

Balance 365 Episode 149 Transcript

ANNIE BREES (INTRO)

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

Hello, my friends, you are in for a treat. Today, we are interviewing a super special Balance365 member who lives out east in Canada. She is an incredibly kind, compassionate woman who is so supportive of all the members in our community. She's also a mom and a full time therapist and she's lost and kept off 30 pounds with the Balance365 program. Like many of our guests, Phaedra talks about how it's not about the weight she lost. It's about the insights and mindset shifts and health that she's gained. It all starts in the brain, my friends. Enjoy this episode.

ANNIE

Hi, Jen, how are you?

JEN CAMPBELL

Good. How are you, Annie?

ANNIE

I am good. I'm so excited. We have a guest on the show. Who I'm not exactly sure when she joined Balance365. But I feel like I know her between the group and the Gram. Both. [Laughs] I feel like I've known her a while. Phaedra, welcome to the podcast. How are you?

PHAEDRA

Thank you. I am doing well. Thank you. How are you guys?

JEN

Good! Excited to be here with you. It's, you know what, when you run an online program, there's something about meeting the people in your program that's just, it's very fulfilling for me to interview our members.

PHAEDRA

Very happy to be part of the podcast. I've been listening and part of the group for a very long time.

JEN

When did you join?

PHAEDRA

I joined...I just checked, I joined in October 2017.

JEN

We're coming up. We gotta, we've got, you're a three year member.

PHAEDRA

I know.

JEN

Wow.

PHAEDRA

Yeah.

JEN

Can you share with us, and kind of share with our audience...Well, you could tell us a little bit about yourself and maybe share what brought you to us, how you found us, what drew you in?

PHAEDRA

Yeah. So in 2017, I saw, I live in Ottawa, Canada, and I'm a registered psychotherapist. And in 2016, 2017, I was not super happy in my job, and was thinking about ways to transition into a different aspect of the work. And so I was working at a university, and was thinking about ways to break out of there and to work more with prenatal and postpartum women. And so I came across your page and followed along on, like, all the things that you guys were sharing with the community, and decided to take a leap of faith and leave my role at the university and focus on working with people that were trying to conceive, struggling to conceive, and then struggling with the transition to motherhood. And so that's when I found all of you, and really found a job, an aspect of psychotherapy that I never experienced at the university, like the connection that I have with my clients now. You just get to see such a full picture of their lives and their journey and to be walking with them in in that process has been really transformative for me. And so I do credit Balance365 and Healthy Habits Happy Moms was helping me to take that leap and find my place in psychotherapy.

JEN

So you must have seen through our community, how many people needed what you wanted to offer, right? Like I mean, working even on this side, and now I'm sure you've experienced it through your work, it's an...I've explained this, I've talked about it at conferences. When you're on our side, and we work with people individually, but we also see what's happening with the collective.

PHAEDRA

Yeah.

JEN

And so many similarities. And I remember I was speaking at a conference two years ago, and I said women are hurting, like women are really hurting. And I mean that they're all hurting and everybody thinks they're alone in that hurt. And I do think diet culture teaches us that in some ways, that we are just a special kind of failure. And I think social media probably has an impact on how lonely and alone some of us feel with those feelings. But from our perspective, we're adding, I've worked with thousands of women over the last six years, it's that we are all hurting, it is a collective hurt. And I think that's one thing that could be, can be quite powerful about our community, and our coaching program. And also we do group coaching. So women get to sit in on intimate conversations. And they think, "Wow, that's me, too." Right? And that's very powerful, I have found.

PHAEDRA

Yeah, I mean, when I stumbled across the community, it wasn't just researching different areas of psychotherapy. Like I needed that, too, I needed to feel like I was not so alone, that other people understood the impact of motherhood on your day to day life, and the history of dieting on motherhood and relationships and friendships and how it just takes up all that extra space, that you don't have to give. Like, your life is already full without all that diet noise. And so, like, quiet that in the background and really live fully. So it was it was a savior for me. [Laughs] And it's like I sneak in those Balance365 messages into my sessions and refer them to the group.

JEN

[Laughs] You're, like, "All or something."

PHAEDRA

[Laughs] "Just do something."

JEN

[Laughs]

ANNIE

Slowly infiltrating the globe.

JEN

That's awesome. The osmosis of Balance365. That's awesome. So Phaedra, do you have a dieting history?

PHAEDRA

Do I ever.

JEN

"Do I." [Laughs]

PHAEDRA

I was thinking about this in preparation for the podcast. And it began before I knew what dieting was. And diet culture and fatphobia has been part of my life since I was a child. Messages around larger bodies have been pervasive in my family for as long as I can remember. You know, as a, I really do mean like, as a child, like, I have a picture of myself when I was four. And I'm like at a ballet recital where I am looking very not ballet in my posture, and like sticking out my stomach. Like I was just living my best four year old life. But I remember the comments around that picture from when I was really young. And then that was just, it paved the way for all the conversations around body image and being big, being not acceptable and, "be careful what you eat" in my family. And then that just of course, snowballed as like a teenager restricting and bingeing and trying to cut carbs and trying to exercise myself skinny and trying everything under the sun just to take control of my body and to fit in and do what was right. According to my family and -

JEN

And be accepted and be loved and -

PHAEDRA

All of that.

JEN

Yeah. Did the women in your family struggle as well?

PHAEDRA

Yeah. My mom lives in a larger body. My grandmothers lived in larger bodies. And yet, so my mom was not someone who spoke about her body or other people's bodies. So I did have some protection in there. But all the other women. [Laughs]

JEN

Yeah.

PHAEDRA

It was just, lots of other people in my life that were very close to me, and really firm messages about big, being fat. And so even though my mother herself didn't speak much, people spoke about her and how that wasn't acceptable and how this person wasn't acceptable. And, "Oh, they used to be so pretty."

JEN

Oh, totally "She let herself go," and yes, it's just disgusting. Yeah.

PHAEDRA

Yeah. Now, with the knowledge that I have now, I can reflect on it and see just how toxic it was.

JEN

Absolutely. I remember after having my first baby and seeing my body after and stretchmarks and this anxiety and just terror I had of going, "I can't become one of those women who let themselves go after they have children." And just literally having those words come to me and now going, "Where did that come from?" I heard that repeatedly before I even had children, about these women who let themselves go. And yeah, and it's just, it's like we're primed. Whether you've been hit with diet culture or dieting. I mean, and I did, I was 19. Or sorry, I was 17 when I did my first diet, but I feel like I was being set up from a young woman to when I had kids to crash very hard mentally, physically, after I had a baby, right? Like, diet culture is intense, but diet culture amongst postpartum women is like, hyper intense. Yeah.

ANNIE

Phaedra, what was, or what were, your behaviors, your approach to food and fitness before Balance365?

PHAEDRA

Yeah, I have always been someone who like, I'm pretty active. So like, my exercise habits have always been pretty stable, you know, they wane and they come and go, but for the most part, exercise is something that I really enjoy, and that I make time for and that I prioritize. And the part that I struggled with the most has always been nutrition. And so I would ignore that part, and just like double down on exercise, like that, like, I don't control everything. And so you know, I would just do what I liked. And so, "Okay, I feel a little fluffy, I'm just gonna do extra workouts. And that'll make me feel better," even though I mean, I know that exercise cannot erase all of the poor nutrition choices that I could have made. And those times I knew that, but I was not ready to tackle nutrition. If I did make any nutritional changes, it was always all or nothing. It was go all in, fail in four days. And then just, you know, start again on Monday. You know, "Oh, I should cut out this particular food or cut out that food and then still do the exercise. And like, that'll just hammer home some results. I'll start again on Monday." Obviously, that's not the way to be successful.

JEN

Or to be healthy, right?

PHAEDRA

Not successful, not healthy, just totally not doing anything. And so yeah, it was not until coming into the program and learning more about body acceptance. And so exercising without the intent of losing weight, just exercising for the fun of it. And I remember hearing you guys, Jen, specifically talk about looking at like the long game and wanting to lift my grandchildren and like that, oh, yeah, that makes a lot of sense. So I'm not just exercising for my body today, exercising for my body 30, 40 years from now. To be able to have that longevity. And so, I kind of got a little bit more gentle with practices around exercise, and looking at it not so much as like looking for immediate gains, but looking for that longevity. And that kind of soothed things a little bit. And then, over time, being able to introduce some nutritional changes that I've made.

JEN

Now with your dieting history, was that difficult for you to introduce nutrition changes? And just on, just a history note for anyone listening, it's that we see that there is diet culture that has women very hyper focused on micromanaging everything, trying different things, trying to find the answer, the secret. And then on the other end, we have, we often see a pendulum swing, and it's when they are eating all the food. They're in rebellion of diets, and they're going to eat whatever they want. And did you experience that or? You did. [Laughs] Oh yeah, that was a firm, "Yes, I did."

PHAEDRA

Oh, yes, I sure did. And so I think, part of body acceptance, I really let go of all the rules that I had told myself in the past and kind of went, you know what, like, relaxed, and so maybe I relaxed a little too hard. Maybe I didn't, I don't know.

JEN

You did what you had to do.

PHAEDRA

Yeah, it was part of the process. And I kind of just like really pushed control. And yeah, I certainly had the pendulum swing in the opposite direction. And I indulged, you know, more than I had ever before. And so that was hard to witness and to allow myself to do but, from all of the messaging that I have heard in the group. But I knew that this was part of the process. And I just like had to just relax into the process. And so yeah, I swung the pendulum in that way, for a little while, I don't know, I really have no idea what the timeline is -

JEN

That's okay.

PHAEDRA

But I just let it swing. And then eventually, I felt ready to tackle nutrition in a way that I never had before. Just really gentle, one step at a time, all or something, balancing one meal at a time, cutting down the snacking, because I was someone who followed rules that were like, you know, six small meals a day and snacking all the time, but not too much of this, not too much of that, I just kind of cut all of those rules out and sort of started with meals, just get some balanced meals, and just do one thing at a time and taking things that one step at a time was really the way to make that gradual change. And just, that was the way that they started to shift for me just one step at a time.

JEN

And that's such a kindness to offer, that we can offer ourselves, right? It's a patient, it's the kindness, we would offer our children of saying, "Just a little at a time, it's okay, as much as you can handle. It's okay." And just gently moving forward.

PHAEDRA

Right. It was in part of the acceptance, it was letting go of all of the shame, that really made a big difference for me, letting go of the shame around my body, the shame around my history with dieting, the shame around the messages that I received as a child, forgiving, and healing all of that allowed me to look at nutrition without the emotional baggage anymore. I could look at food as food.

JEN

I think, too, when you start forgiving the women in your life, it's like, you see that we're all part of this system that is very hurtful to all of us. And then we start hurting each other with it. And one thing that I've looked at, as far as the way I see the behaviors of women in my life as a child, I think they were just projecting onto me what they thought I needed to become to not hurt like they hurt.

PHAEDRA

Exactly. I think that's exactly what was happening in my family, too.

JEN

Like, they actually wanted the best for me.

PHAEDRA

Right. Just, it was a protective measure, executed pretty poorly.

JEN

Yeah. [Laughs]

PHAEDRA

And effort to protect me from that pain, from being different, from being too big and struggling in whatever way they thought would happen. And so I can see that now. And I can move past it. I can kind of, I can see it. I can accept it. And I can see where they're coming from, despite all of the pain that happened along the way.

JEN

Mm hmm. Yeah. So Phaedra, you did end up losing 30 pounds? I think you shared with me, is that right? Do I have that right?

PHAEDRA

Yeah.

JEN

And how do you feel about that, as somebody who has, you know, you found acceptance in this larger body, and you have left diet culture behind? And like, how does that feel for you to have lost that weight? And how do you, because for anyone listening, the other kind of polarizing conversation that happens is, and I think this is actually just part of that pendulum swing of, it's like you want, it's like all the weight loss. And that's all you can think about. And then it becomes

almost anti weight loss, like, even the thought of weight loss is just super triggering. And how do you, what is your language around that? And how do you talk to yourself about that?

PHAEDRA

Yeah, I think that that's been something that was surprisingly confusing for me, after having noticed that I was like, losing some weight. And it happened. It happened without intent. And that was really discombobulating for me, and I, you know, so I took my weight in December of last year, and kind of went, "Okay, that's where it is." And I went to the doctor when he heard the number and kinda went, "Sure, fine, that's great." And then kind of went on this journey of, you know, consistency and balancing my plates and taking it real slow, one meal at a time. And then eventually weight started coming off. And I would weigh myself, you know, once a month just to kind of check in what are we at, cool, was able to kind of release any emotions around, like, it's just data. It's just a number. It doesn't mean anything, it's fine. And then all of a sudden, it just kept snowballing. I was like, "What is happening?" [Laughs] I honestly was worried that something was wrong with me. So I made an appointment with my doctor to have a little blood drawn, I thought, well, surely this doesn't really happen without effort. And I've put in so much effort in years past and gotten no results. And so all of a sudden, I'm not trying and things are happening. And that doesn't make any sense. So I went to the doctor, had some blood drawn, and she said, "Fine, everything is very good. You're quite healthy." And I, that's when I kind of had to stop and go, "Oh, okay."

JEN

"This is what they've been talking about." Yeah. [Laughs]

PHAEDRA

This is working. And so I had to, you know, my clothes were fitting bigger, and I started getting compliments from people. And, yeah, that inner dialogue was a little bit confusing. And as I had come to a place of acceptance of my body, and like, it is what it is. And that's just how she's going to be. And so now that it looks different, I had to find a way to reconcile that difference in my mind that I don't want to be happy about this new look of my body. Because that would make me feel or sound, you know, derogatory towards the old version of my body, like, I loved her then, I love her now, how can I appreciate these changes without disparaging where I had been before, and so I really had to spend a lot of time thinking about that. And kind of evaluating what has changed, it's not just my outside that has changed, my insides have changed so much, like, releasing all that shame. Like I spoke about healing those relationships with, you know, family members who like who deceased, but like healing my side of those relationships, and, you know, working on myself getting regular exercise, eating well, lots of sleep, all of those things have changed. And if those things have impacted my body positively, great. But it's not just my body, it's about all the habits. Right?

JEN

I try and think about, and this is the way I've framed it to other women, it's that, so first of all, there needs to be an acceptance that our bodies will ever not stop changing, right, like, bodies just change. That's what they do. That's what they're designed to do, is adapt. And we age, and

our circumstances can shift right? What Annie and I want for women is to get off these crazy roller coasters of you know, weight up, weight down, micromanaging, but even, you know, my weight shifts within a 10 pound range, but my weight used to shift in a 50 pound range, right? Like the stress of that is gone. So we don't reach a goal weight and stay there, you don't, you know, you've lost 30 pounds, but you may find you're up five pounds next year, or you might be down five pounds next year, like, you'll find a new range where your weight just gently rises and falls like a tide I would say. But also what I see, the journey of Balance365 for a lot of women is reclaiming the body they always would have grown into, had they never been given these ideas about their bodies that their bodies were wrong. Had they never started yo-yo dieting. And that's very much what it felt like for me, that I had been very, very lean in times of my life. And then I had carried more weight than what was comfortable on my frame. And it was just like, "No, I deserve to have the body that I was born into and would have always grown into had I not had this, like toxic diet culture, having me ping pong all over the place with my weight."

PHAEDRA

Yeah, yeah, I certainly feel that. You know, when I was 30 pounds heavier, it was as a result of all the dieting, it wasn't the body that I would have had naturally, it was all the messaging and kind of the confusion around food and the urgency to make changes that drove my weight higher.

JEN

Yeah.

PHAEDRA

Yeah. And so now that it doesn't feel like an emergency anymore, it doesn't feel like I'm trying to sprint towards a particular number on the scale, now that I'm just kind of relaxed into the habits that I have now. I mean, yeah, sure. It could go up and I'm sure it could go down. And I think that I will be okay no matter what.

JEN

And the other thing is that, accepting there's so many benefits to doing that work of acceptance, when you're in a larger body because of the messages, I mean, when you're the heaviest you've ever been, you are living in a state that you have feared for, you know, your whole life likely, and accepting yourself at a time when everybody around you is saying you're unacceptable, is so powerful. So powerful. And what are we really accepting if we're only accepting ourselves in a certain size limit that we're, you know, allowed to be, right? What are we actually accepting?

ANNIE

Yeah, Phaedra, one of the things that sticks out to me when I hear you talk is you, and I don't know if this is intentional, but I hear you talk about your body as if it's like, an element outside of you. And it almost feels like a really like, loving, but separate part of you that you could like, you're talking about her like, yeah, and this was this version of her and this is her current version, and you love them both. And I just think that that's so beautiful, because we get, women get so attached to our bodies as part of our identities and our worth, that we don't end

up caring for them very lovingly, you know, because we make it a reflection about our discipline, and our willpower and all that stuff. But I hear you talk about your physical state as just a piece of you, like a separate piece of you. I think that's really, really beautiful.

PHAEDRA

Yeah, 'cuz that's not all there is, like, my body isn't me. My body is part of me. Sure, there's lots of parts of me that are not physically represented. And so I can't put all of my work into this just one piece of who I am.

JEN

It's like having all your eggs in one basket, in a basket that we can't even control that much. So I used to, you know, my appearance used to be everything to me. And if I woke up with a pimple my day would be like, worst day ever. I have a zit. [Laughs] Where now I'm going, "Look, my appearance is part of me. But it's more like, it's more like a sliver of me now because I have so many qualities and characteristics and, you know, flaws." Really, we all have flaws. But that's all of who I am. And now it's just, it's just wild to me how much my life revolved around how I looked. It destroyed my day, or made me have a great day, like it's just more, it's just insignificant to me now.

ANNIE

And now we get on social media. And I'm like, Look at our breakout." [Laughs] "Or my terrible hair day." Like -

JEN

"Hey, look at my zits!" Yeah. [Laughs]

ANNIE

[Laughs] Like, let's just call it out as part of being human. Right?

PHAEDRA

Yeah, there's something really beautiful about that, that it's not, it's not all about the outside anymore. And yeah, I can acknowledge my flaws. And that's okay. It's just a piece of the puzzle. It's not the whole puzzle. Yeah, it's normal.

JEN

Has anything shifted around maybe how you feel about other women? Or how you perceive other women? Or, yeah.

PHAEDRA

Yeah, I mean, coming to acceptance of myself. I mean, I always thought, you know, I don't judge anybody else harshly. I mean, I try very hard not to, but looking at myself under a microscope and kind of examining my values, and who I am as a person, and who do I want to be? And what kind of example do I want to set for my boys? And you know, placing value on physical appearance alone is certainly not the way that I want them to walk through the world. So, we

can't use any negative language for people's bodies. Like, just, that's definitely not what I would want them to be doing. And so I've not really spoken about my body with them, good or bad. But I've made very conscious efforts to separate, people inside from people outside. And so I've been able to really hold on to that for myself and judgment of other people as well. And really separating out worth from physical appearance. I just don't see that as being equatable in any way. So yeah, it's definitely changed how I feel about other people, how I look at other people, how I just I feel like I've settled into this place of like, really acceptance and love of all sizes over the last five or so years.

JEN

Awesome. I think, Annie, it's your story. I think you've said every time you walked into a room you were, you're sizing up other women.

ANNIE

Yeah, it was constantly like, "Am I bigger, am I smaller? Am I prettier? Am I uglier? Like where am I in this lineup?" Like, it was a constant ranking.

PHAEDRA

Yeah.

JEN

Now you're like the Oprah meme. Like, "You're beautiful!"

ANNIE

"You're awesome!"

JEN

"You're beautiful!"

ANNIE

"Everyone's awesome!"

ALL

[Laugh]

JEN

We're all number one!

PHAEDRA

[Laughs]

ANNIE

Exactly. Yes. Exactly. Which feels like, and honestly, then it's allowed me to have, I don't see women as potential threats anymore. Like they're, there's like, there's nothing threatening about

a beautiful, confident woman who, regardless of what she's, where it used to be like, "Who does she think she is? She, you know, she thinks she's hot stuff wearing that," or like, "Oh, like, oh, that's pretty ballsy. You know, like, she would wear that. Really?" That was me just perceiving a confident woman as a threat.

JEN

Yeah. And you needed to tear her down in some way in your mind to -

ANNIE

Yeah, like, give her a little check. You know, because that's what I was, like you said, Phaedra. That microscope that you were using on myself, I used it on other women.

PHAEDRA

Yeah. I mean, for me, at least, I certainly did that as well. And you know, in my circle of friends, I have always been the larger one. Like, from when I was small to you know, today, I'm probably in the largest size of my circle of friends. And always feeling a little insecure about that. And like, how I measure up and how I look in photos when I'm standing amongst my friends. And you know, worrying about that. But yeah, I've been really, thankfully able to let that go. It doesn't matter -

JEN

Doesn't matter.

PHAEDRA

- to me. It never mattered to them. It doesn't matter.

JEN

Mm hmm.

ANNIE

Freedom.

JEN

Awesome. Freedom! So Phaedra, tell us, this is my favorite question. So is what you're doing, does it feel sustainable?

PHAEDRA

Yeah. Yeah, totally. I feel...So I was thinking about this as well, before we hit record. And I never would have thought that I would get to this place of freedom around my body image around nutritional habits, easing into exercise for joy, and for like mental health benefits more so than the physical, but I never would have thought that this would be me. And I know, I did buy into Balance365 three years ago. But I think that there's probably some part of me that hoped that I would come close to some kind of freedom. And I would see people on Facebook and I would see them going, you know, like, "I never thought this would be me." I thought I was the

exception who would never get here and I thought, "Okay, well, good for her. That's never gonna happen to me. My stuff is too gross and too ugly. And my wounds are too raw. There's no way I'm getting there." And then, all of a sudden, I'm here and I feel lighter emotionally. I feel happier day to day than I have in a really long time. I feel connected to myself. I feel connected to those around me. I feel that if I can continue this way, then I don't know where I'll be in a year from now. But the habits are there, they are my foundation and it's really helped me to tap into a life that I didn't ever anticipate.

ANNIE & JEN

Beautiful.

ANNIE

Jinx. I said that, too.

JEN

[Laughs]

ANNIE

Phaedra, do you have any words of wisdom, advice, encouragement, for women listening who haven't joined and are thinking about, maybe they're on the fence? What would you say to them?

PHAEDRA

I would say join. I would tell them that the community that will surround them is like nothing else on the internet, it's full of love and acceptance and going through, like going through the Balance365 materials, really tapping into your values, thinking about who you are and who you want to be, taking this journey one step at a time, and it really, one baby step at a time. It's made such a difference in my life. I, like I said, I would never have imagined feeling this level of freedom. I would never have thought that I could land here. And so if anyone listening is thinking about it, I would highly encourage them to jump in. It's wonderful.

JEN

Thank you.

ANNIE

Awesome. That's what I was hoping you would say.

PHAEDRA

Okay, yeah.

ANNIE

[Laughs] You nailed it. Jen, anything else? Any other questions?

JEN

I don't think so. It's been a joy to have you on, Phaedra. Thank you.

PHAEDRA

Thank you for inviting me on. This is like an out of body experience talking to you. I've loved the program every step of the way. And I've admired you guys from afar for a long time. So I very much appreciate having the chance to talk with you both.

JEN

Thank you. I hope we can meet you one day, like, get together, post COVID retreat.

ANNIE

Mm hmm.

PHAEDRA

I would love it.

JEN

That would be so fun.

ANNIE

Agreed. Yeah. All right. Well, thank you, my friends. We'll talk soon, okay?

JEN

Thanks, Phaedra.

PHAEDRA

Bye.

ANNIE (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 on over to balance365.co to join coaching.