

Episode 171 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 1000s 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, Annie here. Thanks so much for joining us on Balance365 Life Radio. Today we are talking about self-control, the health and wellness industry's favorite phrase, am I right? And we hear versions of this everywhere. "Why can't I have more self-control around food?" - "If I only had more willpower, more dedication, have more motivation." My friends, you actually can have more self-control around food, but it's not with the ways that are traditionally taught by the health and wellness gurus out there. Today, we're going to share four reasons you don't have self-control around food and how to change that. But before we get into it, make sure you grab our free guide, "Five Reasons You're Craving Sugar and What to Do About It." You can find the link to grab that in our show notes. Enjoy this episode, my friends.

ANNIE

Jen, are you ready to talk about this juicy topic?

JEN CAMPBELL

I am.

ANNIE

This episode is gonna answer the very common question we get, which is, "Why don't I have self-control around food? Like, why can't I just, why can't I just control myself a little bit more?"

JEN

Yes, so 99.9% of people that we meet and work with think that they have a self-control issue, right? And we are going to go into the four reasons that they feel like they don't have self-control around food.

ANNIE

And these are the four most common reasons that we would see in women, right? Maybe not all-encompassing, but definitely the four most common.

JEN

Definitely, there's definitely things outside of this that people might be struggling with. But these are the four biggest rocks that we've seen over the years, most common.

ANNIE

Yes. So if you want more self-control around food, listen to these four reasons and then adjust accordingly.

JEN

Yes, so the number one reason you don't have self-control around food is because you live in a state of deprivation. And out of these four, this one is the most foundational. If you're new here, welcome to a health and wellness team that tells you the truth. Amazing, right? [Laughs] And the truth is deprivation is what is causing a lot of people's inability to control themselves around food. And there's two parts of deprivation, we cover in Balance365. There's physiological deprivation, which is literally denying yourself food. So you're starving or cutting yourself off from a food group unnecessarily, like outside of medical restrictions. So maybe you just, you don't eat carbs anymore, your body is going to have a physiological response to that. And the second would be psychological deprivation, which is essentially denying yourself the joy of food. So study after study show that people who approach nutrition or weight loss from a place of deprivation, or taking away, they end up more consumed with thinking about the food than they ever had before. And this can last for years.

ANNIE

Which you've probably experienced, right? If you say, "I'm not going to eat said food," you're like -

JEN

Or I'm not gonna eat, period.

ANNIE

[Laughs]

JEN

Right. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yeah, you cannot stop thinking about food.

JEN

Exactly. So our bodies are wired for survival. And there's some essentials that we need to survive. Our bodies need to be warm, we need to breathe, we need to eat and drink. And so there are systems in place, in our bodies, to make sure that we survive. So if you stop breathing, so if you just tried to hold your breath, there are systems in place in your body that make it impossible and eventually you're gasping for air, right? And if you're going hungry, there are systems in place to make sure that you find food, which came in very handy for us during

days of famine, where we would just, you're thinking about food all the time, you're hyper-aware of smells of food. And that's all because your body's trying to find food to keep you alive.

ANNIE

Today, not so much.

JEN

Today, not so much.

ANNIE

Hopefully.

JEN

But you know, when someone's on a 1200 calorie a day diet - look, and I used to do this all the time, extremely low-calorie diets, I would fast, I used to be one of those intermittent fasters. And it is excruciating to drive by a McDonald's right? Now that I don't starve myself, I can drive by McDonald's all day long. It's just not an issue for me anymore. I'm not saying it doesn't smell good. But I don't, I'm not overwhelmed with a compulsion to go get food, right? If you have certain foods that are off-limits, and are labeling them good or bad, or you have a very all-or-nothing attitude towards nutrition, then you probably also will struggle with self-control. And this is the psychological deprivation that I mentioned. You're just so damn devoid of joy in your nutrition choices. So, typical situation, maybe somebody in a social situation, maybe their partner's eating something that they've told themselves is bad and off-limits, and they can't have. And maybe they've even told themselves that they don't have control around that food, which will reaffirm the behavior of losing control. And so you're sitting there, your partner's having it, you have all these thoughts, good, bad. You can't just have one bite, you just, you'll lose it and you'll eat it all. And you might have six because well, you got started. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Mm-hm, mm-hm.

JEN

Yeah, start again, tomorrow, you're just gonna have all these bad foods. So, those two things, if you are living in a state of physiological or psychological deprivation with food, then you likely also try struggle with self-control around food.

ANNIE

Yes. So what that reminds me of is my early, early gym days, I was that typical brown rice, chicken, broccoli meal, which -

JEN

[Sarcastically] Yay.

BOTH

[Laugh]

ANNIE

Physiologically sustained me, right? I felt full and satisfied. But I was missing out on some joy of the foods that I actually enjoy eating, that taste good to me.

JEN

For sure. So you probably had some of these issues that we're talking about.

ANNIE

Yup.

JEN

And you can learn more about deprivation in Episode 140, we will link it in the show notes if you want to do a deep dive there. The number two reason that you don't have self-control around food could be because your environment is full of triggers. So this personal responsibility culture we live in totally ignores that studies show human beings are massively influenced by their environments. It's not easy to change your habits. But we can set ourselves up for success by learning to create environments that set us up for success. And there may be times you find yourself indulging or not following through on some habit change commitment. And you're coming down hard on yourself when that's happening. But here's the thing. If you are living in the same environment where you created all these undesirable habits, then there's going to be a lot of triggers in that environment to go back to those old habits.

ANNIE

Yeah. And when you say triggers, Jen, just to clarify, we mean, like, the reminder to do the behavior.

JEN

Yes. Sorry, not the emotional trigger. Yeah, just, I'm speaking about trigger as a reminder, just like when you see a red light, you're reminded to hit the brakes to stop.

ANNIE

Mm-hmm.

JEN

There's a belief out there that successful people have more willpower than those who are unsuccessful. Right? That's what we hear all the time, we hear people saying, "I wish I had more self-control around food, like you know, this person or that person." But that's wrong. So studies show that people who are successful just rely on willpower less, right? So if you think of willpower like a muscle that gets tired, and if you live in an environment that is full of, whether it's habit triggers, or just super calorie-dense foods, where you're being offered food all the time, etc., your muscle might be tired by noon, where somebody who doesn't have all those triggers

or reminders, their muscle, it'll be six o'clock at night and their muscle might just be getting tired or whatever.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

I hope that makes sense with how I'm explaining it.

ANNIE

Yeah, I think it does. I just, I think the takeaway is it's so important to set up your environment to support the behaviors you want because if you aren't living consistently, presently, mindfully, and intentionally, your habits are going to win out, and you're autopilot. And if these are, these are habits that you want to do less of, because of your environment, then a way to resolve that is to curate your environment.

JEN

Yes. So make, have less temptations in your environment. Right? So to set your environment up for success, think about decreasing the barriers between you and your desired habits to make them easier, and increasing barriers between you and your undesirable habits to make your undesirable habits harder. And here's some examples. If you have a goal to decrease the amount of time you spend on social media, how can you set your environment up for success? How can you create barriers between you and social media? For me, I've removed social media apps from my phone, so I don't have quick access to them anymore. If I want to use Facebook or Instagram, I have to use it on my desktop. And that's actually led to a significant decrease in my doom scrolling habits.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

Another one is if you want to eat more fruits and vegetables, make them easy to consume. Right? Often we are consuming calorie-dense food because they come in convenience form and they're handy and they're there. So wash, cut up, put away, put them at eye level, your fruits and veggies. Our community has become pretty famous for the veggie tray revolution. And that's because I keep like an old Tupperware veggie tray in my fridge, right at eye level, full of like cut and washed veggies and it's there at all times. Usually with a side of ranch.

ANNIE

Yeah, I have to tell a short story. We had some leftover candy from a family gathering in our house and we put all of our, I usually try to do the same with chop and wash, prepare fruits and veggies and then move them up to a level so nothing really is in those fruits and veggies containers in our fridge. Well I put the candy in there. And I totally forgot about it. Everyone did.

JEN

Right. So, traditional fridges, you're right, that have like the fruit and vegetable drawers. It puts your fruits and fruits and vegetables out of sight.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

Yeah, I should put my coffee creamer in there.

BOTH

[Laugh]

ANNIE

Or your candies.

JEN

Or my candy.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

Yeah. And another thing, I actually, this is a newer one for me in this past year, is I bought a big basket. And I keep a fruit basket on my island counter now kind of front and center. And as soon as I started doing that, our whole family's fruit consumption went up. So it's just so easy to grab an apple or an orange or banana for a snack. Yeah, and then with berries, I hate when berries go bad because they're pricey up here in Canada. [Laughs] And so, I always wash those, as soon as I get them washed, dried, get them in the fridge so that we actually eat them.

ANNIE

Yep.

JEN

And when I do that, we do, right? So again, creating barriers and removing barriers. If you want to decrease sweets, treats, or alcohol consumption, as Annie just talked about, get them out of sight. So Annie moved hers to the drawer of her fridge, I've moved sweets to a high cupboard above our fridge, where I can't see them. My kids can't see them, my partner can't see them. And when they're out of sight, out of mind.

ANNIE

Yep.

JEN

And Annie shared on previous podcasts that she stopped buying boxes of wine a couple years ago. So now the wine's not at eye level, it's not easy to pour glass after glass. And she just decreased easy access to it, which has led to a decrease in her consumption.

ANNIE

Yeah, I know this can be tricky, especially the whole barrier of just not having it in the house. You know, that can feel like restriction to people. And that's not our intent here. The intent is to just help you be more mindful. "Do I really want this? Or do I want this as a result of my environment?" Because it's front and center and it's in my face. So we always say, if you really want ice cream, but don't want to keep it in the house, you can likely go get it.

JEN

Go get it. Yeah, and of course, this is a sort of a personal journey. So I used to think I would never have self-control around ice cream. And now I can keep it in the freezer all the time. And I'm not thinking about it. And that came down to my relationship with myself in with food and how I talk to myself. And eventually I just, ice cream didn't have the allure that it did before, but I think it's unrealistic message to put out there that you can do that with every single food or substance, right? Like, and you have to go case by case here. Every person is different. And it can even change depending on the season of life you're in. And so keeping it out of the house can be a very good strategy, if you find keeping it in the house is not helping you moderate it. But again, we always, always, always preach this relationship with food being foundational to this, if you're using it as a tool or a weapon. But what creating barriers does is it creates kind of that mindful pause so that you can ask yourself if you really want it. And if keeping something out of sight leads to a decrease in your consumption, whether that's consuming social media or consuming sweets, were you using it in a valuable way to begin with? Right? Do you really need it?

ANNIE

Half the time, you might not even notice that -

JEN

Yeah, totally.

ANNIE

- you did without it, right?

JEN

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, so what I'm saying here is, you may feel like you have no self-control. But if you spent some time setting up your environment to support your desired habits, you may realize you actually do.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

The third thing I want to talk about, the third reason you don't have self-control around food, is your mindset. So this is somewhat related to what we just talked about psychological deprivation. All or nothing thinking, or assigning moral value to food leads to a person having massive food scarcity mindsets. And that means food starts to feel like a precious resource that's going to be taken away from you at any moment. So when you get access to it, you want to hoard it, or eat it. And so I just mentioned that story with ice cream. I felt like I'll never have self-control around food, or I'll never have self-control around ice cream in particular, ice cream was my thing. And that's because of the way I treated ice cream. Like it was, like, the worst food. You know, it was high fat, high sugar, high, like you know all the things. So whenever I had access to ice cream, I was eating the whole thing.

ANNIE

Yes. Sounds familiar.

BOTH

[Laugh]

JEN

And that mindset is a big driver of compulsive eating. So what if you had an abundant mindset? Right? So and again, this comes down to your relationship with your food, your body, yourself. What if you weren't an all-or-nothing thinker and realize that all foods can be good foods, and that you are still a good person after you eat cake. So this would be in line with having a food abundant mindset. No panic is necessary if you have, can have any food at any time. And for me, it was a game-changer. When I realized that I can have ice cream on a Tuesday, or Saturday, or for breakfast, if I really want, and then all of a sudden, that's when it really, the allure really started going away for me.

ANNIE

I think if you wanted to get a little bit more objective, you know, we always talk about food and how it has some emotional connection or can have a lot of emotional connection. You know, think about how you feel when you are on the receiving end of a limited sale. Right?

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

For this time, only you can get this special price. There might be some additional incentive for bonuses or saving money, but that's similar to what women experience when they label foods as off-limits. And then they allow those foods for a temporary setting. It's like, "Oh my god, I gotta get it right now."

JEN

Yeah, yeah.

ANNIE

Because it's gonna be gone. [Laughs]

JEN

Yeah. So if you see this online shopping deal across your feed, like, I'm looking at some summer clothes right now. And if I have to pay full price, I'm a little more mindful. If a sale came on, I would probably go, "Oh my gosh, these are on sale. I have to have them."

ANNIE

"Right now."

JEN

Yes, yeah, very similar. So most people give themselves two options when it comes to food choices, yes or no. Now or never. And we think you should try yes or later, or now or later. Right? So that no option can just spiral people into that food scarcity mindset. And giving yourself a now or later option can keep you in a food abundant mindset. Because the truth is you can have the cake or the ice cream or the glass of wine later. You can, you absolutely can, and being calm about this will keep you reasonable in making rational, reasonable choices for yourself. When you get yourself in a state of panic about food, that's when your behaviors become chaotic, that's when you lose control.

ANNIE

That's when you're buying all the dresses.

JEN

Exactly.

BOTH

[Laugh]

JEN

So number four, the fourth reason that you don't have self-control around food could be because you have lost sight of why your choices matter. So meaning is a big deal, understanding your why and keeping that close, knowing very clearly and concisely why you make choices, that can sometimes feel like sacrifices can change everything. Because change does require compromise. And a lot of our listeners have weight loss goals. And I always say weight loss requires compromise, because it will require change. And compromise can feel like sacrifice and sometimes it is. And sacrifice is not sustainable, unless it has meaning. We make all kinds of compromises in life, like partnering, can feel like, well, I'd say partnering is full of compromises. Having kids can feel really hard some days, right? But if you have the privilege to choose those things, then you make the compromises for them, right? And you even, you might even find joy in those compromises. Because you're working towards something greater for yourself, a bigger vision or version that you have for your life, right? It's meaningful to you, the sacrifices you

make, to partner, to have kids, feel meaningful to you. And we all get to decide what's meaningful for us, where there may be people listening and their careers are very meaningful for them. So they will make the sacrifices for their careers. Other people, no. So they won't, and that's okay, because we all get to choose. Hopefully you have the privilege to choose.

ANNIE

Yeah, this is so important, because this is what will make the discomfort of change tolerable, or more tolerable.

JEN

Absolutely, absolutely. But you know, and this is, again, if you're losing self-control around food, what I see a lot of is people get the F-it's, like, screw it. And that's because they've lost sight of the meaning of the sacrifice.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

And we have to know that meaningful and fulfilling lives don't always look like fun and don't always make us happy in the moment. Like, I know why I pass on cake sometimes. I know why I pumped the brakes on my alcohol consumption a couple of years ago. And the reasons are important to me, even when it isn't fun, which is why I'll endure some discomfort for it. Right? Like I've been in many situations now where it was uncomfortable to pass on wine. But I did it because it was important to me.

ANNIE

For sure. I mean, I think that's true for anything in life. I can't think of anything that I'm really proud of. That didn't come without some discomfort, some challenges, some obstacles, it certainly, there aren't certainly situations where I look back and think that was fun and easy and cozy all the time.

JEN

Yeah, so was your weight loss, was that without sacrifice?

ANNIE

Oh, no, no, no, it came with, I guess it didn't, I don't recall it feeling like a lot of sacrifice. But I did give up a lot of things.

JEN

Right.

ANNIE

But I was willing to.

JEN

You were willing to.

ANNIE

Yeah, in favor of something that I wanted more.

JEN

Yeah. And I mean, one of the biggest questions we're asked is, "How do I lose weight without restriction?" And that's kind of it, right? Like, it's when the decisions you're making, I mean, maybe they feel like a sacrifice to you, maybe they don't, but the changes you're making feel meaningful to you.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

And you do them, even though you're going to experience some discomfort for them, or you're willing to experience some discomfort for them.

ANNIE

And I think regardless, if it feels like a compromise or sacrifice either way, what it really boils down to is that you're willing, like, I will sacrifice this in the short term, because I want this in the long term.

JEN

Yes. So if you find yourself kind of floating aimlessly, maybe you're overeating. You keep breaking commitments to yourself. And you don't really know why. Maybe you need to be reminded of why you have the things you value and who you are becoming.

ANNIE

Yep.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Absolutely.

JEN

That's all I got today, Annie. [Laughs]

ANNIE

That was so good. Let's do a quick recap the four reasons. First and foremost, you're living in a state of deprivation. If you do not address that first, the following reasons may feel even more

difficult to address, so address this first, Number two, your environment is full of triggers. Curate your environment. So you don't have to rely so much on willpower. Number three was address your mindset, that's shifting from all or nothing to all or something. Food scarcity to food abundance. And then number four, connect your choices to something that matters. Your why.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Awesome. Great episode. Thank you so much, Jen.

JEN

Thank you.

ANNIE

Bye-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.