inspiring. You know, when women get together something happens, you know, and we don't even have words for it. There's like this thing, right? This whole, there's a huge shift. And anyway, so I went into my master's and started off working with women and knew like, this is important to me. I finished my master's degree and worked with children and youth but also families in a more structured position. And then I decided, you know, my passion really, really lies here in working with women and families, but I wanted to create space in my life to really do this work that we're talking about. So I opened my private practice after I had my daughter, Joanie.

JEN

So what, what are some of the issues? So, what I'll mention to our listeners is that you also coach in Balance365 coaching and your group sessions are on body image coaching. But you also have expanded, your private practice isn't just about body image.

DEANDRA

Yeah, so body image stuff is definitely something that I work with with women. But of course, my practice, and the thing is, is that this stuff is interwoven with many other issues and things, right? So someone might come up with a body image challenge, or struggles with their body. And what we find is that some of the stuff is related to past history. It's related to maybe some traumas that existed in someone's life. And so you can't just go into practice being like, "I'm going to work with women on body image issues," because this is a very diverse experience for women. There's no one way to heal this per se.

JEN

Right. And it's often, would you say having a negative developing and negative body image is often a symptom of some other stuff?

DEANDRA

Yes, we call it the smokescreen.

JEN

The smokescreen.

DEANDRA

It's a smokescreen. It's a symptom, it's like, and for women, it's a really easy thing to attach to, because of the culture that we live in. So you know, when it comes to feeling not good in ourselves, our bodies are the first thing that we can hyper focus on or attack because we've been taught that that's where the worth is. So, when women come in, they're like, "I'm having body image issues," or "I'm struggling to accept my body" or "I'm having challenges with food." You know, for me, that's an indication that if they've done some of the work, you know, some of the like affirmation work and trying to change the mindset, and that's not working, I'm like, "Hey, you know what, this is bigger. This isn't just the, you know, you can't shift your mindset."

JEN

Those issues are way out of the scope of practice of Balance365. So our coaches can help women do the mindset work, but we're referring women out all the time and we're actually pretty consistently referring to you because you take online clients, and during these times of pandemic, accessibility to professionals has gone down greatly, as well as we have lots of women living in rural areas and stuff. So it's really nice to have you as a resource.

DEANDRA

Yeah. And it's been, it's so great because I do want to say that the mindset work is really valuable too. And it's almost, and I said to some ladies on a recent coaching call, like, it's not a linear process, our personal growth or our journeys, we do different things at different times. And we all get to that, we're all working towards going to the same place, but we might get there differently. But mindset work is an important part of the process, because our attitude has a huge impact on how we relate to others in our lives and how we relate to ourselves. But sometimes it's just not enough.

JEN

Yeah, absolutely. So I wanted, we're having you on because we wanted to talk about something that is part of the work you do, and it is focused on helping women connect to themselves. And that can have a significant impact on their body image. Do you want to expand on that? Like, tell us what it means exactly. And. [Laughs] What does that mean?

DEANDRA

What does that mean, connection to self? So I want to share that, although I do like, teach yoga, and I do meditation and stuff like that, I have always resisted identifying as being someone who's like woowoo or fluffy. So. [Laughs]

JEN

[Laughs] But you check all the boxes. [Laughs]

DEANDRA

I know, I know. But with a critical mind, I just want to share that like someone who's like, "Okay, what's the research behind this stuff?"

JEN

Yeah, totally.

DEANDRA

When we talk about connection to self, in a sense, it is something that is not really tangible. Okay. So, the connection to self and we all have experienced it. I'm going to say that. That's a big statement, but we've all experienced moments in our life where we feel fully integrated and connected with ourselves. Meaning that what we're doing feels timeless. You know, we're out of that rational thinking brain. And we're just simply in the moment with whatever it is we're doing, whether that's with our children, whether it's we're doing something creative, even like work, sometimes when we're doing a job that we were really passionate about, we just become fully in it. And when we're there, we feel like we're fully ourselves, like we're able to be ourselves and we're not being critical

of ourselves. And there's a sense of ease and confidence in who we are in that moment. And so like, have you guys experienced that before? As I'm saying this?

JEN

I bet Annie has.

ANNIE

Well, to be honest, this is, I think, a skill that I really lacked up into the last, or I shouldn't, I don't even know if you would call it a skill, an awareness maybe, that I really lacked up until the last few years of my life because I've gone to therapy. [Laughs] Hat tip to professional help. She would ask me questions that would help identify my own experience and I couldn't, like connect to it. I just, I couldn't, because I was so used to experiencing everything else from everyone else's perspective. So yeah, I'm definitely getting better at this. And there are moments that it just feels, I don't know, the word limitless is coming to mind. Like, I'm just like living in my power. Like, this is just how it is.

JEN

I saw this in Annie not too long ago, she spoke at a women's conference and my feeling watching you was like, "Annie is in the zone." Did you feel that way doing it Annie?

ANNIE

Oh, yeah. Yeah. And it was just, it was the cycle of like, owning it and then like seeing other women just like validate like, "Yes, I've done that too." And it just kind of like was just stoking the fire and it just, yeah, yes, absolutely.

JEN

That's awesome.

DEANDRA

Yeah. And so I think that there's moments where we have a big feeling of that. Annie, I think that that experience that you're talking about right now is like a big feeling. It's like, you can't ignore it, because it takes over your whole self in that moment. But even when we think back to moments in our childhood, positive experiences, if we can access those, or sometimes when we're out in nature, when you're say, watching a sunset or doing something where you're just like, fully present, and it might even just be a glimpse, like, those moments, those experiences and that awareness in those moments, is part of the path back to ourselves because that's when we can let go of all this cognitive thinking and doing and just like simply be in ourselves. So you know, I like to explain it that way. And we all have different ways that we get there. That's the thing

about this. It's not like there's one path to yourself. It's like becoming curious about, "Okay, what are the things that I do that feel really nurturing and connected?" For some women that's getting their hands in the garden. It's like getting your hands in the garden or going for a hike or some women, it's like lifting weights, you know, it's like that moment of empowerment and you're fully in your body and you feel completely integrated and connected with yourself. I like to use the word integrated.

JEN

Yeah, I actually feel that way running. And now that you're talking about this, I've always felt that way. So when I was young, even in elementary school, I was always a distance runner. In fact, it's pretty much the only thing I ever excelled at as far as athletics go. But running has never been difficult for me. It feels like I become one with my breath. And the time just passes for me and I don't get that feeling when I lift weights. Lifting weights is something that's important to me and I do, actually regularly, but it's a bit more like, "Okay, I accept this behavior is something I want as part of my future self," where I think when Annie lifts weights, she is one with the weight. [Laughs]

ANNIE

I would agree. And on the flip side of the coin, I am not one when I run.

JEN

[Laughs]

ANNIE

I'm like resisting.

JEN

You're like, "When is this over?"

ANNIE

Mm hmm. Yes, exactly.

JEN

Yeah. But it's such a beautiful illustration of how it's just different. A woman in our community has been sharing. She's been going through her core values and talking about her wellness vision, and really realizing that she's lived her life for, we should have her on the podcast to tell her own story, but she talks about this publicly, so I'll repeat it. Really, she's living her life as you're talking, through other people's eyes and being what other people want her to be. And she's realizing by building her core values, and her wellness vision that Harmony is like a hippie farm lady who has a garden and

a dog at her feet and chickens running around. And that's who she wants to be. That is where she feels connected to herself. And it's been such a big mindset shift for her because now she can move forward and connect her health behaviors to that woman. Right?

DEANDRA

Hmm. Yeah. And so that's, that's a really powerful way to express that. It's that when we figure out or start to build that awareness, as Annie says, or find that connection to ourselves, then we can figure out how we can integrate these lifestyle changes and things that we want into that version of ourselves. Because so often, we become the person we think others want us to be. And as women and others, I mean, even more so because we're constantly in this place of giving and sacrificing. And that we can really start to lose that connection to self.

JEN

Totally, I think, you know, for how long I wanted to be who my parents wanted me to be. And I always pursued the grades that my parents wanted me to have, the education my parents wanted me to have, the university degree, I used to want to be a doctor, which is so crazy because science is not my thing. But I wanted my parents to have a daughter who was a doctor. And then after I got married, I became who I thought my husband and his family needed me to be. And so it's really only been in the last six years that I've been like, "Whoa, pump the brakes. My identity feels like actually very strongly tied to being an entrepreneur, and building this company." And so for me, part of building this company is going, "Now I actually feel in alignment with who I am." And it's funny when I talked to my husband about just kind of like, where we see ourselves in the future. And you know, sometimes we talk about like, what if we won the lottery, what would we do like \$50 million, something huge, and I'm like, "I would still run that company." Like, that is, you know, like, it's just a part of me and I'm I feel in alignment building this business.

DEANDRA

Yeah. And so I think, Jennifer, when you say that, what comes up is, when you say in alignment, it's like there's a sense of ease in what you're doing. There's not a force. You're not forcing yourself to do something that you think others want, you know, like, whether that's a job or behaving a certain way, or mothering a certain way, and I say this with an acknowledgement that sometimes there's a privilege to being able to do what we want.

JEN

Yeah, absolutely.



DEANDRA

But that sense of ease that comes from doing what is in alignment with us. You feel it outside of an occupation as well.

JEN

Yeah. I mean, I am who I am in this business, like, also outside this business, like, this is just me being me when I show up here. I also fought to have this business, right, like, this is not now what my husband wanted. He really wanted me to stay home and raise our kids and no judgment towards him. That was his experience and that's the experience he wanted for our kids and so that really was probably the biggest time in my life when I've had to, had to say like, I have this, you know, that pull and me going like, "These people I love and have been trying to be everything for them want me to be something I am not," like, I just truly do not feel drawn towards being a stay at home mom, and that's no judgement to anyone who does. It's just not something that feels, I guess what I would say in alignment, maybe, I'm not sure.

DEANDRA

You know, and so, as you say that, I just like if you think about being, doing and being someone that other people want you to be and thinking about how it feels when that isn't easy for you. Just think about the shame and guilt that comes from not successfully being the person that other people want you to be.

JEN

Yeah, totally. You feel like you're...

DEANDRA

You're not good enough.

JEN

You're not good enough. Yeah, you feel like you're hustling. Annie, we were talking about this this morning, when you start feeling like you're hustling for your worth to other people. Like, you can just feel it and you're like, "Nope."

ANNIE

Yeah. And I know I've done it in work. I've seen other people do it in work, but it's, for me, it's always come from an insecurity that, like, I'm just that, I'm not good enough that I need to prove like, I need you to know that, like, I'm invested. I'm working hard. I'm focused, I'm committed. Versus I know I'm focused. I know I'm committed. I know I'm invested. And that should be enough. Right? But like, I know that when I, when I first

started kind of doing this work, bringing this awareness to me, my therapist would ask questions like, "Well, what did you think?" If we were talking about a work project. "What did you think?" And my answers would be like, "Well, Jen Thought XYZ," or "They thought this" or "They thought it was good," or "They thought," and she was like, "No, what did you think?" Like I had, I couldn't even answer it from my own perspective. Like, "How did you think you looked in that outfit?" "They said I look nice." Or "He said I looked nice," or "They thought I was funny. They thought it was good." You know? Like, I was always so used to, like Harmony, experiencing things to remember other people's perspectives that I couldn't even identify my own. Like, what did I think? I was so lost.

JEN

What about you Deandra? Do you have personal experience with this? [Laughs]

DEANDRA

Yes.

JEN

Let's do your therapy session now.

ALL

[Laugh]

DEANDRA

Yeah, actually, so when we speak about, like finding myself or connection with myself, I mean, first off is music. Music has been -

JEN

Oh, and you are amazing. We need to pause and talk about how you have a couple actual albums out, I always forget that about you. You're so talented in so many ways. And then I forget about the music part. I listen to your music all the time.

DEANDRA

Oh, that's awesome. So music is part of my, it's just part of what needs to happen for myself. It's just so important to me. And it's been that way since I was a child and I have released one EP, and I have a couple other singles I've released and I'm working on an album right now.

JEN

Oh, you're so good. She sounds like Norah Jones.

DEANDRA

Oh, that's like the biggest compliment ever.

ANNIE

Oh!

JEN

Yes. She's like, we're gonna link that in the show notes. And we are going. I'm going to send this to you right after we finish recording, Annie. She's amazing.

ANNIE

Okay.

DEANDRA

Yeah. So that is, that is a huge part of my connection to self. And one of the things I noticed is when I'm not engaging in that practice, I start to feel crappy about myself. Put it simply, you know, and so for me when I start attacking my body, which happens, you know, and I know that in Balance365 we talk about bad body image days.

JEN

Yeah, they they crop up.

DEANDRA

They crop up. For me, that's a message that something's off, that I'm not taking care of myself in a holistic way. And so when I say, taking care of myself holistically, I'm not just talking about exercise and food, even though that is a big part of it. I'm talking about my creative self. And I've been connecting with that. Have I been connecting with my intellectual self? I love having conversations about issues. I love advocacy. I love reading research. And so when I'm not doing these things, and it slowly happens, right, you get busy, it falls off, then all of a sudden, I'm finding myself looking in the mirror and being like, "Oh, man, you look like you've gained weight" or, "Hey, your clothes don't look as good anymore." And like, "Remember what you used to look like?" And all these things, and I'm like, "Whoa, when's the last time I sat down with my guitar? When's the last time I did something in my work or my community that felt really purposeful? When's the last time I got my ass outside in nature?" You know, these are the questions I ask myself. Because I know that when I start attacking myself physically, it's because I'm actually not meeting my value, like my other values as a human, right, I have rather values other than the way that I look. And when I'm not utilizing those values or those resources, I start to attack my body. And I find that with a lot of women.

JEN

Totally. Why do you think we attack our bodies when we're feeling that way? Do you think that's sort of a conditioning? Like, when things are not quite right, something's wrong with this body of yours?

DEANDRA

Yeah, that's a good question. So I would say yes, I kind of almost want to laugh at that. Because it's like, well, yeah, that's what we're told, like -

JEN

[Laughs] It's all conditioning.

DEANDRA

Like your worth is the way you look. But I also think that caring for our values or caring for our resources within ourselves, or utilizing those resources, there's nothing tangible, physical about that, right? Like this is, like this is a bit esoteric. This is a bit like cognitive or getting into a space where it's like, well, what does that mean? Whereas with your physical body, it's right here right now, look at this. I have weight on my body. I can physically attack that. You know, like, there's some proof, there's proof. That's what it is. It's proof that I'm worthless or that I'm not good enough. Whereas if we were to ask, like, you know, "Have I not been making strides in the areas that really matter to myself, and now I'm not feeling good enough?" That takes a little bit more awareness versus like, "Oh, I'm fat. That's why I feel bad."

JEN

Right? Right. It's just, it's right there.

DEANDRA

It's right there.

JEN

Yeah, that's very interesting. So what do you see in women who do this work, connect to themselves and start exploring this? What are some of the benefits you see in women who do it? What have you experienced? Or you can even speak for yourself if you don't want to speak of general.

DEANDRA

Well, I'll do both. So I'll talk first about myself. So I started off, I grew up in a larger body and then I went, when I was in my early 20s, I went through a drastic dieting phase, every diet you can imagine. Raw food diets.

JEN

[Laughs] Us, too, by the way.

DEANDRA

South Beach diet, Atkins diet.

JEN

Oh, I did South Beach, too.

DEANDRA

Clean Eating with [unintelligible]. All the things. Dropped so much weight, was skinny skinny, skinny, in my opinion. Felt like crap. And hated myself. Wouldn't even shower. Didn't want to look at myself in the mirror and started going to therapy. Yeah, at one point I got like, brought to a therapy office and at the university, because I was I think I was having a panic attack because I was the president of the Student Union at that time, and I was doing all this advocacy work, but still I just really hated myself to be honest. You know, a lot of people didn't agree with my opinions. That was hard, because I was doing advocacy work, and so when you do that you also piss a lot of people off. [Laughs] And I couldn't handle it. I couldn't handle the pushback. And so it caused me to have this panic attack. So I got basically like, escorted to the therapist office and I think I was 22 or 23. And, that's when the journey started. And in session, I remember talking to her about how I was controlling my food. And one of the things my therapist said was like, "Okay, I want you to have a cookie every day," because I was so restrictive with my food. And I remember that being like the biggest, like, "Are you kidding me?"

JEN

Like, never.

DEANDRA

"I'm not going to eat a cookie every day." But I remember looking up online, "What would happen if I took in an additional 150 calories every day for a year?"

JEN

Oh no, yeah.

DEANDRA

Like, what would happen to my body weight, right? So this is the mindframe I was in.

JEN

This is very, I mean, today, even women we work with, and we got we had a huge influx of members last weekend and we've got a few calorie counters on our hands, don't we, Annie?

ANNIE

Mm-hm.

JEN

Where they're going, "How do I not know exactly how many calories I'm eating in a day? Like, how do you even know what to eat if you're not doing that?"

DEANDRA

Yeah, oh man, I've been there. It's so hard, and like, so, I was there. And then I started, and I had so much fear in doing what I wanted to. And at that point, I wanted to move to BC. So I'm originally from Manitoba, and I had all this guilt about making that move. So, the first step was actually just taking the risk and doing what I wanted. And I did that, and that was very anxiety provoking and hard. And then when I got here, I was exposed to a totally different culture. And started doing yoga, actually, was a big part of my connection to myself, because in a yoga practice, it felt like it was a safe space to move my body without these ideas of, you know, trying to lose weight or whatever. So it started there. And I could start to feel that connection to self and then honestly, it was a lot of therapy. [Laughs]

JEN

Wow, that's great.

DEANDRA

A lot of therapy and a lot of understanding, like Annie said, "What do I really think about this? What do I actually like to do?" And you know, interesting enough, from the age of 18 to about 23. I wasn't playing any music. But prior to that I played, I've performed and done music since I was like nine years old. So I totally took a hiatus from my musical practice. And I think in one of my counseling sessions, I sang for my counselor, and she was like, "Um, this needs to happen regularly. As you're doing this, I just see a total shift in your body and how you relate to yourself, I can see that physically. So I need you to continue to develop this practice." And so in doing that, there was a lot of freedom. I felt space in my life for myself. It felt like a way to connect to myself. And then slowly I just continued to build the awareness. What do I want? What do I need? Who am I? What are my preferences? Asking those questions, starting to feel like, really feel what feels

good, you know, or noticing what feels good, that awareness instead of just trying to think about what is right for others.

JEN

What will make me, or what will make me thinner, or what will -

DEANDRA

What will make me thinner, what will, and so that's interesting. So, back to the food thing and the body image thing. It's like, I actually had to let go of all dieting for a while and I know you guys do this in Balance365, so this would be very similar to the pendulum swing where I just stopped. And of course, I gained some weight in that. But then I started to feel like crap, because I was heavier and I wasn't exercising and I was drinking a lot and partying and so then it started with, "Okay, what type of exercise feels okay in my body?" So, hiking. That felt good. So getting outside, and then it just slowly started to build that connection with myself and again, noticing, "Okay, how do I feel when I eat this way? Like physically, how do I feel?" This is something that we talk about on the coaching calls, or I have spoken about in our coaching calls. It's like, it's in that space of awareness. So whether that's aware that this feels good, like an activity that you're doing or that you, you know, when you're eating something that your body feels good when you're eating it, or your body doesn't feel good when you're eating that, in that awareness is how we develop change.

JEN

Absolutely.

DEANDRA

If we're in the space of discomfort long enough, and we're being fully honest and aware of it, you will change. You won't sit in a space of awareness and stay there if it's really uncomfortable. You will stay there if you dissociate from that, if you decide to not to not build that skill of checking in and if you just stay on autopilot and in your cognitive mind, you might not be able to find that inspiration to change but if we can go inside and start to feel like "Hey, man, when I eat six cookies, I don't feel good." [Laughs]

JEN

Right. Yeah. And also like, I deserve to feel good, right? We talked, we've been talking a lot about this in Balance365 coaching. Because with emotional eating, a lot of people are saying to themselves, and I used to do this, "This is all I have, I deserve this." So at the end of the day I was eating because I didn't feel like there was anything else in my life that was for me. And so this came from Michelle, one of our coaches, she said, "What else do you deserve?" And so actually understand there's a trade off there.

Because you also deserve to feel good in your body. And really making, rather than it coming from a place of restriction, coming from a place of feeling like really empowered to say, "Yeah, I do deserve to feel good in my body, and this is what I'm willing to do in order to have that."

DEANDRA

And you know, Jen, I would take it even a step further, which is, you deserve to feel good in your life. And if food is the only thing that you're allowing yourself, because it feels good, I would be out asking like, "What else do you really want out of your life?"

JEN

Yeah, and this, I will take it even a step further. [Laughs] And I think we need to understand our past patterns with food, saying like, you were just trying to survive, and that's okay. Like some kids, some people grow up hoarding food, right? Or they, maybe they, they might have had abusive parents and food was all they had to comfort themselves because they didn't have that parental comfort. Or, you know, there's just all kinds of things, behaviors that develop around food during different stressful times of life and going, "It's okay," like, just be very compassionate towards yourself. Now you have the awareness and the opportunity and privilege to expand. So let's do that. This is the next part of your journey.

DEANDRA

Yes. And, you know, I would even, I would say, in that moment when you're going to eat, I'm saying, "Okay, I wanna, you know, I've already eaten supper, but I'm like, really feeling like, I want to have that bowl of ice cream." Checking in. "Why do I want that bowl of ice cream?" Or maybe not why. But like, "Is there something else that'll do it right now?" Or something else? And then just you know, if there's not, great, enjoy a bowl of ice cream.

JEN

Yeah, no judgment.

DEANDRA

No judgment. But just asking yourself, especially if food has been your pattern for nurturance and support. And there's no shame in that because sometimes that's how we survive.

JEN

Your story sounds so much like Annie's, as you were saying it, and I want to circle back for anyone new that hasn't listened to Annie's story. Annie really had her big moment



too, when, you were dieting Annie and noticing that when you were dieting and getting to these leaner weights, you still weren't happy. And then you noticed all the women around you weren't happy either.

ANNIE

I couldn't even stick with anything long enough to like, lose weight for longer than a week. Like, it just wasn't working. It wasn't working. But I did notice that even at my leanest, it didn't cure all my body image issues like I had thought, like, "Oh, when I get to this weight, then I can be happy. When I look like this, then I will feel content." And it was like, "Oh no, there was a lot of mindset work that had to go into that too."

DEANDRA

Yes. I wanted to say around this work, I find that when we start to connect to ourselves and what we really want and what feels good for us, and what feels purposeful, and using our resources, or our talents or whatever you want to call it, that, at least in my experience, and Annie and Jen, I don't know if you experienced this too, but it's like the drama starts to move away from the food and the exercise so that it's no longer full of drama and concern and it's not hijacking my cognitive space anymore. And it's just part of life because my focus is actually on other things. I'm not thinking about food anymore, and it was a slow process. It wasn't like I woke up one day, I was like, "Hey, I'm not thinking about calories anymore." This is like a five year, six year process of starting to really connect with who I am and what I want. And it was, you know, changing relationships with people. It was moving cities, it was starting my master's degree, it was all of these choices, these small choices, small steps back towards myself, that helped me move away from myself being my physical body.

JEN

So what are you...Do you see similar results in other women you work with? I'm thinking about Balance365ers right now who have made major career moves and different things since starting Balance365. We actually had Molly on the podcast recently talking about just some incredible things that have nothing to do with food and fitness, because it's all about the mindset shift that we talked about in Balance365. Are you seeing this in other places as well?

DEANDRA

I see it in women just starting to really look at their relationships and what they need in their relationships and starting to speak up about that. I see it in women starting to think about how, is this job really what I want? And I see it in women changing their communication style, and starting to really express their needs. And sometimes that's the beginning work, you know, is creating space for yourself in your life. So in your

relationships with your children, with your partner, at your workplace, whatever it looks like, you know, so I've seen women start to do that. And then as they start to do that, you know, our conversations and our therapy sessions move away from body image and food. You know, then we're starting to talk about some of the deeper stuff, like the history, what's happened in childhood that hasn't been processed or thought about, what's, you know, and so that's what I see as I see people come in with body image at the forefront and then we start to unpack and then I see that that body image stuff isn't even on the table anymore. And it's not because we're ignoring it. It's because it's no longer the issue. It's just the issue that got you through the door.

JEN  
Right.

ANNIE  
Which Jen and I are kind of a level like above that, because like we said, counseling and therapy is outside of our scope of practice. And that's why we refer out to professionals. But we see women coming to us trying to talk about food and fitness. And we're like, "It's not about food and fitness. It's about something deeper," and then you go even a layer deeper.

JEN  
We also we had this conversation yesterday when all the coaches met, we had a coaches meeting yesterday, and women come to us because they think they need help with their weight, with food, with fitness. That's fine. That's definitely something we do help with. But they don't actually need nutrition coaches. They need life coaches. So our coaches need to have a wide variety of tools in their toolbox for coaching. We're not just food coaches in Balance365.

DEANDRA  
No and I love this about you guys. I love love love this about the program because so many of us women, that is our first step. You know, I started off with yoga or fitness and stuff too. And dieting, like that's, again, because of our conditioning, our programming, social programming. That's where we think the work needs to happen. "I just need to have better willpower with my workouts and my food." And then, yeah we get there, we're like, "Okay, so I have these habits down." O, "As I'm working towards these habits, all this other stuff is coming up." There's something really beautiful about your program and how women are also connecting with each other.

JEN  
Yeah, it is beautiful.

DEANDRA

So powerful. Like when I leave those coaching calls. I'm high.

JEN

[Laughs]

DEANDRA

I'm so jacked from the conversation with all these women and I'm like, this is amazing, because it's not just a food plan or an exercise plan, you know, you guys are creating a community of women saying, "We want more. We want more out of this like society, but we also want more out of ourselves in our lives." It's so beautiful.

JEN

They rave about you, too, by the way. Every time you have a coaching call, we hear about it, how amazing everybody thinks you are. So, what are some practices that women can start doing, just the ones listening who are kind of little curious about this? What can they start doing to reconnect with themselves? So they can go to therapy, we know that, number one to find a therapist.

DEANDRA

Yeah, you can go to therapy. But there's also some things that you can start. So I would say first off, I actually wrote some of these things down. Start asking yourself what are the activities or things that I do that feel timeless, where I feel fully integrated in the moment and in myself? If you can't think of any recently, think back, you know, to a time maybe a younger self, when you can remember feeling like that freedom. It's almost like a sense of freedom.

JEN

Yeah, I'll tell you that this can be very difficult. We had a woman the other day in Balance365, she was working through her wellness vision. And one of the questions, we ask different questions, and one of them is to describe some moments in your life when you felt truly happy. And she posted that she just, she can't even remember the last time she felt very happy. And I just had to say, like, "Go back, like, keep going back." And because this is about really finding what brings you joy, it doesn't matter if it happened when you were five years old. We can cultivate something from that. And I just think a lot of women out there are living very joyless lives because they're living for other people so much. So it can be a real eye opener to go through that exercise.

DEANDRA

Yeah. And I think, you know, Jen, I think the word happy can be a bit of a hang up for people too. Especially -

JEN  
Yeah.

DEANDRA  
So you know, I would say even just like something where you just felt like you were there in in that moment, you were there.

JEN  
Connected.

DEANDRA  
You were connected. You were there, you're integrated, whatever you want to call it, you were just fully there. And you know what? If you can't think of one, I would say, okay, get curious. That's information for you. That's some information. And it's not bad. It just is information, that maybe it's been a really long time since you've made that connection. And the other thing I would say is you need to acknowledge your resources. And I know in saying this, this is really hard for some women. So resources, what do I mean? Like, are you kind? Are you intelligent? Are you a good problem solver? Are you really good at structuring things? So you get, like, really starting to think about, what are the things that you're good at? And it doesn't have to be a lot, but start to acknowledge those resources or things that, you know, that you have, we all have a couple or at least one thing that we're like, "Yeah, I got that. I'm a kind person." You know, we're like, "I'm a good mother." And I say, okay, and acknowledge those resources. How can you use them more?

JEN  
Annie and I just talked about this, didn't we, Annie? Expanding who you are beyond your body.

DEANDRA  
Exactly. Yes. Yes. Yes. So, who are you outside of your body? What are your resources? And how can you utilize those resources in your life, in your community, start doing it. Just do it. And notice how things change. Sometimes we have to behave before we can change the thoughts. If we just try to sit and change the thoughts, as like the precursor to changing them, behavior doesn't work. We have to sometimes just, like, do it. So use those resources more if you're creative and you're not being creative, do it.

ANNIE

What I like about that is it's really focused on what's working well already or what's going well or what you can do well versus like, let's try to change the things that you don't like or the things that you suck at or the things that you know, you don't feel competent in. It's like, "No, what are you already good at?" And like doubling down on that.

JEN

Yeah, I mean, we're always gonna have things we suck at and aren't good at, right? And there can just be an acceptance as part of the human experience that there are, like, it's okay to have elements of us that aren't maybe up to par [laughs] in certain areas. But like, there's also so many things we are great at. We're just so conditioned to be focused on our flaws, and even self improvement can become a rabbit hole of like, I truly am such a perfectionist and have to really keep an eye on that mindset. That even when I'm working to, quote unquote, evolve as a woman, I have to be careful not to get too far down that rabbit hole and just let myself be enough sometimes just let myself be at my current level of knowledge. and not have to learn anymore.

DEANDRA

Well, yeah, and you know, we think of self improvement often as being a focus on things that we struggle at, or a focus things that we feel like we need to get better at. When really self improvement, when you think about like unique self improvement is like, how can I continue to grow and enhance my unique abilities and resources? Defining out what are those things outside of what other people tell you, outside of, you know, your conditioning culturally or within your family. Like, what are the resources and things that you know, you can offer and build on those, because that's where the confidence is built and the self worth, the self esteem, not by doing all the things that you find really difficult and you've been struggling with over the last 10 years, right?

ANNIE

Yeah, that's not fun. [Laughs]

DEANDRA

No.

ANNIE

It sucks.

DEANDRA

Zero fun.

JEN

That's why I actually, I had quite a pendulum swing with exercise where I ran and ran and ran and my desire to run was very rooted in diet culture for a long time in my 20s, it was like the best way to lose weight. And then my pendulum swung to weightlifting and I'm like, "No, I am a badass. I lift weights. I'm gonna be working on getting big." Well, turns out I actually don't love weightlifting. I actually don't get that big [laughs] when I lift. And I just can't. I was just kind of forcing it. And I have these big dangly limbs and I don't know, it's just not something that comes naturally to me as it does Annie, and so now I'm back to running but it's just a total different experience for me when it's not rooted in diet, culture and weight loss. Yeah, it's a result, so Annie and I were talking about this earlier, I said, I just needed something I could be good at. And also after breaking my wrist, weightlifting is even more challenging for me. And I thought, just go running, you'll be good at it. You know, you're good at it. And that just totally changed my mindset to just start running. So yeah.

ANNIE

What are some other things do you have? Is there more on your list? I'm curious.

DEANDRA

Yes, there is. So acknowledging your resources and doing those things. And then the other thing is, sometimes in session I actually create, I don't know if you've heard about this, but it's like a wellness wheel, or it's actually created through Indigenous cultures across Canada and probably other Indigenous cultures. But this idea of our self being, you know, physical health, mental health, intellectual health, and spiritual health, right? So thinking about yourself as this person with four quadrants, but there's other models where you can think of all these other things, but I would say even creating that, looking at it and saying, "Okay, where has my focus been in regards to my health? Has it been all physical? You know, has it been all food and exercise? So what about my emotional health? Have I been connecting with that?" And so that's another way that sometimes I'll get women to look at how they're caring for themselves. And so actually writing it down.

ANNIE

I like that. I feel like I intuitively, to toot my own horn, I intuitively kind of came up with this checklist a while back for myself that when I'm feeling like salty, like in a mood and a funk and a slump. I'm like, "Am I sleeping? Am I eating well?" Which to me means like balanced meals. "Am I moving? Am I connected with nature? And am I doing some sort of like education like challenging my brain like reading, listening to a podcast?" Something. Like, these are my two -

JEN

Some cognitive self care.

ANNIE

Yes.

JEN

We actually have a we have a page in our self love journal, again, I guess it's not the wellness wheel, but we just have different columns of self care. So we have cognitive self care, physical self care, emotional self care, social self care. And just as a way for women to pause and think about what are they doing for all because you're right, we dump it into physical self care, or we call it physical self care where a lot of people are, it's actually physical self abuse in some ways of what they pursue for exercise and dieting. But yeah, just start listing it, let's expand our definition of health and self care.

DEANDRA

Yeah, and look into, the wheel is a really good way even if you're doing the checklist, imagine that it was in a circle, and it was a wheel and if all of the weight was in the one corner would that wheel roll? No.

JEN

Ooh, I like that.

DEANDRA

So it's this idea that, you don't have to have a lot, but it has to be balanced, and so the Indigenous perspective is always, it is circular, all encompassing perspective and not so linear, hierarchical, it's like, okay, if you were to put this in a circle, would it roll or, you know, roll balanced? And so how balanced are you and your care?

JEN

I love that.

ANNIE

That's really good.

DEANDRA

And so then even for women that are struggling with that, it's like, I might put that on a piece of paper, hang it up on your wall, and ask yourself every day, "Okay, what am I doing today that's going to hit at least one, maybe all four of these markers?" And so one thing could hit all four. So nature for instance, for me, I'm hiking, I'm outside, I feel,

you know, spiritually connected as in like, I feel like I'm connected to something bigger than myself emotionally, I get a break intellectually, I also reduce stimulation. So nature can hit all four things. And so you might have one activity that's in all parts of the wheel. And then those are kind of your really important activities because it means like, those are the activities that are really integrated for you.

JEN

I love that. Annie would you have an activity that you do that hits checks a lot of boxes?

ANNIE

I would say lifting or biking, like, getting outside, and like even just going to the lake and taking a walk around the park sort of thing for the reasons Deandra mentioned. What about you, Jen?

JEN

Probably similar. And one thing, this COVID stuff is really throwing me, but I used to work out with a friend, which in one part was accountability, but I just found that combining it felt like social self care for me being you know, busy working mom of three kids. It's not like I have ample social time. So combining, that checked a lot of boxes for me, was physical self care, sometimes emotional self care, because your workout partner is sometimes your therapist. And then yeah, just socializing. It felt really good. So I would say in my wellness wheel like social self care probably need to tune up. And anytime I can combine socializing with something else, I feel, yeah, really great about that.

DEANDRA

Yeah, and I would say for women to even, when they start, because let's be honest, sometimes it would be a struggle to find things that might fit into this wheel. I would say nature's a good place to start. So that for me is always like, "When's the last time you were outside? When's the last time you were outside in some trees?" [Laughs] And so like, can we make that a focus this week for you to just get outside? You don't have to exercise, but I want you to just go outside, breathe the fresh air. You know, and for some women, that's where they have to start, is a practice of getting outside regularly, maybe with their children, but most people identify as getting outside in nature as being one way that they feel connected.

JEN

Yeah, awesome.

ANNIE



Something you said really stuck out to me, Deandra. It was, what did you say? Reduced stimulation?

DEANDRA

Mm-hmm.

ANNIE

I hadn't really considered that. But I could see that as a benefit to some of the activities I already engage in, like exercise, like taking a walk, like spending time with just a friend because normally in my life I'm like, you know, caring for kids, trying to cook a meal, clean up the house, making sure the laundry is, you know, like, or work. It's like, I've got, trying to constantly multitask, right? But when I'm just in the presence of a friend for a drink some coffee, or I'm just on a walk, it's like, I'm just doing that one thing, right? I'm just in that moment. And so even though there's still some stimulation, it's not quite as much.

JEN

I've also found that after a long day of working or podcasting, for example, I've been talking all day and looking at a screen all day, going for a walk after work without any digital input, like no podcast, no music, like no phone even on me for anyone to contact me, just me going for a walk can feel just so good as well.

DEANDRA

Yeah, and then I was just gonna say, like, that is really important for us to consider regularly is how can we pull apart or put away all the other things that are taking our attention? Whether that's our phone, our work, whatever, and just simply be and for some people, that's meditation, they use that space. But for some of us that's not of interest and so going for a walk, not bringing your phone, being with a friend. And so whenever in your life, you can reduce the multitasking. Whenever that's a possibility for you, do it, because that also provides a space for more connection to yourself, the moment and the experience that you're having. And there's a lot of opportunities in our lives right now to pull us away from that. So how can we create that space in our lives for that?

ANNIE

That's awesome. You know, circling back to benefits. Real quick, I think one of the biggest benefits, brace yourselves, in connecting with myself has been better sex. My sex life has improved dramatically.

JEN

[Laughs]

ANNIE

Because I'm more like aware of what feels good. What do I need? What do I want?

DEANDRA

Yeah. And think about that, when you think about sex. What is sex? Sex is like, fully, when you are having good sex. You're fully connected with yourself, the moment, the person you're having sex with. You're not in your cognitive brain. You're not analyzing your body, you're not analyzing, Should this feel good? Should this not feel good? When you're in that space, you're not having amazing sex. You know, it's really hard. So yeah, you're right, whether that's a symptom of being connected to yourself, or maybe for some of us, that's the pathway back, maybe you have really good sex right now. Okay, great. That is a resource. Now. How do you feel when you're having really good sex? How do you feel in your body? How do you feel in yourself?

ANNIE

Yeah, but what I used to do was like spectating, it was like, I was hovering above my body during sex, like looking down, like, what's this angle? What does it, what is he thinking? What's this like? What does this feel like? How should I do this? Should I sit like that? You know, like whatever. [Laughs] Instead of just being present?

DEANDRA

Yes, I think that's such a good example Annie of how we can be outside of ourselves. And what happens when we are connected to ourselves. Sex is a perfect example of how it changes so much when you're just fully in your body, in yourself, in the moment, versus when you're in that self critical cognitive space and really trying to mediate how you're behaving versus just being yourself.

ANNIE

And that is not the first time this has come up on our podcast, when women start owning what they want and need and speaking from that space, like we've had other Balanced36ers say, "My sex life has improved." That's great.

DEANDRA

Yeah, what a revolution for women. Good sex. Come on, bring it. I think we could all use a little bit of a better sex life. But a big part of that is communicating your needs and preferences and also acknowledging what you like, what feels good. Right? So again, that's that awareness building. And so when we talk about activities, the first activity that I would say is start building the awareness about what feels good, whether that's in your

sex life, whether that's in your work, whether that's at home, like, what feels good, attune to that, acknowledge it, fully feel what it feels to feel good.

JEN

Mm-hm.

DEANDRA

All the feels. Feel it all.

JEN

There must be some blocks there for some people who have different trauma, whether it's sexual trauma or that kind of thing, even back to other bodily sensations, we hear from women that had actual food scarcity growing up, so feeling hunger is deeply triggering for them. So there must be, I guess blocks at times that really, that's where therapy comes in, where it's not just mindset work anymore, they need to dig in a little deeper on why they can't feel their body sensations.

DEANDRA

Yes. And you know, this came up in the most recent coaching call actually. And so I would say if you have a hard time feeling your body, like physical body, if you have a hard time with that, or I'm saying all these things right now to you, and you're like, "No."

JEN

Like, "I'm uncomfortable." Yeah.

DEANDRA

"I'm uncomfortable. I could never access that. When I'm having sex, I feel like I'm completely out of my body. I don't know the last time I felt integrated," I would say, "Okay, you know what, I think the first step for you might be therapy." Because the number one thing that trauma does when we have trauma, and trauma can be small, like, little T traumas, smaller traumas that happened consistently in our lives. Whether that be, like, I mean, this is a whole other can of worms, or big traumas like big incidences that were really impactful. It disconnects us to ourselves. That is what trauma does. It disconnects us from our sense of self, because there's safety in disconnecting from how we feel, because there's so much overwhelm in that moment, that it's actually better to not feel what we feel for survival. And so if we've gotten into a pattern of disconnecting from how we feel so that we can survive, even long after the trauma has happened, regaining that connection is going to be more work than just mindset. And we might be having to look at some trauma therapies like EMDR, or somatic trauma therapies, there's lots of different ways to go about it. But yeah.

JEN

Yeah. Yeah, I wanted to just note that in case anyone was, yeah.

DEANDRA

It's important.

JEN

Yeah, anything else guys? That was super fun. You know, I love talking about trauma and stuff like that. [Laughs] That was our, I think that was our first conversation. You're not an introvert, are you? You're an extrovert, Deandra?

DEANDRA

It's funny you say that, I would say I'm pretty balanced. I'm pretty much in the middle.

JEN

I'm pretty in the middle too. But I'm more on the introvert side and like, deep and meaningful conversations are my jam. And the first time you and I met up, it was like, I think we got right into this stuff. It's just like, right in, and I was like, "She's my girl."

DEANDRA

I know, I'm like, "This is a friend that I have to keep," because that is part of my wellness wheel is connecting and deep meaningful conversation, and also just like expanding the way we look at things. And I guess one of the things I really want to leave with is this idea of curiosity, like, how can we be more curious about our connection to ourselves, that it's not a linear process, that it's not something that you can just like, follow these steps and you're going to find the answer. Everybody has a unique experience of the self, and unique resources and part of our self journey, our own personal journey is figuring out what makes you tick. What makes you feel integrated, what makes you feel joyful?

JEN

You know, since you and I have talked about this, I've been looking out for that in my kids, like, rather than pushing them towards this or that activity or whatever. I've been trying to pay attention to what my children gravitate towards for activities, because I want them to experience this. I don't want them to pursue things that they think me and their dad want them to do. I want them to feel integrated with the path that they choose in life. So that's been really helpful for me as a mother. Thank you.

DEANDRA

That's a really good point, Jennifer. And I think that that's a really good way that we can support our children and our other members of our family is support them in the things that we see create joy, and we see them, you know, experience that connection or integration. And because we can see it when people are in that place, I mean, you talked about seeing it and adding we can see the energy here -

JEN

You can see it, yeah.

DEANDRA

You can see it. So foster that with each other, with your friends, with your children, it's like promote that versus promoting them to, you know, do all these other things that we're told we're supposed to be good at.

JEN

Right. My son currently, he took all his piggy bank money and bought a metal detector and is scouring our city for old nails and [laughs]. But he is totally integrated with this activity. And I'm like, "Okay, I don't understand it. I don't need to understand it. He's just, this is his adventurous explorer side."

DEANDRA

He's a treasure hunter.

JEN

He's a treasure hunter. Yes.

DEANDRA

So he's looking for that treasure. Right now it's nails. Maybe it'll be something else later.

ANNIE

Yeah. You're gonna be thankful when he shows up with some real treasure someday.  
[Laughs]

DEANDRA

Yeah, man.

JEN

There's your university education.

ALL

[Laugh]

JEN

If you go.

ANNIE

Well, this was wonderful. Thank you Deandra for your time and your expertise and sharing your knowledge and gifts with us. I appreciate it.

JEN

You are a total gift to not just the world, but we're very thankful to have you for our clients as well so thank you.

DEANDRA

Oh, my goodness, You're so welcome. And I feel, I sincerely feel immensely grateful to be part of the program that you guys are offering. I'm 100% behind it. And it is one of the best things of this year for me in following my own path, is connecting with you ladies and what you're creating. So thank you.

JEN

Awesome. Thank you.

ANNIE

Thank you.

DEANDRA

Hope you guys have a good day.

ANNIE

Yeah, we'll talk soon, okay?

DEANDRA

Yes.

JEN

Bye, guys.

ANNIE

Bye-bye.

DEANDRA

Bye.

ANNIE BREES (OUTRO)

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](https://balance365.co) to enroll in next month's coaching round. See you on the inside.