

Balance365 Episode 93 Transcript

Annie Brees

Welcome to Balance 365 Life Radio, a podcast that delivers honest conversations about food, fitness, weight and wellness. I'm your host Annie Brees along with Jennifer Campbell and Lauren Koski. We are personal trainers, nutritionists and founders of Balance365. Together we coach thousands of women each day and are on a mission to help them feel healthy, happy 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!

Welcome back to Balance365 Life Radio. Today we are turning the tables on who's playing podcast host with Jen actually interviewing me, Annie. Get ready for a whole episode about everything including being teased about my body on the playground as a kid to starting a new diet every single Monday morning and how that felt.

And of course, my favorite part, how I overcame it all to find a place of peace and love with my body, food and fitness. Naturally, I hope it's entertaining and enjoyable for you. And if you are listening, we would love for you to snap a selfie of you listening to the Balance365 life Radio Podcast and tag us on Instagram and Facebook. Thank you enjoy. Jen, this whole show is yours. You're running the show today.

Jennifer Campbell

I am. I'm really nervous.

Annie Brees

So behind the scenes, Jen said that she wanted to interview me about my story of my experience with health and wellness, and we show up for the recording today and she says "Okay, do you have an outline?" and I said, "No, as the official podcast host that is your responsibility."

Jennifer Campbell

I forgot to do my homework.

Annie Brees

So this will be exciting because I have no idea what you're going to ask me.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, well, I just wanted everybody to hear your story because I think it's really inspiring. I don't think you talk about it very much and I see not just, you know, what your changes have produced, but your mindset towards those changes and I see that come out in your social stories, and I see that come out in the way you coach women. And I just think it's so wonderful, but you never talk about yourself.

Annie Brees

It's like, I love having a microphone, obviously, podcast host. I'm always the one that's like-

Jennifer Campbell

You're great at it.

Annie Brees

I'll be in front of the camera, no problem. I've had, like, many Mariah Carey moments. But there is something that, like, talking about my experience is, like, it kind of makes my skin crawl a little bit.

Jennifer Campbell

I think that when you've been able to lose weight and keep it off, you know, that there are certain people out there who will fixate on that. And they, you know, your story is so much bigger. And I imagine you don't want to attract the people that are only looking for that.

Annie Brees

No!

Jennifer Campbell

That's why you don't talk about it.

Annie Brees

No, and like it's never even.

Jennifer Campbell

I have never seen it before and after photo. I've never seen you post one. And I'm so glad I mean, that is something that we don't do.

Annie Brees

If you scroll way back on my Instagram you can find a multitude of-

Jennifer Campbell
Oh, you used to.

Annie Brees
A multitude of what I would call sins.

Jennifer Campbell
I have some too, actually.

Annie Brees
Yeah and I don't know, like, part of me, like, likes having them on there because it's, to me, it's my evolution, you know, it's like, and it's proof of like, this is what I was and this is what I've become and maybe if you're at point A too that, like there's hope for you or, or that you can just see that, like, the natural evolution through Instagram, which I view is kind of like my online diary in many ways.

Jennifer Campbell
Right.

Annie Brees
But I think there are some before and afters and you know, it kind of makes me cringe now, but you're right. I feel like that that is just such a small aspect of my story that I'm not even really, that's not the meat of my story. Like, that is not, like, that's, like, a side dish, you know?

Jennifer Campbell
Yeah, totally and the other thing-

Annie Brees
It's like the green bean casserole.

Jennifer Campbell
is putting the message out there that you, I think we know and we have a whole podcast about it, that before and afters have been infiltrated our world in such a toxic way, and how it affects women in larger bodies to be constantly bombarded with this message that they should change.

And I know that your body used to be larger than it is now. However, you are so supportive of women wanting to do what's right for their bodies, and they don't have to take the same path to you. And that freedom looks different for every woman.

Annie Brees

Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

And this is just happens to be your story and your freedom and what happened for you.

Annie Brees

This sounds like a beginning of, like, a history documentary, like, "This is your story."

Jennifer Campbell

Let's take a deep dive, Annie at seven years old.

Annie Brees

Oh, man.

Jennifer Campbell

Let's actually take a deep dive.

Annie Brees

Okay.

Jennifer Campbell

Why don't you share what did you struggle with when it came to your body when you were young and what were the messages you got? And how did that make you behave?

Annie Brees

I have, when did it begin? I don't exactly Remember, like, an age or a specific event, but I do have so many childhood memories of feeling really uncomfortable in my body. And I mean, I can think of experiences like and I've shared this with you before, but I remember coming outside for recess and I would have been either fourth, fifth or sixth grade, probably fourth or fifth coming outside for recess.

And a handful of boys, probably like five or six, who I thought were my friends coming out waiting for me. They were waiting for me to come out the doors of the school to recess and they were singing Annie Beluga. Like, the, you know, the baby beluga whale, comparing me to a whale. And I could name them, I could give you first and last names.

Jennifer Campbell

Like, I mean, that's traumatic. It's awful

Annie Brees

It was. And you know, I remember, my parents were always kind of like, "Don't let anyone see that they hurt you, you know, like, don't let them know that they got to you," like if someone was poking fun at you, like that's what they want. And so I remember at the time just kind of being like, "Cool," and then running off and playing basketball or whatever.

But now that I'm 36 it's unbelievable how many times that's come up in therapy. And it's like, maybe I should have dealt with you know, because I think I just didn't even stop to feel the hurt that that caused which, I mean, I was in fourth or fifth grade. I don't even know that I had the skills necessary to express or to handle those emotions. But now at 36, I'm like, "Yeah, I wish I would have," because that was hurtful, like, super hurtful. And I was also really boy crazy. Like I always, always had a crush on a boy, always.

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

And so to see these boys, some of them that I had crushes on, turn around and make fun of me. But then like 10 minutes later pick me first for the basketball team because I was the tallest and I was the biggest and I was like the strongest. It was just such a weird experience. And it was just hurtful.

Jennifer Campbell

But it's confusing because it's like, "We love how big you are. And then we hate how big you are." Right?

Annie Brees

And I think that why, that's one of the reasons I fell so hard for athletics was because it was a way to use my body to, like, position myself in a way of power. Like, you know, people wanted to be my friends because I was good at sports or I was powerful or strong or I could you know get the rebound faster than they could and that sort of stuff and which was really good, it had some had some downsides too.

But you know, there's other experiences growing up, I remember and I've written about this so many times, wanting to wear, like, girls clothing and I just didn't fit. And I shouldn't say it didn't fit into it. The clothes fit me much tighter, even if I could fit into

them. The jeans were, like, really tight and I didn't want really tight clothing. So I always ended up shopping in the boys section.

And I remember one trip over spring break we went to the Mall of America which, when I was in middle school or high school, was, like, the coolest thing ever. It's just a few hours north and they had an Abercrombie and Fitch and I remember I went with three other girlfriends and they all went into Abercrombie and Fitch to buy like, they just, like, they saved all of their back to school, like, money for shopping there and I couldn't fit it in anything and I remember again doing the same thing, like, kind of be like "It doesn't bother me. It's cool." Again, 36 years later, like, "Yeah, it kind of bothered me."

Jennifer Campbell

As you burst into tears, "It really bothered me."

Annie Brees

Yes. You know, and they weren't they weren't trying to be exclusive. That's just where girls my age, the majority of them, were shopping. Some of their families could afford it. And I was like, I really wanted, I wanted to be able to shop in there and I just I couldn't, I just didn't fit.

Jennifer Campbell

So you just sort of had many experiences when you were young where your body just really was a source of shame, I guess, for you.

Annie Brees

Yeah, it really was. And you know, I remember dieting in high school. I remember doing some really, like, potentially harmful things. Like, I remember thinking, if I just took everything I ate and then cut in half, like, if I just ate half of what I would normally eat that I would lose weight. I remember thinking if I just drink liquids that I would lose weight. And it is so flawed for so many reasons now, but that's really, like, that was the information I was using. And it was about that time that I started getting really into women's magazines. And I think my mom would have had conversations with me about it, but I was too embarrassed to talk to her about, like, "Hey, I actually I'm a lot bigger than these girls, and I don't like that. Like, what do I do?" You know?

Jennifer Campbell

Aww. Yeah.

Annie Brees

So I outsourced it. I would buy women's magazines. And I think my parents were so thrilled that I was reading that-

Jennifer Campbell
Yeah.

Annie Brees
They didn't stop to consider like, "What is she reading?"

Jennifer Campbell
Right. Those magazines, just reaffirmed all of the messages that you were telling yourself right? Like, some of those girls magazines were-

Annie Brees
Yeah, the messages that I got in middle school and high school from those magazines was "Be cute. You exist to get a boy. Your job is to impress boys, please boys, make sure you're a good kisser. Don't be too needy. And then you can also look like Katie Holmes, if you just follow this diet and her exercise routine. And so, like, that's what I tried to do.

I failed miserably. I couldn't stick with anything for more than, like, three days. But I kept recycling that process over and over and over again with Katie Holmes, and then it was, who was the 90210, kike, Kelly Kapowski and like, those girls, I was like... that's what the cover of the magazines were. It was "Follow her diet and exercise routine and you can look like that."

Jennifer Campbell
And people ate that up.

Annie Brees
Yeah. And as a result you can be happy. And then when you look like that you'll be happy.

Jennifer Campbell
And get accepted, you'll get accepted and loved by a man.

Annie Brees
Yes. And then you're winning.

Jennifer Campbell

Right and you have those experiences early on where the boys are making fun of you for your body size and you know, it happens in layers. There's not one experience that sends girls on this tailspin. It's just, it's comes from so many different places and you didn't get the message from your parents, but we have members in our community who were also getting that message from their mom and dad sometimes too. And so it's just we have a lot of young women and young men trying to navigate. All of this diet and exercise stuff isn't about diet and exercise or health. It's about wanting to be accepted and loved, right?

Annie Brees
Be seen.

Jennifer Campbell
Be seen.

Annie Brees
Like, avoid being made fun. Fitting in.

Jennifer Campbell
Right, so, when do you think your first diet was? Do you remember?

Annie Brees
I mean, I did some kind of self experiment diets. My own. You know, I didn't recognize it as a diet when I was living in my parents house, but they did the cabbage soup diet. Do you know what that is?

Jennifer Campbell
Yeah, I've seen a family member do that one as well.

Annie Brees
Yeah. They did that a number of times. And again, I didn't think of it as dieting. I just, like, thought that's what was for dinner for seven days. Now, I very much see it I'm like, "Oh, wow, that's, that's what was happening." But I know that I joined Weight Watchers shortly after college. And that was probably the first of, I don't know, 15 times, maybe, joining Weight Watchers.

Jennifer Campbell
Wow.

Annie Brees

I had moved to Minneapolis right after college to go to school for aesthetics. That's a fun fact people may not know. I was an aesthetician for a couple years. But I moved to Minneapolis and I had just, I played college softball where I was quite active, being fed by the cafeteria. I didn't have to, like, think about food too much and I moved and my activity decreased quickly, like almost overnight. As soon as the season ended, I moved and practices were done, games were done.

And then I was shopping for myself which, if you follow me, you know that I don't cook so I'm, like, no clue what I'm doing in a grocery store, really. And so I just kind of bought what I thought was good. I ended up eating out so much and I put on a significant amount of weight rather quickly, and I, like, panicked. And I was, like, "You know, oh my gosh oh my gosh, oh my gosh, I'm the heaviest I've ever been, like, I have to do something. I have to take action right now."

So I just joined with Weight Watchers. And I don't even remember if it quote unquote worked or not, but I can tell you that I joined multiple times since so I think the proof in the pudding is that it didn't work for me, you know, or maybe it worked temporarily.

But Minneapolis was, and this isn't something I talked about either a whole lot, but there's a there's a lot of experiences in Minneapolis, that I remember going and buying meals for a family of four and eating them within two meals and or going to Jimmy Johns and ordering two sandwiches and ordering them two different sandwiches. As if one wasn't for me but they were both for me.

Jennifer Campbell

Was that bingeing or was that just what you needed to sustain yourself? Because you were a larger woman.

Annie Brees

I think I was doing the thing where like, I don't eat breakfast and then like finally around two o'clock I was famished and like, wanted to eat all the food you know, so-

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

A little bit of reactive bingeing. But, and combined with a larger body, I needed more calories to sustain that weight, but I also think that I was just, like, I was lonely. I didn't have any friends. I was bored when I wasn't in school. And food was entertainment, I mean, Jimmy John's tastes good, you know.

Jennifer Campbell
I've never had it.

Annie Brees
You've never had Jimmy Johns?

Jennifer Campbell
I don't think. We don't have that.

Annie Brees
It's like a sub sandwich place but I really remember, like, the shame I had going to Jimmy John's, ordering two sandwiches both for me but like trying to disguise it as like "Oh, I'm bringing a sandwich to my friend, you know." That sort of thing.

Jennifer Campbell
So just, like, so then you were basically doing secret eating, basically, because that, which we see, we know a lot of women do that but we know a lot of kids do it too, right?

Annie Brees
Yeah, we've heard so many stories and the reason I share that it's because I know like I'm not the only one that does that or had has done that. Like I've heard stories about how women would drive home through the drive through on their way home from work and then dispose of the wrappers and then go eat dinner with their family, you know and that can happen for so many reasons. Maybe they, you know, they are hungry. Maybe they are dealing with some emotional eating issues or stress or whatever. But I really think it was a lot of emotional baggage that came out as food for me.

Jennifer Campbell
So you did the yo yo dieting thing through your 20s.

Annie Brees
Yeah, quite a bit.

Jennifer Campbell
And you were regaining weight and losing weight.

Annie Brees
You know, every Monday was like, I woke up with this, like, I don't know how to describe it other than like a weight on my shoulders. It was just, like, I could not take a big deep

breath in because I woke up and every Monday I told myself like "Today's the day. The diet starts Monday. We're doing this, like, this is the time it's gonna work and you're gonna have success and you just have to stick with it."

And it was always ridiculously extreme changes that I was trying to make. So what would happen is, like, Monday I would, like, be perfect quote, unquote, you know, like chicken, brown rice and broccoli, three meals a day, and then Tuesday would be okay, Wednesday, I'd kind of like get bored and realize that I'm like, kind of hungry and missing my Jimmy John's.

Jennifer Campbell
Jimmy John's.

Annie Brees

And then Thursdays is, you know, you just kind of slowly slide downhill and then by Friday it was like "Hey, it's the weekend, you did great all week, like, and my willpower and my motivation had waned by then and I couldn't sustain any longer so I would just eat through the weekend, and then have so much shame and guilt about eating throughout the weekend, that Sunday night would come and I'd be like, okay, I'd get out, like, my little journal, I would get up my diet magazines, my diet books, I'm like, "Okay, this is what you're gonna do. You're gonna wake up, you're gonna work out, you're going to do this, this is what you're going to eat for meal 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Jennifer Campbell
Right and the cycle continues.

Annie Brees
Yes. I mean, I did that, honestly, for a decade and a half.

Jennifer Campbell
Yeah, yeah.

Annie Brees
And it's exhausting.

Jennifer Campbell
It's really exhausting. Because I'm sure you're not just doing the, it's not just the physical energy you put into it. It's the mental energy. Right and the constantly thinking about food.

Annie Brees

Yeah, it consumed me. And it wasn't even just thinking about food. It was thinking about my body. I could not walk into a room without comparing myself to every other woman in that room. Like, where do I stack up? Is she bigger? Is she smaller? Is she prettier? Is she more muscular? Like where am I in relation to all these other women? Like, all I saw were bodies.

Jennifer Campbell

Right? And did you weigh yourself often?

Annie Brees

Oh, yeah. Well, okay, so yes, I did. But I will say, I actually think we had started balance 365. So this is this is jumping, you know, quite a few years down the road after after dieting. I had ditch dieting, but I also ditch the scale in the process. And what happened over time was I was like, I thought what I was doing was like the "Yeah, screw the scale. Like, I don't need the scale to tell me my worth." And I believe that. But if I was really honest with myself, I think I was in denial.

Jennifer Campbell

Denial about?

Annie Brees

About, like, what my habits were doing. And I didn't want to deal with the scale as like, it was almost kind of like holding up a mirror to my habits, you know?

Jennifer Campbell

So you had some, are you saying not so healthy habits?

Annie Brees

Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

And you just couldn't face how that was impacting your weight.

Annie Brees

Right. And instead of becoming like, obsessed, like, I need to know my weight all the time, I became afraid of my weight.

Jennifer Campbell

Mm hmm.

Annie Brees

And that wasn't health for me either. Does that make sense?

Jennifer Campbell

It does because I had the same experience which maybe we can, we'll reverse this for another podcast where I didn't weigh myself for four years.

Annie Brees

Exactly. Yeah, I think I was like a year and a half. And I was so afraid of what that weight, seeing that weight on the scale would do to me, like how it makes me feel, how it could potentially affect my habits or my impulses, that panic that used to set in every Monday. Like, I didn't want to experience that again. But to me, that's not me being truly objective about my weight.

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

That's still, my weight is still in control of me. If I can't step on the scale, and just face it and get off then it still has too much power over me.

Jennifer Campbell

Because if weight is just a number, then why can't we look at it?

Annie Brees

Exactly.

Jennifer Campbell

We can't on one hand, say weight is just a number and on the other hand advocate for people to stop weighing themselves. Because I feel like you're actually just advocating for people to hide from their triggers run from their triggers, and not actually deal with them.

Annie Brees

Yeah, so that's a good way of saying it. I knew that my weight was going to be triggering to me. I didn't want it to trigger my habits, or my emotions or how I felt about myself, so I just avoided it.

Jennifer Campbell

You didn't want to fall into the shame spiral and possibly trigger another diet cycle.

Annie Brees

Yeah. But I knew at some point, I think it was shortly after Blair was born, at some point I was like, "You know what? Like, this isn't working either." I had just gone from one extreme to the other, like one end of the spectrum to the other, like I was obsessed, and then I was avoiding. And for me I felt like to be in a true space of health and balance for me, meant that I wanted to be able to step on the scale, step off and go on with my day. Regardless, regardless of what it said, I wasn't celebrating the weight went down. I wasn't breathing myself with the weight was up. It was just like, "Okay, like, your shoe sizes size nine. Okay, great. Move on."

Jennifer Campbell

Right? Totally. The I had brought this up to a woman in Balance365 about a year ago, I said, "Weight isn't the problem. It's our obsession with weight." So we say it's about health, but you don't get up in the morning and run and get a blood pressure cuff and "Quickly, I've got to know what my blood pressure is this morning" and then figure out what your blood pressure is all throughout the day and track it on a graph. And I mean, you might actually my husband had to do that once when he was having some blood pressure issues.

But it's the way we treat weight and how much worth we put into it and how much we, actually not just our worth, but our health, what we you know, and it's like, there's just an unhealthy fixation with weight, right. And so, and as a woman who has been on the smaller side and gotten larger, I have put on a significant amount of muscle mass in the last 10 years. And if I was fixated on my weight, I would not have that muscle or that bone density I built over the years, right? Because that all contributes to how much you weigh.

Annie Brees

Absolutely. And I just, like I said, I was still exerting effort concerned with my weight. I just wasn't actually weighing myself. And that's like, that's not how I want to spend my energy. Right? I don't have extra energy to spare.

Jennifer Campbell

Right? You're busy, you run a company, you've got three kids.

Annie Brees

Yeah. Like, I don't want to spend my energy in ways that aren't ultimately productive. And I feel like that just kept me trapped. It kept me occupied with stuff that really is, like, I mean, as cheesy as it sounds, keeps me out of my power.

Jennifer Campbell
Right? Yeah.

Annie Brees
Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell
So I know this because I know you but when you were at your heaviest, you were wearing a size 24?

Annie Brees
Yes. The heaviest point in adulthood came shortly after having Sloan, my first girl, I kind of, you know, I think after so many years, so prior to getting pregnant with Sloan, I had been pretty heavily restricting, like monitoring my diet, monitoring my exercise. And I was doing okay as long as nothing rock the boat, but-

Jennifer Campbell
Right, like no social situations.

Annie Brees
Yeah, yeah, or pregnancy. You know, that's a real boat rocker. So as soon as I got pregnant, I went through that phase of not feeling well, I wasn't really sure what I should be doing for exercise. I knew that I shouldn't be dieting as a pregnant woman. So my only other option, because that's all I knew, was you're either dieting or you're eating all the things. So I went through nine months of eating all the things and I I put on a fair amount of weight with my pregnancy and it was, in my opinion, I'm pretty comfortable saying that. It was probably unnecessary I didn't need-

Jennifer Campbell
It was like a pendulum swing that we talk about when people stop restricting. It's nothing to be ashamed of. It is a normal and natural response to restricting. It is like how people gasping for air after holding their breath.

Annie Brees
Yeah. Hey friends, Annie here real quick. I wanted to sneak into this episode to tell you why it's important for you to love your body right now, even if you want to change it, and

more importantly, how you can do that. You can learn the exact process we use with our clients in our free workshop, the five step process to overcome overeating, getting off the diet roller coaster and restoring a healthy relationship with food that you can pass on to your kids and you can get all of that for free. It is super simple. Just pause the show open up your browser and type in balance365workshop.com or you can click the link in your show notes. Alright, let's get back to this episode.

Jennifer Campbell

And I don't know if you know this Annie, but you probably do know this because we talk every day. But there's a couple studies that I reference often. And now just before we get into this, I think, fine print and for people who are new to us, they need to understand that we just want people to be the weight that feels healthy and comfortable for them where they feel like they have a good quality of life. And we want you to be the way you're supposed to be, not higher, not lower. But this study showed that the women who, the group of women in this study, who were putting the most amount of weight on during pregnancy, had the most restrictive dieting practices before pregnancy started.

Annie Brees

Yeah, that was me. Absolutely. And you know, knowing what I know now, it makes complete sense. That's, as you said, that's what I would absolutely expect from a woman who had been dieting to then kind of feel like the guard rails are off. And it's like, "Okay, let's game on."

Jennifer Campbell

Right, right.

Annie Brees

And then you combine that with like, I wasn't feeling well, so I was just trying to eat whatever, like, whatever was appetizing, you know. But then I remember having a moment, I was probably like 39 weeks pregnant and John was standing right next to me at the scale, like one of those, you know, like late checkups. And I was like, "Do not look." Like, I knew, I just, again, the shame about my weight was like, it was just, but I kept telling myself like, "You can deal with this afterwards. You can deal with this afterwards, you can deal with this afterwards." Well, afterwards, I had pretty bad postpartum depression.

Jennifer Campbell

And a newborn baby and your whole life is thrown into upheaval and-

Annie Brees

Yeah, and I mean, I love Sloan dearly, but my word, she was a tough baby.

Jennifer Campbell
Right.

Annie Brees

I mean, I didn't I didn't bond with her. I mean, I just posted about it last night. I wanted to run away and leave her I leave her withdrawn. And I was going to run away to California by myself. I was like, "Peace out. I can't do this. I don't even feel that, like, loving, motherly feeling that I'm supposed to, you know, that everyone's like, oh, motherhood is so great. This is so awesome." And I was like, "No, this is terrible. I don't like this at all." Knowing what I know now, it was definitely postpartum depression. I let it go way too long, though.

Jennifer Campbell
Right.

Annie Brees

I just didn't know you know. So eventually I did go to go speak to my doctor, came up with a plan for postpartum depression and tackled that. Simultaneously we moved back to Des Moines, which was a little bit larger city and I could join a gym. But at the highest there, that was around the time that I was at my highest weight and I was a size 24, I think, in jeans, I don't. That was back when I wore jeans, that was probably the last time I wore jeans, no, I'm kidding. But for me it wasn't again, it wasn't about the size. It wasn't because of anything that had to do with the magic number 24. It was just, I was just unhappy for so many reasons.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah. And it sounds like you have a history of emotional eating, and you kind of brought up Minneapolis, and then you're going through another significantly traumatic experience in your life. And it's never about the weight, it's about the behaviors, right? I mean, a combination of genetics, you know, and then also then there's behaviors that we can layer on top of that.

Annie Brees
Right.

Jennifer Campbell

But it sounds like you kind of got to that place because you're going through a very hard time in your life and food was there to help you cope, which is actually okay. Right?

Some people, they need that. I think when we talk about emotional eating, emotional eating has been spun by the diet industry to be the worst thing ever and I love how we talked on our, I think, was it Traci Mann? We might have talked about emotional eating. I can't remember.

Annie Brees
Josh Hillis.

Jennifer Campbell
But food is comforting, right? It is comforting. The issue is if that's the only tool in your toolbox to comfort yourself right? And so it's not that emotional eating is bad and it's not even what I would consider a quote unquote bad behavior once in a while. It's that if that's all you're doing, right?

Annie Brees
Well and it wasn't just comfort. I went from working full time to being a stay at home mom, in a smaller town, again, where I didn't have any friends. I remember showing up for storytime at the library thinking like "Yeah, okay, I'm gonna go make some mom friends, like, this is gonna be great." Because I'm a, I don't know if you can tell, I'm an extrovert.

I like people. I could have a friend at my house all day. We could just talk, talk, talk and have so much fun. And I remember showing up for story time at the Winterset Public Library and it was grandmas and I was like, "Oh, like where all the moms? Where all the stay at home moms." I'm sure. I know that there are stay at home moms in Winterset, Iowa. I just, I didn't locate them.

Jennifer Campbell
You couldn't find them.

Annie Brees
No and and with a six month old and postpartum depression, I remember, I could tell you the tv schedule from 5am to 5pm. Because that's all I did was watch TV with my baby, eat. And that was my life. And it's like.

Jennifer Campbell
You were just trying to cope. I was just trying to tread water at a time when you were feeling like you were drowning.

Annie Brees

And I was doing the best I could. I really was.

Jennifer Campbell

Yes, you have a lot of compassion for that woman because you can acknowledge the pain she was in and what she was going through.

Annie Brees

Yeah, I didn't then, though.

Jennifer Campbell

How did you feel? Tell me about that. How did you feel about your body? And how did you feel in your body at that time?

Annie Brees

I was so uncomfortable. I mean, honestly, the self talk in my head was, it's cringe worthy. You know, it was like a lot of the, like, "Why can't you do this, you're just, like, get it together. Like, let's go. Like, come on, everyone else is doing it. So and so is doing it," and the real, like, gut punch was one of my best friends, and she knows this now, but one of my best friends, at the same time, we had babies maybe three or four days apart, and she lost all of the baby weight within months, I hadn't. Her baby was so easy, like lovey dovey, sweetest little cuddler. Mine wasn't. She had all this money to take these beautiful family trips and family photographs. I didn't and I just could not help but compare our lives.

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

And looking at her made me feel, like, so despicable, like, I was failing as a mom because my baby was colicky. I was failing as a woman because I had put on weight and I couldn't figure out how to lose it. I couldn't seem to pick up a five, this is actually, I'm super competitive. And this was, like, where, like, this is the tip of the iceberg was I had been training for five k, because that's what I knew. So I was like, "Okay, I've got to lose weight." What do you do? You run, right?

Jennifer Campbell

Like every woman

Annie Brees

I know, like, the personal trainer in me, this is obviously, this is pre personal trainer days. But the personal trainer me now is like "Ugh! You have so many more options." I hated running but I thought that's what I needed to do to go to lose the weight. So I had been training for five K. She calls me literally two weeks before and she's like, "Hey, I think maybe I could do this with you, like, do you mind if I join you?" And I was like "No, that's totally great."

I was always the more athletic one. I had been training. It was totally cool. We show up to the 5k and she beats me and I was like *gasp* "You already have all this other stuff going for you, just let me ask this race, you know, like, let me win." And so as a result I did whatever anyone would do is I quit Facebook so I couldn't see any of her photos. Maybe a little extreme, maybe.

Jennifer Campbell

This is so funny because in 2009 when I had my first son, I also had very severe postpartum depression. I also quit Facebook.

Annie Brees

I couldn't handle it, like it was-

Jennifer Campbell

I couldn't handle it either. It was awful.

Annie Brees

It was constant reminders of how she was thriving. And I felt like I could barely keep my head above water. And it was nothing about her. She didn't do a darn thing wrong. It was just me and the space that I was in. I just couldn't take it. So I had to create a boundary. A boundary for me was like, "I just need to get off Facebook."

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, it's not about you. It's about me. And that's how that's a healthy boundary to set.

Annie Brees

Yeah. And so so eventually what happened is we moved to Des Moines. I joined the YMCA and that was, like, one of the best things we'd ever done because at the YMCA, they had free childcare.

Jennifer Campbell

Righ.

Annie Brees

So not only was it a, I know some moms are going to understand this, it was a break from my baby, who screamed at me all day, which I was like, "Someone, please." You know, I don't have any brothers and sisters. I'm an only child. John's family lives out of town. Like, we didn't have a lot of help, like, raising this kid. So to take her to the YMCA for two hours for free a day, I could get a workout. And like, it was just for so many reasons, it was exactly what I needed. And it wasn't even necessarily about, like I did start to lose weight once I started moving more, I mean, as you can imagine, you know my habits changed, my weight changed.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, just upward spiral. Once you were able to exercise and I'm sure that being a very athletic, competitive person, I'm sure it just really helped with your mental health and all kinds of things.

Annie Brees

Yeah, so that was a really pivotal moment in my motherhood, I guess you could say, because that's when I really started to be in a headspace to, like, make rational choices and like, choices about my future, not just like trying to survive, you know?

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah.

Annie Brees

So, eventually that's where my exercise passion kind of rekindled from college.

Jennifer Campbell

Yay!

Annie Brees

And I became a group exercise instructor teaching kick class.

Jennifer Campbell

So in those days, today, even with a body positive movement going on, we still don't see a lot of women in larger bodies working in the fitness industry. And that's today. So back then you must have felt really, like, holy cow!

Annie Brees

Yeah, I remember showing up for my personal training group exercise certification and I remember the week or two before kind of contemplating, like, "Maybe I should,

like, try to lose some weight" because I don't want to show up and like, be the odd woman out, you know?

Jennifer Campbell
Right.

Annie Brees
And then that thought was immediately following like, "Yeah, right. You've done that for 10 years and didn't succeed, like, that's not gonna work now." So I didn't, and I showed up and I remember being so nervous, like, "Is everyone looking at me?" Like, you know, I clearly don't have-

Jennifer Campbell
Right, what's she doing here, right?

Annie Brees
Like, who is she? Is she, like, is she the building director, you know?

Jennifer Campbell
Right.

Annie Brees
She's not a group group exercise personal trainer. And no one said anything.

Jennifer Campbell
Yeah.

Annie Brees
Nobody said a darn thing.

Jennifer Campbell
So, obviously, weight stigma bias is out there. And we know it happens, as it happened to you when you were in school. However, often I would say, often, we build up in our heads what, how horrible an experience is going to be and then you actually do it. I mean, we hear this every day. "I'm so scared about my holiday. I've never not tried to lose 20 pounds before my holiday. I'm gonna have to put on a swimsuit." And women run through. They're just like Worst Case Wanda, they are just "The worst is going to happen." And then you do it and you're like, "Nobody cares."

Annie Brees

No.

Jennifer Campbell
Literally nobody.

Annie Brees

No one cared at all. And in fact, something happened that I wasn't anticipating and it still happens today is people were drawn to me, because I wasn't that. And I was like, looking around I'm like, "What?"

Jennifer Campbell

Like it's refreshing, I'm sure, for women to see someone like you, in a normal bottle. I shouldn't say that thin bodies are abnormal, but the fitness industry attracts people in smaller bodies and the fitness industry, to this day, is not very inclusive of people with different body shapes.

So it's, I think, as a woman in a larger body who wants to enter the fitness industry it takes a bit of being brave to do that, even though representation is so desperately needed in the fitness industry. So of course, people were attracted to you. Not to mention you have amazing energy and you're super kind and very inclusive.

Annie Brees

Oh thank you. It's just the irony of someone who, as a woman who had spent the majority of my life despising things like the size of my thighs, to have women come up and be like, "Oh my gosh, I love your thighs. I want my thighs to look like that. I wish, you know, like, your thighs kind of look like my thighs. And that makes me feel really good about my body." And I'm like, "Oh." That was not intentional. That was not, like, the outcome I had anticipated, but it was so welcome. I was like, "Okay, like, I'm gonna just gonna roll with it like, awesome. I'll take it."

Jennifer Campbell
Yeah.

Annie Brees

Yeah. So today, you were about a size 12 in a jean size.

Yeah. 10-12 depending on, you know, the brand.

Jennifer Campbell

And this has happened over the course of a couple of years, and you've had a couple more babies. And, again, we love our fine print. This wasn't necessarily intentional for you, what would you say? What was your, like, tell us about it. What is this journey from size 24 to size 12. You did not diet. You did not. I mean, I'm sure there were, I mean, obviously, it's a journey and everybody who's on this journey goes.

There's, you know, part of the change process is for any change is something we called relapse. Right? And we have a podcast on the stages of change. And then I think people commonly associate the word relapse with people who are in alcohol recovery or drug recovery, but relapse is part of almost any change process.

So you say, "I'm going to eat more vegetables at lunch," maybe is the goal. Even that kind of change can involve relapses where you make choices that are not aligned with the person you're trying to become. And so even when people quit dieting, or they say, "I am not doing this dieting bs anymore," they will find themselves relapsing at times.

Annie Brees

Yeah, honestly, so the journey from 24 to 12, as you put it, I think what got me started, was a desire for weight loss, because I believed that if I lost weight, then I would be happy. If I lost weight, I would have the perfect body and the perfect body equaled happiness, right. That's definitely was my motivation for getting started. I totally wholeheartedly believe that that would happen.

What kept me going though, was the experience of how good I felt after a workout, the energy I felt after a workout, how I didn't feel so overly full that I had a tummy ache and had to lay on the couch for two hours afterwards and didn't have the energy to go do anything afterwards. And those were the things that kind of, like, started, for lack of a better word, like, kind of rewiring my brain. It was like, so over the course of and this was 10 years, that was 10 years ago.

Over the course of those 10 years, I started coming to the gym because I want to lose weight. But what, like I said, what's kept me going is you're going to feel, you feel better after you work out. You're more productive after a workout, you sleep better when you work out. You just have a general better relationship with your body after workout because the gym became a place where I can, like, explore what my body can do and embody my body instead of being at war with my body.

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

And as a result that has been able to sustain my habits, like, that reward, we talk about this all the time in Balance365, the routine, reminder, routine, reward, but that reward of how I felt after engaging in those habits has what's been able to sustain me for 10 years and as a result, my weight has changed.

Jennifer Campbell

Right and I know, so I think we have this in another podcast, so just so everyone is clear and we're not sending the wrong message. As far as fat loss, exercise in itself does not make a big impact on fat loss. So you're not talking about "I got from size 24 to size 12 by committing to the gym X number times a week."

Annie Brees

No.

Jennifer Campbell

You're talking about the mindset it puts you in. The journey of learning that your body is powerful and it's something you can love and care for and that whole mindset trickling over into your nutrition habits, I imagine.

Annie Brees

Yeah, absolutely. That was, in fact, I had a brief stint with a bodybuilding coach. That was probably, like, eight years ago, but I had come to the gym and I had started lifting heavier and I started noticing that like, "Hey, I'm kind of strong." And so then not knowing again, not knowing what I knew, I thought, like, "Okay, what do strong people do? They do bodybuilding." Knowing what I know now, that's not exactly how it works out. It can work out that way. But that's not always how it works out that way.

Jennifer Campbell

It doesn't have to be the path you take-

Annie Brees

Right, right.

When you lift weights.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah.

Annie Brees

So I hired a bodybuilding coach. And what he did was asked me to count my macros, you know, shocker. And again, that's one of those situations where what brought me to making some nutritional habits was a desire to see, you know, weight loss or change in my body, but it really was temporarily good awareness to see if I was eating balanced meals and left to my own devices, I won't eat fruit, like-

Jennifer Campbell
Right.

Annie Brees

I just won't. I could go days without having a vegetable, like, I'm pretty much carbs and protein like, rice, meat and potatoes kind of go?

Jennifer Campbell
Right, right.

Annie Brees

So but again, shocker, knowing my diet history, it won't come as a surprise, I couldn't sustain it. I didn't want to count macros forever. I didn't want to-

Jennifer Campbell
Yeah, not a lot of people do.

Annie Brees
Right.

Jennifer Campbell

But what we tell women in Balance365 is that if you want to look at your macros, it's not really something you need to do forever, but just take a couple days or look at it from meal to meal because it certainly can bring some awareness and it's like I have this analogy where I say "Some people take a hammer out of a toolbox and can build a beautiful house. And some people take a hammer out of that toolbox and they start smashing themselves on the foot with it."

Annie Brees
Right.

Jennifer Campbell

And it's all about how you use that tool and learning more about food and the macronutrient composition of your food as a tool towards positive change, nutrition

education, learning what a balanced meal is, that's wonderful. But I have been in the place where I use macro counting as a way to, again, further punish. You know, it was a very negative experience for me. Yeah, at the time I used it. And so,

Annie Brees

Yeah, it wasn't ultimately something I could sustain for longer than a few days, because I mean, for so many reasons. I just find it tedious. Like I was like, I already ate it. I don't want to log it, you know?

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah. Or even how do you, it's like, you cook spaghetti. Like last night we had a casserole, spaghetti casserole for supper, and it's like, how do you even begin to work out the macros in a spatula size serving of, do you know what I mean? It's just a, it would be a very tedious process that needs to start with when you start cooking, essentially. And as a busy mom, it's just it is not realistic for me.

Annie Brees

Yeah. But I will say, like, you said it did bring some awareness that, "Okay, you know what, actually, you need a little bit more protein, especially if you're going to be doing the kind of weight training that you want to do. And you have the strength goals that you have, you need proteins to support that muscle growth."

And so for that reason, it was insightful, but it wasn't anything I could sustain for the long term. But over the course of the years following, I did start to see my plate as a Balance365 plate, you know, so it's a protein, carbohydrates and vegetables, a little bit of fat there. It's comprised of mostly foods that I enjoy or all foods that I enjoy. I still have frozen pizza at least once a week. I drink plenty of wine, were you gonna say wine?

Jennifer Campbell

I was gonna say wine.

Annie Brees

Yeah, I like I like my wine. But because my mindset is now become like "Those foods aren't off limits those aren't bad foods. I can have those foods anytime I want them." I actually just don't crave them as much. We have monster cookies in our cupboard all the time. Like, I forget about them half the time.

Jennifer Campbell

Right, right. Yeah. And that's almost a universal experience for people who stop dieting and restricting, right, so my thing used to be ice cream and now, ice cream can sit in our

freezer for, it can go bad, like, it can get freezer burnt or whatever, and we have to throw it out.

Annie Brees

Which, that's kind of, it's the same experience I had with the scale. Like, I want to be able to coexist with a scale, coexist with monster cookies, coexist with wine and not feel like these are controlling my every waking thought or my behaviors or how I feel about my body or if I eat the monster cookie and the wine, I mean, it's a party, combine them both. It's, like, I can just move on with my day. It's not like, "Now, you have to, like, get back on course."

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, or maybe just have six real quick before you realize what you're doing or you've had one, so you might as well have twenty.

Annie Brees

Yes, I have to eat them all before I can start my diet on Monday.

Jennifer Campbell

Right? Yeah. So and I think it's almost a universal experience for women, they find that when they can stop pulling back on that pendulum to being very restrictive they actually crave sweets less overall, because they're not restricting them anymore. They're not obsessed with them. They don't develop preoccupations. And then it can just be an upward spiral from there. And so that's what your experience was.

Annie Brees

Yeah and the other thing that I want to add about my experience that happened over the course of a decade and I say that not to, like, discourage women that it's going to take you so long to get where I got I came from and now am, but I say that just because this is, like I said, an evolution that didn't happen overnight, it wasn't like I just read this book and did these things and I was healed, like, this has been 10 years in the making plus therapy.

I started therapy two years ago but the other element that's been really crucial has been accepting that my body is not the ideal body that I thought I was meant to have. You know, and that took a little bit of grieving or mourning I guess you could say to acknowledge that like, "You're not going to be Katie Holmes, you're not going to be right Kelly Kapowski or you know, the girl in the Abercrombie, the half naked girl in Abercrombie and Fitch shopping bag, like, your body is not built like that." Like I could diet, diet, diet, diet and my legs will still be thick

Jennifer Campbell

Right, you have to accept, we all, it is a journey and a lot of deprogramming and all of that but we have to accept the bodies we have, right, and of course we have some influence on that body shape, I guess, some influence but like the foundation is there, that's the body you got, right? You can't change your genetics.

Annie Brees

Right and I think that it's so evident. Last summer went out to lunch with, I have four girl cousins that I'm I'm pretty close with and ironically our maiden name is Leg like the body.

Jennifer Campbell

That's the other funny part of your story that I love, Annie Leg.

Annie Brees

Like the body part I spent years 18 is also it's like, "God is like a sick, a sick joke from God" or something. Anyways, I went to dinner with my four cousins, all girls, and I'm looking at them and I think they're beautiful women, they're smart, they're funny, they're good friends. Some of them are moms. They're, like, successful. And I have such admiration and we all have the same thick legs.

Jennifer Campbell

That's awesome

Annie Brees

And it's just like, this is my as cheesy as it sounds, this is like, this is my genes. This is my family tree, you know.

Jennifer Campbell

This is what connects you to these women.

Annie Brees

And you and Janelle talked about that in the sisters podcast about how, like, you look at members of your family, and you see other generations, you see family members, and that to me is, like, really like, endearing, like, I love that.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah. I remember Janelle said on that podcast, "I look just like every woman on my mom's side of the family. And Jen looks just like every woman on my dad's side of the

family." And even though her and I have very different body types, we can see where they came from, right?

Annie Brees

Yeah. And I think but like it's so easy for me to look at them or easier for me to look at them with admiration and like, "Hey, this is, like, this is your body, you're, like, in the Leg family, like, you got the Leg legs, you know? Like-

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah.

Annie Brees

Yeah, but, to say that about myself, you know, we're just it's hard to be as objective about yourself as you are with others.

Jennifer Campbell

It is. You've had a lot of experiences though, you know, to unpack.

Annie Brees

Yes.

Jennifer Campbell

But that's why self you know, self acceptance and self love is such a big part of this journey, right? And you can actually make more progress with your goals when you work with the body you have, not against it.

Annie Brees

Absolutely. And, like, that's how I've been able to find the ultimate like, I mean, I don't feel confident every day. Like-

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

Some days I wake up and I'm like, not really feeling myself and like, the vibes are off or whatever. But now I have the awareness to know like, "This is just a day." And they ebb and they flow and but overall, the lows don't last as long, they aren't as low. I know I have some tools to pull myself out of it or deal to cope to feel those feelings in a in a more positive manner instead of starting another diet or berating myself or holing up and like, just not doing anything for six months.

Jennifer Campbell

So seeing this, like, big, quite a big body composition change for you and then I'll let you elaborate on this but the message that I've always gotten from you and that I hope people are getting from us in our company is that when you reach the point in your life when you were finally able to accept yourself, love yourself, treat yourself with kindness, pursue habits that made sense and that felt good for you, your journey from size 24 to size 12 wasn't this, like, transformational weight loss story because Annie found the secrets.

It was "Annie is now living in the body she was likely always meant to have had you not gotten steamrolled in grade four by boys singing a song to you," which that sets off, so what people don't understand is that sets off a chain of behavior, right, is body shame.

And we like to think we live in this culture that talks about shaming being the way to get people to be compliant to the behaviors you want them to have, but actually shaming leads to the opposite effect and we know that body and food shaming actually leads, more often than not, people to develop very unhealthy behaviors like emotional eating, overeating, food hiding, et cetera, et cetera. And then on another side, often full-fledged eating disorders, right? So, yeah, so do you want to elaborate on that or?

Annie Brees

Yeah, I think that that's, you know you hit the nail on the head and that's also why, you know, could I show you a really impressive before and after that would knock your socks off and would have, you know, hundreds of people at my doorstep saying "Train me. Show me what the thing is, you know, like I'll buy whatever you're selling."

Yeah, I could, but that's, like, not, that's not the story, like, to me as the story is exactly what you said that it was equal parts of self self acceptance, habits rooted in self love versus self loathing, working with a body I have not the body, like, on the cover of the magazine that's led me to this outcome and like I said, the thing that maybe got me started in all this was a desire was the outcome, was the end result that I wanted.

But what's kept me going is really how I feel and that you know, you said at the beginning that when people diet it's often like they're seeking acceptance and belonging and love and now I know that I'm worthy of that regardless of the body I'm in and to me, that has provided, essentially, immunity from quick fixes, scams, you know, anything that the diet industry has to offer and I know that, like-

Jennifer Campbell

You don't want it. You're good.

Annie Brees

No, I'm not buying it. Which again, feels like freedom, like, I'm not susceptible, I'm not vulnerable to the diet industry, you know, like-

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

Which is everywhere or diet culture.

Jennifer Campbell

Right and diet culture really tries to root out those shame triggers, right and if you have bought this acceptance of yourself or even if you're on the journey, and you're developing the tools to work through the emotions that come up when you're feeling that shame, you do build an immunity, right? So, and yeah, and it's really, it's so freeing to have those tools and know you are capable of it all on your own.

Annie Brees

It is and if I was still stuck obsessing about my weight, about my body about my appearance, there's no way I could have co founded Balance365, co-founded a nonprofit, become a mom to three healthy kids, like, it just consumed me. And it's soaked up my energy and it trapped my energy and now that I'm not doing those things, I have thought space, headspace mind, mind space, energy to spend on what I think is a much more productive, much bigger contribution to the world and instead of just looking-

Jennifer Campbell

Small.

Annie Brees

Yeah, looking a sort of way or achieving an ideal, which again then feeds into, like, how amazing this feels to find that freedom.

Jennifer Campbell

Right? So what is your advice to women who want what you have, Annie, because we work, we know there's lots of women out there who are feeling the way you felt, just sort of trapped inside their habits, trapped inside their body, uncomfortable in their body and they want what you have and we in Balance365. We are not anti weight loss. So we are

not, there is a movement out there that thinks talking about weight loss is wrong. We are not one of those voices. So what would you say to women?

Annie Brees

You know, two things came to mind. If you're looking for, like, some takeaways, like, "What can I do, like, right now?" We've talked about it before on the podcast, but I think I've become really good at mothering myself. And mothering is something we talked about in Balance365. And it kind of goes hand in hand with compassion. And I think what women are afraid of, or at least what I was afraid of is if I let go of restrictive dieting, and my restrictive exercise routine, that I'm going to fly off the handles, and I'm going to sit on my butt and eat ice cream and donuts and pizza for the next 10 years.

Jennifer Campbell

Well, that's what you feel like doing when you're dieting.

Annie Brees

Right, right. And we would argue that yeah, you might have to, like, go through that.

Jennifer Campbell

You might have a couple months of that.

Annie Brees

Yeah, yeah. But if you resist your urge to pull back to dieting, because you're going to feel like that, just like I did every Sunday night.

Jennifer Campbell

You're on a pendulum, the roller coaster's back and forth, back and forth.

Annie Brees

If 25 year old Annie, instead of on Sunday night started planning her next diet for Monday morning just said, "You know what? Just chill out, like, just let yourself just, like, follow your instinct for a little bit." I would have realized that on the other side of eating donuts and pizza and ice cream and sitting on the couch was this instinct that my body actually had naturally, was, like, actually you do crave some movement. You do crave balanced foods and a variety of foods.

And that's where the mothering comes in that like sometimes you might have to let yourself sit on the couch and eat pizza. But eventually you can also mother yourself and say, "Enough of the sitting on the couch and eating pizza you need to get up and go for a walk." And knowing when the, you know, the grandma who's going to like let you

Netflix and chill steps in yet versus like, you know, drill sergeant mom that's like "Get your butt out and go outside," like knowing knowing who you need to be for yourself in which moment.

Jennifer Campbell

And you need to meet yourself where you're at, right? And the problem is that women meet themselves with the drill sergeant all day long every day, 24/7, and that inner drill sergeant never lets up. And so we are dealing with a lot of shame all the time.

Annie Brees

Yeah. And so, like, so I guess, like, and for that reason, it's so hard to prescribe, which is exactly why we don't prescribe, you know, meal plans or, like, action plans, a generalized specific action plans for members. It's like, you need to, we want to give you the tools so you know what to do for yourself.

Jennifer Campbell

Because what you need from moment to moment, day to day, month to month, year to year is going to change, right and you need to have the tools to know how to navigate this. I just told someone yesterday, there are habits we have when we're thriving, and there's habits we have when we are surviving. Your thriving habits are not healthy for you when you are in survival mode. It is not healthy to be thinking you have to be at CrossFit five times a week, you know, or whatever your ideal is when you're in survival mode. You need to learn to meet yourself where you're at. Maybe when you're thriving and life is cruising and you feel good, then cross fit five times a week is totally doable and a healthy choice for you but it's all about meeting yourself where you're at.

Annie Brees

Yeah, but what happens is when they get into a point of their life where they're surviving and they're trying to thrive but they're-

Jennifer Campbell

Right-

Annie Brees

For so many reasons that they just say "Screw it, I'm not going to do anything at all."

Jennifer Campbell

Right, right.

Annie Brees

And so they get stuck in this, like, on again, off again, right, wrong, black, white, on the wagon, off the wagon and I want to help women get to the middle where they can ebb and flow between the two, as they see fit for their life, without the shame, without the self-loathing and that's where I'm at. And that to me feels really good. But again, that's been a practice.

Jennifer Campbell

Right? And what I will say is that even though you have, again, changed your body composition significantly, you know that you will still ebb and flow throughout life, you are not a, you don't reach a certain weight, and then stay there the rest of your life, you are going to go through periods where you'll see yourself fluctuate up and down, as I have, you know, I tell people, I've maintained my weight for the last four years. But the truth is what I mean by that is I've maintained a range, where when I was dieting, I was up and then I was way down, and then I was way up, and I'm going, it's about the range is what it is.

Annie Brees

Right, and I mean, case in point, I actually stepped on the scale this morning out of curiosity, and I know I'm probably five to 10 pounds heavier than I was this time last year and my response. "Oh, well."

Jennifer Campbell

"Oh, well."

Annie Brees

Yeah, like it's fine. It's fine.

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

And I know I can tell you exactly why my weight has likely gone up this time of year compared to what, you know, what I was doing last time this year compared to what I'm doing this time this year, my habits are different. As a result, my weights change, and I'm not worried about it.

Jennifer Campbell

Right, right, It will ebb and flow. I find, I've told women I find I'm a little bit heavier in the winter and a little bit leaner in the summer and I just go with it and it's clearly that I gravitate towards, you know, like, heavier meals in the winter. I think it's, like, a cold

comfort thing here in Canada. And in the summer, I'm like, "Look at all the fresh fruit that's in season and the vegetables and I gravitate to lighter meals." And we're moving more.

Annie Brees

And the days are longer. I just saw outside more and I just saw a post from the National Park. I follow them on Instagram, the National Park Federation or something like that. And they were, they posted a picture of a big grizzly bear named Holly, I think-

Jennifer Campbell

Oh yeah!

Annie Brees

Did you see it?

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah.

Annie Brees

And they were congratulating her on how much weight she had put on for the winter. And-

Jennifer Campbell

It's an every year contest.

Annie Brees

Yeah. Go Holly, like, this is life. Like, Holly knows that she's gonna be sleeping for a while, she needs more fat on her body-

Jennifer Campbell

Pack it on Holly. Yes.

Annie Brees

So she's eating. And it's like, oh, like, I mean, just like you said, like winter is coming. The days are shorter, the opportunities to be outside and move your body just aren't what they were in the spring and summer and like, and as a result, a lot of people put on a few pounds, the holidays, there's opportunities to eat, there's such good food around the holidays. And it's fine. Like, it's just fine.

Jennifer Campbell

It's fine.

Annie Brees

And so the other thing I was going to say is when you're having a moment of, like, an impulse to start that diet, that Sunday night impulse that I always had, are you step on the scale and it's higher than you expected or wanted and your life If you have that panic, like "I need to do something right away," I would offer that just pause, you can notice your impulses, but you don't have to act on them. You don't have to do the thing that your brain is telling you to do.

Jennifer Campbell

There's going to be, through any change process, there's going to be uncomfortable moments. I mean, the whole thing might feel uncomfortable. And that's just the nature of our brains and being a human being is that your brain wants you to keep following the patterns that you've always followed. And it's all about that pause right?

But there are going to be moments in your journey when you have to make the choice that feels uncomfortable to you, whether that is the choice to "I'm going to sit for 10 minutes with my feelings and journal before I dive headfirst into a bag of brownies to cope with my emotions." That might feel uncomfortable. But that's part of the change process on the other side. When your impulse is to diet and restrict, you're going to have to choose, make the choice to not diet and restrict, even when it feels like The wrong and uncomfortable choice.

Annie Brees

And it's likely what what you've been conditioned to do. The final thing that I want to say to women is that if you're anything like me, you have been doing this for years. And it hasn't worked, right. So I got to a point where it was like, "What do I have to lose?" I've tried Weight Watchers, how many times, I've tried South Beach, I've tried Slim Fast. I've tried all the exercise routines. Nothing is getting me to the place I ultimately want to be. And it's like, "What have I got to lose? I've tried it all." And that was like a, kind of a, we always say for many women we can be the last house on the block.

Jennifer Campbell

Right

Annie Brees

That they have tried, we know a large-

Jennifer Campbell

They have knocked on every door on the street and then there's Balance365 at the end with that-

Annie Brees

With our little porch light on.

Jennifer Campbell

Last chance.

Annie Brees

And it worked. And like, that sounds so cheesy, but it worked. But it didn't work in the way I thought it was going to work. It wasn't this overnight, six week, 12 week transformation. It was a practice. I keep using the word practice because that's what it was. I mean, I made plenty of mistakes. But instead of throwing in the towel and calling quits and starting all over again, I just looked at it as an opportunity to gather information about what was working well, what wasn't working, well, what could stay, what needed to go, what I liked, what I didn't like, and then kept it moving. And then it just kept tweaking along the way. It was just tweaks.

Jennifer Campbell

Right and what are your thoughts on goal weights when women are like, "I need to lose 50, Annie, I need to lose 50 pounds, is Balance365 for me?" Hard question, right?

Annie Brees

Well, if you're listening and you're like, "Yeah, actually, that's me." I would say "Yes, Balance365 can help you lose weight. I wouldn't be surprised if you got into the program, started working on your habits and realized that maybe your goals weren't what they thought you were they were. And we see that quite often and that could be because maybe your goal weight is some bs number that you pulled out of thin air or what-

Jennifer Campbell

It was what Katie Holmes weighed.

Annie Brees

That's what you graduated high school and you realize that like, actually, that's not sustainable for me to live at a healthy weight. That's not a healthy weight for me at this point in the game.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah. So I'd rather women release goal weights and trust this process, and trust that their body weight is going to land in a spot that's healthy for them. It may not look the way they wanted it to look, it might be exactly what they thought, it might not be anything like it but just trust the process, that your body is going to settle into a weight that's healthy for you when you have this whole process down, right, this mindset, the tools to work through different situations and nutrition habits that support how you want to feel.

Annie Brees

I am probably 25 pounds heavier than what I thought was my ideal goal weight.

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

And I'm happy as a clam.

Jennifer Campbell

Right. My sister shared on, I think in the sisters podcast we did, she had a very specific goal weight that she thought she needed to be based on what her sister weighed, me. And at one point was about 25 pounds above that. And that actually felt very sustainable for her to be at that weight. But she was like, "No, I must push through" and that started a chain of events that catapulted her back upwards because she had to get so restrictive to push through that, quote unquote, plateau, as the diet industry likes to call them, and then she catapulted back. And she talks about that as being like, really, the last time she could ever do that to herself again. Yeah.

Annie Brees

Yeah, I know that I could get to that, to that goal weight, that former goal weight. I know exactly what I would need to do to get there. I'm not willing to make the sacrifices.

Jennifer Campbell

Not interested.

Annie Brees

I'm just like, I, like, see it on the rack. And I'm like, that's not for me. Like, because I want to live my life. I want to eat my pizza-

Jennifer Campbell

Totally.

Annie Brees

And have my wine and like, go out and get popcorn at the movies with my kids. And I know to achieve that weight and sustain it would require me to sacrifice all those things and I'm not willing to sacrifice that.

Unknown Speaker

Annie, last thing, so this weight loss that you've experienced and the life you're living now, there's arguments out there, there's people out there telling women, that weight loss is impossible and the only way they are going to be able to maintain their weight loss is by living, basically, a horrific life that requires them to micromanage every calorie that goes into their mouth. Do you feel what you are doing is sustainable for you?

Annie Brees

Yeah, absolutely. And it has been sustainable. My youngest is just over three. I naturally returned to my pre pregnancy weight. I don't want to say effortlessly because it did take some mindfulness. But it certainly was not an obsession, and it wasn't micromanagement. I did have to be mindful and pay attention but now, you know people ask me all the time, like, "What do you eat?" I don't think about food.

Jennifer Campbell

Like, I can't remember.

Annie Brees

No, like, I think about food when I'm hungry and I'm like, "What am I going to eat? Do I need to go get some food? Or can I like, is there something in the fridge? But honestly, I'm not like, I'm just not consumed. I'm not obsessed. There are times when I might pull out a tracker because the spoonful of peanut butter can get big real fast.

Jennifer Campbell

Right so you just once in a while have to bring in some extra tools to be having a look at like, let's get real with it.

Annie Brees

Yes, it's, to me that's no different than I would periodically test my strength in the gym to make sure-

Jennifer Campbell

Right, mine is cheese. Not peanut butter but cheese. Once in a while, I have to bring out the little scoop. I could have cheese every day, all day. But I have it on my eggs in the

morning. And once in a while I have and I usually just free pour it out of the bag of shredded cheese and once a while I have to bring something out and just give it a little measure because I just love it so much. I could lie to myself about how much I'm having. But that's just like such, it's nothing I obsess or micromanage, right? It's just a little check in.

Annie Brees

It's just simply like a compass. Like, where am I at? Okay, I'm here, like, it needs me to be a little bit smaller.

Jennifer Campbell

Do I need to adjust the wheel a little bit?

Annie Brees

Right. And it's and it's just, you know, we've talked about in our workshop, your kids play Mario Kart. Instead of, like, this big correction when they hit a wall.

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

Back to the right. It's just, it's like a slight adjustment. And that's where it stays. It's like "Noted. Carry on with my day."

Jennifer Campbell

Right? It's just a little check and balance. There's no, yeah.

Annie Brees

Yeah, so I would say I can easily, with minimal effort, maintain my weight as it is right now. My habits are, I think, really complementary to my life. They support the life I want to live and my health and my mental, emotional, social health all aspects of my health.

Jennifer Campbell

You've got lots of flexibility there, you're not on some rigid-

Annie Brees

Right, and I could do this forever. I mean, now if you require me to give up my coffee cream or wine, right, those are my non negotiables. Pretty sure I could live on coffee creamer and wine. Anyways.

Jennifer Campbell

Well, thank you for sharing your story with us.

Annie Brees

You are welcome.

Jennifer Campbell

It's such a wonderful story and it's so real and raw and and just realistic about what people can expect and timeline, right? I feel like some women just have to give it time. That's what they have to give it and a lot of people aren't willing to. And what I want to say is that I heard a really good quote a couple months ago and it reminded me of Balance365 "You will be successful at something when you're willing to do what other people are not." And as far as this life, there is just not a lot of people willing to walk away from dieting and embrace this life. And I feel like there is so much success to be found here. But you've got to start doing what other people aren't willing to do

Annie Brees

Well, and it's hard to give up dieting when everyone else around you is likely dieting.

Jennifer Campbell

Yes.

Annie Brees

Yeah, I do remember, real quick, a conversation with a Balance365 member. I think you were in on it. We were kind of troubleshooting why she hadn't experienced any success in the program.

Jennifer Campbell

As in, what was her success metric?

Annie Brees

She was, I think she was trying to balance her breakfast and she was like, "I just don't think this is working. And I'm still hungry. I haven't lost. My weight hasn't changed." Like, just thing after thing was just like not going well. And finally one of us was like, "Well, how long have you been doing it?" And she was like, "Two weeks." And I was like, "Okay, you need to keep going." And it happened again, with a with a client, she's transferring from another Personal Training client and she's like, "I've been doing this for a month now." And I was like "And.. it's going to be many months."

Jennifer Campbell

So yeah, Rochelle shared yesterday with Balance365 that she's actually lost 70 pounds since she started working with us. And she feels the same way as you. It's just, everything she's done has felt so sustainable and so enjoyable. Not that she hasn't had tough moments of having to mother herself. But she said, so first of all, Rochelle has been in Balance365 for two years. Like, we have to be very real about that we have to let this time pass because it's a journey. And people, there was a couple Balance365ers that asked her, you know, "What did this look like?" And she said, "It just hasn't been about the weight. Like, it's just, it's about everything that's happened off the scale that has been so important to me, the change that has taken place" and I thought, "That's perfect."

Annie Brees

And I think that that's what's ultimately going to sustain people, in our experience, that's what sustains people, that's what sustained be. And so as scary as it can be to let go of those ideal weights or those goal weights or your obsession with your weight, I think it's, for a lot of people, part of the process.

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

Yeah, this was fun. Thank you.

Jennifer Campbell

It was fun. Thank you.

Annie Brees

Good interview. Thank you.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah. Okay, we'll talk later.

Annie Brees

You make your great podcast host, by the way.

Jennifer Campbell

Thank you.

Annie Brees

But you don't get my job.

Jennifer Campbell
I don't want your job.

Annie Brees
Okay, goodbye.

Jennifer Campbell
All right, bye bye.

Annie Brees
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