

Balance365 Episode 176 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

Welcome back to another episode of Balance365 Life Radio. You know, we've talked on this podcast a fair amount about how children can disrupt sleep. But it's not just women with kids who struggle with solid sleep habits. Kids or no kids, we continue to hear from more and more women how menopause is influencing the quality of their sleep. If that's you, we hear you loud and clear. And this episode is just for you. Today we have a very special guest, the one and only Barbara St. Louis. Barbara joined our coaching staff of four years ago but was coaching long before that. Barbara specializes in coaching women going through midlife and menopause and on today's episode we dive into how menopause impacts sleep, and plenty of actionable suggestions about what's helpful and what's not so helpful so you can begin to tackle improving your sleep today. Before we dive into today's episode, I do want to let you know that the doors to Balance365 coaching are opening soon. And if you enjoy what you hear on our podcast, you are going to love coaching. Get on our waitlist. Those who are on our waitlist are the first to know when the doors do open and can snag one of those limited spots before it even opens to the public. You can find the link to our waitlist in the show notes.

ANNIE

Hi, Barbara. Welcome to the podcast. How are you?

BARBARA ST. LOUIS

Hi, I'm good. How are you ladies?

ANNIE

I'm really great. I'm so happy to have you on, so excited to be chatting with you in general, but especially about this topic, because this keeps coming up more and more and more. Wouldn't you say Jen?

JEN CAMPBELL

Yeah, for sure. It's been a minute, Barbara, since you've been on.

BARBARA

Yeah, I'm happy to be back. Always so fun to sit with you, ladies. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Barbara, do you want to take a minute before we dive into this topic and just tell us who you are and your special area, like why we would have you on a podcast about this topic in particular?

BARBARA

Sure. So I am a Balance365 coach. Prior to that I did coaching on my own, but I followed Jen and Annie on social media and I just really connected with their mission. And I saw that they were hiring. And in 2018 I joined the team as a coach. And when I was doing my own coaching, a lot of the women in my community, or the my friends and people who I was coaching, were approaching, or over the 40 mark and everyone was, you know, always joking how it goes downhill after 40. And I really wanted to change that narrative and understand why women felt that way. So I did a lot of research. I took some certifications on midlife and menopause. So I am a certified menopause wellness coach. There's a company called Burrell Education that does a certification in that. And then I have also done other certifications with other groups, nutrition. But midlife and menopause seem to be my specialty because a lot of the women, my friends and community were in that same age group. And I really wanted to understand the challenges that we face at this stage of our life, and how to change that narrative so that we can really live our best life and feel our best at this stage of life and not feel that it has to be a downhill stage, that it could be your power years, and so that was really what drew me to that. And so when I was coaching with Balance365 I think we talked about me doing a specific call on that. So that is one of the calls that I host, is a midlife and and menopause call and I love sharing with the ladies, you know, a lot about women's health and midlife, specifically women's health and how it's just an underserved area. And there's a lot of information out there about pregnancy and postpartum. But there's just this gap in midlife women's health. So that's what drew me to it.

ANNIE

Yeah, I think, as you know, Barbara, when we founded the company, we did have more of a postpartum focus, Jen and I had younger children, and a lot of our audience had younger children. And as we've grown older, it seems like our members have also grown older with us. And we are definitely seeing an increase in women over 40 joining Balance365. And they do face a unique set of circumstances as they move through perimenopause, menopause, post menopause that are likely to affect their health and wellness aspects. And so really speaking to the unique considerations and experiences that they might have is really important to us.

JEN

We have a couple other podcasts that we've done with both Barbara and Amanda Thebe that touch on menopause. And this one in particular is really going to be focused on sleep. So we'll dive into that. And we'll link to our other podcasts in the show notes. But do we just want to give a super brief outline of what menopause is for those kind of brand new to the topic?

ANNIE

Absolutely. Barbara, you want to field that one for us as the expert? So what is menopause?

BARBARA

Yeah, so being in menopause means that it's been at least 12 months since you've had a menstrual period. And when your period stops completely and doesn't return. So your ovaries are no longer producing estrogen or progesterone. And when I say 12 months, I mean 12 months straight in a row. If your period is erratic or still popping up, every now and again, that means that your ovaries are still producing those hormones, so and that you may still be in perimenopause. And perimenopause is that time when your ovaries are gradually beginning to make less estrogen and progesterone. And it's a very transitional time. It's usually when women feel the most symptoms, because that's where, you know, your body is feeling the impact of those hormonal shifts.

ANNIE

And so would you say that perimenopause is likely when we start to see some of those sleep issues kind of come to the surface?

BARBARA

Yes. And I didn't mention that, you know, perimenopause can start, it starts between the ages of 40 and 50. And it can last several years. Some women, you know, can start as early as age 35. And yes, it is typically when you are going to see a lot of symptoms. So some women see changes in their monthly cycle. They're either less frequent or more frequent, heavy. You may experience hot flashes, night sweats, which are hot flashes at night, low energy, migraines, mood swings, depression, and then sleep issues as as we're discussing today.

ANNIE

I remember those postpartum night sweats and they were brutal. [Laughs] So what you're saying, Barbara, is they could return as I approach menopause.

BARBARA

Yes. [Laughs] Unfortunately.

ANNIE

Okay. Noted.

BARBARA

It sounds like you have some experience on how to deal with them.

ANNIE

No, no, I mean, change clothes in the middle of the night? [Laughs] Sleep on a towel. I don't know. I'm open to suggestions. But also talk to me about just really quickly, hysterectomy or removal of the ovaries. How is that in the same ballpark?

BARBARA

Right. So natural menopause happens when it's, you know, your body is just naturally going through those changes. But you can have, you can enter the phase through a hysterectomy or having your ovaries removed. So that is could also induce those menopause symptoms.

ANNIE

Okay, so sleep specifically, I think, Jen, you've shared that it is one of the number one symptoms or issues that women are reporting as...

JEN

Definitely for our members. In that perimenopause stage. It's, you know, we talk about the importance of sleep often in Balance365 and then women in perimenopause are like, "Hey, come on, man." It's really tough for some of them, right? Symptoms vary from woman to woman, but some really, are really struggling with sleep. So yeah, that's why I wanted to do this podcast, just very focused on on sleep and not just sleep but fatigue, right? And their energy levels throughout the day.

ANNIE

Right. And that, I mean, that's, you know, just big picture. That's why we talk about the importance of sleep so much, because regardless of why you're maybe lacking sleep or feeling exhausted, it can contribute to memory issues, balance issues, mental health, your physical health. So really like doing what you can within your control to protect your quality and quantity of sleep, knowing that it might not be perfect. There might be elements out of your control, but making it a priority is important.

JEN

Yeah, so can we talk about how menopause can impact sleep? Or I guess, menopause or even just midlife, right? As a season?

BARBARA

Yeah. So, there are several factors. And we could start with this stage of life that you're in, during these times of you know, your life, while women in midlife, you're dealing with a lot of disruptions in your sleep patterns for various reasons. So not only the hormonal shifts, but you're at a stage in your life, where you're at the peak of your career, you may be dealing with teenage issues, so you're stressed about your teenager driving, or you may have young children or you know, some women may not have any children. But you're juggling a busy schedule, college applications, worrying about whatever it is that's going on, maybe you have a pet you're dealing with, taking care of your aging parents, you know, helping with their care, their finances, and then all of that, you know, comes to collide at this time of your life and you're worrying or you have trouble quieting your thoughts. And that is one of the major things that causes a disruption in your sleep.

JEN

So, it's like this stage of life in addition to the like physiological changes that are happening to you. So it's kind of, it can all feel like it's all coming at once. Yeah.

BARBARA

Yeah. And we can talk about the hormonal shifts as well. But the stage of life is one factor, and then it collides with the hormonal shifts as well.

ANNIE

So it's, what I hear you saying, Barbara, is it's very likely a high or potentially a high stress stage of life anyways, because you maybe have more responsibility in your career or your home, caretaking for family members. And then you're met with hormonal shifts, which, what does that look like?

BARBARA

Right. Yeah. So estrogen is the primary sex hormone in women, and it plays a really major role in your body and you have estrogen receptors all over your body. So it's not just responsible for your reproduction and your monthly menstrual cycle, but it also can have an effect on your cognitive abilities. That's why it's, sometimes women have brain fog, and then also, you know, physical symptoms. Now, estrogen also helps to promote sleep. So all of the hormones interact with each other. So it helps the body use serotonin, which is a neurochemical that assists with sleep. So when you're low in estrogen that can cause you to have anxiety, low mood, low energy, and, of course, disruption in sleep. And then progesterone is also declining during this time. Now, if you think about when you are pregnant, like your first trimester, that's usually when you're higher in progesterone. And that's when you are probably feeling the most tired. Progesterone is that hormone that, it's like a feel good, calming hormone, but that's declining at the stage of life as well. So that can also cause sleep issues.

ANNIE

What about, I know you talked about some of these already, some of the other midlife symptoms that women might be experiencing.

BARBARA

Yeah, so night sweats.

JEN

What is it?

BARBARA

That's another one. [Laughs]

JEN

What is a night - I didn't have, you know, I've never had a night sweat.

ANNIE

You've never had a night sweat?

JEN

No. And I'm like, "What is that?"

BARBARA

So it's just hot flashes that happen at night, suddenly, your body temperature goes up. And it's the number one reason women at midlife complain about sleep struggle struggles, because they're so uncomfortable and so disruptive. There's really, there's a lot of research being done on the causes of night sweats, but they feel that it's because of the drop in estrogen, which affects the part of your brain that regulates your body temperature. So you suddenly feel hot, and it causes you to, you know, awaken while you're sleeping.

ANNIE

So I can tell you what it felt like for me is I would have experienced that where I would be like really hot, I'd kick off all the covers. And then next thing I'd know I would wake up because I was chilly or like freezing because I was sleeping in just what felt like drenched in sweat. And I don't like, I don't think I'm exaggerating. This is not being dramatic, like sweating through T-shirts, like sheets, pillowcases, getting up and like laying down towels in the middle of the night. Like it can be pretty intense.

BARBARA

Yeah, I thankfully haven't experienced them yet. But I know it can be exactly how you described. And then if you have a partner, you know, so it's also disruptive for your partner as well.

ANNIE

But hot flashes can come during the day, too, not just at night. I mean, I know that's what we're talking about as it relates to sleep, but they can also happen during the day.

BARBARA

Yeah, yeah, definitely they can happen during the day.

ANNIE

What are some of the other symptoms?

BARBARA

Sleep apnea is, so they're also, those are the some of the hormonal related symptoms, but there are also some medical conditions that happen with women at that stage of life. So sleep apnea, if you've ever heard someone who's sleeping, they're snoring loudly, and then they suddenly stop, like there's pauses in their breathing and they're gasping for air, they're choking. That's very common during this stage of life, and again, research feels that may be caused from a loss of of estrogen. But you know, this is one where if you are experiencing this, you know, you should get it evaluated with your doctor because you know, you can have a sleep study. There are things that they can do to help you as far as treatment on you know, mild cases, they may give you some lifestyle recommendations to address it, or more severe cases, you may

have to have some kind of device to help with whatever is obstructing you from being able to breathe, and then some more severe cases that may require surgery.

JEN

My husband had surgery -

BARBARA

Oh, really?

JEN

- three years ago, yeah, he had horrific sleep apnea and had surgery. He'd had his nose broken many, many times and [laughs] it was quite obstructed, but it's changed everything for him. Like his sleep quality, he just raves about it. So yeah, not to scare anybody that's not I don't know many people who have had their nose broken multiple times, but -

ANNIE

He was a professional boxer.

BARBARA

Oh.

JEN

[Laughs]

ANNIE

That's like important information there. I feel like that's an important detail that we should share.

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

Okay, so hot flashes, sleep apnea, anything else?

BARBARA

So there's one that, you know, I haven't experienced myself. But it's common at this stage of life as well. It's called restless leg syndrome. And it's a really weird sensation that occurs in your legs. And I guess what happens is, is you feel this uncontrollable urge to move, and it's usually at night. And so, and it can happen even while you're sleeping. So you're twitching and jerking, which wakes you up. So either you're dealing with this as you're trying to go to sleep, or you're dealing with it during sleep. And, again, this is one where there was no like, validated known cause, but they feel that it's either lack of iron, and this is why a lot of pregnant women may experienced this as well. Because they may have iron deficiencies. But there's also some research that says that could be attributed to the brain chemical dopamine. And that's needed for smooth muscle movement.

JEN

Wow, interesting.

BARBARA

Yeah, it's very common for women at midlife.

JEN

I know several women dealing with restless leg syndrome, and also sharing that it happens to show up for them just as they're sliding into sleep, just as they're falling asleep. So really annoying. And so would you say, is that something that could be improved with supplements, Barbara, as far as, I'm not recommending supplements, that's out of my scope of practice, but maybe checking in with the doctor about it?

BARBARA

Yeah, definitely another one that you know, you'd share your symptoms with your doctor, and then they would prescribe or give you some suggestions. Yes.

ANNIE

Okay. So I don't want to like paint a grim picture.

BARBARA

I know. [Laughs]

JEN

[Laughs] First the bad news.

ANNIE

Yes. Sounds like a party. But, there might be some helpful actions, shifts, suggestions that you can integrate into your, maybe your routine or your practice to help mitigate some of the disruption, if you are experiencing sleep issues during menopause. What would you say are some of the things that women could do if they're like, "Yeah, this is me, I'm going through menopause. I'm not sleeping. Well, what do I do?"

BARBARA

Yeah, so having a healthcare provider who understands menopause and can talk to you about the different treatment options is really helpful. You know, I often share this with the, on my coaching calls, that I was often dismissed by my doctor, when I shared that I thought I was perimenopausal. You know, she would say, "Oh, you still, you're still getting your period," or, you know, it was, I felt dismissed or silly about asking to be tested. So definitely, if you feel that you aren't getting the attention from your primary care, I would suggest seeking out a doctor who is a menopause specialist. And you can find one by going to menopause.org, which is the North American Menopause Society. They have physicians on there who are trained specialists, who take courses in menopause, because as I mentioned, this area is underserved and there are

physicians who don't get the training in menopause and may not feel comfortable treating their patients. So definitely seek out that if you feel that you aren't getting the care, and you can search within the US and then they also have a search option for other countries. So yeah, I know you have worldwide listeners.

ANNIE

I think Barbara, I've heard you talk about it, I've heard Amanda Thebe talk about it. Sometimes the symptoms of perimenopause, menopause are like seemingly kind of like vague and sporadic. Sometimes they show up on any given day. They're not always consistent. And it can be like putting some of the pieces of the puzzle together. So making sure that you have a primary care provider who is familiar and comfortable and confident with that area of expertise can be crucial because women are like, "Well, I'm not sleeping and I have brain fatigue, I'm, you know, I have weight gain, especially in my midsection," you know, XYZ fill in the list of symptoms, but they can one by one look unrelated.

BARBARA

Yes. And that's also, I also recommend women journal, and come to their doctor prepared with some data so that their doctor is more prepared to be a detective and they have some data with them. So everyone's transition is very different. So journaling is really the best way to understand how it's impacting you, and what symptoms may be bothering you the most. And so things like you know, how often you sleep, what your sleep patterns are, and also maybe your periods, whether those are frequent or infrequent, all of the things here, hot flashes, journal and bring that information to your physician so that you're better prepared, because we know a lot of times they're time constrained, you have maybe 15 minutes with them. So come prepared to that appointment. It will be an easier for them to help treat you.

JEN

It's really kind of, I hear you saying like take control, like take ownership of the symptoms and get in there and advocate for yourself with your doctor.

BARBARA

Yes, yeah, definitely.

ANNIE

I know another suggestion you have Barbara is to, this is a phrase we use in Balance365 often is, meet yourself where you're at. What do you mean by that?

BARBARA

Yeah, so there are going to be days where you have more energy, there are going to be days where you don't have the energy. So give yourself some grace on those days, where your energy levels may be lower, and adjust as needed. You know, prioritize your to do list if there are things that can wait till tomorrow or another day. Just meeting yourself where you're at, because this journey is a roller coaster, and you're going to have your good days and your bad days. So understanding that and not expecting that you're going to be able to perform the

way that you did maybe back in your 30s or your 20s and tackle things and have the energy level, it's you do have to meet yourself where you are right now.

JEN

So kind of seize the day, when you've got energy seize the day, when you don't have the energy, just honor your body.

BARBARA

Yeah.

JEN

Yeah. I love that.

ANNIE

How about exercise? Is this help - I know the answer, Barbara. But -

BARBARA

[Laughs]

ANNIE

- is it helpful?

BARBARA

Well, you know, getting the extra, getting in exercise might be the last thing you want to do when you're you're fatigued, right? But research shows, and it's that exercise can actually help to boost your energy level. And I've seen it for myself, you know, and everyone is different. So for me, I exercise in the morning, because if I exercise later in the day, I'm not gonna be able to sleep, but it can help with your fatigue. But for some people, it can actually help them sleep better as well. Maybe doing some stretching or relaxation exercises before bed could help them sleep better. And then also, depending on what time of day works for you, it can also help you with your energy levels throughout the day.

JEN

There is many different ways people can exercise, there is many different levels of intensity. And sometimes when we go through different seasons of life, it may not look the same as it had been, which I think ties back into meeting yourself where you're at being so important. I was coaching a woman the other day and said to her that ideally our rest would match our intensity, right? So like if life is go, go, go, go, you need a lot of rest, actually to recover from that or recovery needs to match intensity. So, sometimes the best choice for your overall health and wellness is not a super intense workout.

BARBARA

Yeah.

JEN

So if you're having a very symptomatic day, but you want to do something instead of nothing. That's okay. But maybe, maybe changing your expectations and maybe giving your body a little bit of what it needs, like maybe a walk right?

BARBARA

Yeah. being outdoors. Or something more relaxing, like, yoga? Deep breathing yoga session. Yeah. So it definitely doesn't have to be intense exercise. And I think that's, unfortunately, some women feel that, you know, it doesn't count. Unless it's, you know, they're breathless and tired. But as you said, it's meeting yourself and your energy level.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Barbara, if women find themselves with the interest and the energy to exercise, but they're unsure of what to do, is there any type of exercise in particular that you would recommend they, you might like, encourage them to investigate more at this stage of life?

BARBARA

Well, I always say, you know, do what's enjoyable. Find what you like to do. But, you know, at this stage of life, incorporating more strength training is really important, because we do lose muscle mass over the years, so to help protect our bone density, prevent osteoporosis, you know, falls are very common for women when they're older. So just to, for us to maintain our independence. It's doing strength training, some type of strength training, and it doesn't have to involve weights, it could be your own, you know, body resistance, anything that's helping to maintain that muscle mass over the years.

ANNIE

I was hoping you'd say that.

ALL

[Laugh]

ANNIE

But I want to just, I want to repeat that, Barbara. It doesn't have to be like, heavy barbells. Right? Body weight, or a resistance band, even some light dumbbells if you get some hand weights. More than enough.

JEN

Yeah. Even you know, like yoga is strength training. If you're, you know, like just thinking about if you're resisting, then you are doing resistance exercises. Right?

BARBARA

Yeah.

ANNIE

Okay, so, so far, we've got talking with an understanding health care provider, meeting yourself where you're at, exercise as you can, what else would you recommend for women struggling with sleep during menopause?

BARBARA

So just having a general sleep routine, you know, of course, you can't. I always say you can't control how much sleep you get. But you can control you know, your sleep behaviors, right? So sticking to a schedule is really helpful, so maybe going to bed around the same time every night so that your body gets used to that routine and then you wake up around the same time every morning so that's one thing, and then having a wind down routine you know, we do that for our children you know, when they're young, you -

JEN

Bath, story, bed.

BARBARA

Yes! Exactly, you read them a story, might rub them down with lavender and so forth. So creating a ritual for yourself where you prepare yourself for sleep is really helpful. And you know, some women like taking a bath, some women like reading a book, finding something that helps to calm you down. That doesn't involve screens. [Laughs]

JEN

Yeah.

BARBARA

So, because you know the screens can interfere with your your sleep wake cycle. And then remembering that your bedroom is is for sleep. Yeah, so trying to eliminate some of that stuff. A lot of people try to go to sleep to the TV. Having that wind down routine is really important. Something that I do, because I'm one of those people that wake up in the night thinking about my to do list, is I do a brain dump.

JEN

Love that. Get it out. And leave it there.

BARBARA

Yep. I brain dump all the things that might wake me up in the night that I think I forgot about. And as someone has said, leave your worries on the nightstand. [Laughs]

JEN

You know, I do that for anxiety. So when I'm feeling anxious, I do brain dumps, often when I'm anxious, I start thinking that I'm going to forget things. I'm going to start forgetting things. And I'll

wake up ruminating on my to do list as well. So I actually find that very helpful. So that I know it's there. I won't forget it. That's everything on my to do list. And yep, leave it there.

BARBARA

Yeah. And you can, it'll be there tomorrow. You can work on it tomorrow.

JEN

Yeah.

BARBARA

Yeah. And then having a cold room. Because of the night sweats. So cooling down, making sure the temperature in your room is cool, especially for women who might be experiencing night sweats is something that's helpful as well.

ANNIE

I don't think I do any of those.

ALL

[Laugh]

ANNIE

But I may have to, I may have to start. I'm also not experiencing too much disruption to my sleep. But those are all really great suggestions. I know you also have listed Barbara, like sleep meditations, which could fit into that nighttime routine, which are super soothing to listen to.

BARBARA

So there are a few apps that I love. Headspace. Calm. There's another one called Relaxed, and they all have meditations. You can either do a guided meditation, or just listen to some, like a playlist with ocean waves or white noise.

JEN

I like listening to rain or storms or, yeah, I mean, everyone's gonna have their thing, right?

BARBARA

Yeah, and that can get a little tricky, because sometimes I'll do that, and my husband is like, "I can hear that, I can't sleep." [Laughs]

JEN

[Laughs]

BARBARA

I often wear my headphones while I'm doing it. So you know, you have to be respectful of your partner as well, if you're trying to listen to your meditation, and it's keeping them up.

JEN

One could make a case for separate bedrooms. Just saying. [Laughs]

BARBARA

[Laughs]

ANNIE

Barbara, is there anything else that you would add that's helpful?

BARBARA

Something I haven't tried personally, but um, you know, taking an Epsom salt bath. You know, there's a lot of, I've heard a lot of women share that that's helpful because the Epsom salts contain magnesium, which calms your body and promotes sleep. So that's something as well, and then I'm sure we're moving into this, but you know, limiting things like, limiting the caffeine closer to the evening is something I've found is helpful because that's going to keep you awake, you know, that's going to have, it's a stimulant. And you're gonna be awake if you're having a soda or an energy drink or something later in the day.

ANNIE

Would that be a good segue into what's not helpful?

ALL

[Laugh]

ANNIE

So, caffeine, number one, or I should say caffeine maybe specifically later in the day, you might notice that if you drink caffeine after a certain time that keeps you up or disrupts your ability to get to sleep. How do you feel about alcohol, Barbara? Is that helpful? A helpful sleep aid?

BARBARA

Yeah, so, you know, a lot of women do tend to go to that, you know, glass of wine at night to wind down and so forth. It can help with drowsiness. But, you know, once the alcohol wears off, your sleep can be disrupted. And it also can trigger some of the symptoms of menopause, like many women share that after drinking wine, their hot flashes, or their night sweats are worse then, you know.

JEN

Interesting, that's good to know.

BARBARA

They feel it's more so a trigger for that. So yeah, that...

JEN

It's a tough one because it almost, can feel like I guess a bit of a quick fix for some people because you, it just provides that kind of immediate relaxation, but then if it makes it worse later, then not worth it.

BARBARA

Yeah, yeah. And then, you know, something else is just watching the clock and just feeling that anxiety over lost sleep. Just encourage you not to lie awake, wondering about, you know, trying to fall asleep or watching the clock, focus on your behaviors rather than the outcome, so that wind down routine, that whatever it is that you do to turning off the screens, focus on doing those things. And then if you, if you don't fall asleep, don't sit there watching the clock, because that's going to increase anxiety, which is going to of course impact you getting the sleep.

JEN

Vicious cycle.

BARBARA

Yeah. It is, it is.

ANNIE

I know we touched on this a little bit before, but do you want to say any more about screen usage before bed?

BARBARA

Yeah. So, you know, and I'm very guilty of this, perusing Facebook, or -

JEN

I think this is a pretty universal -

BARBARA

[Laughs]

JEN

- thing right now. [Laughs] Yeah, at this moment in time.

BARBARA

Yeah, well, I, you know, I am truly guilty of this. But again, one thing that I found is helpful. You know, depending on what kind of device you have, a lot of the devices now have these limits that you can put on the phone, screen time limits, or bedtime reminders, and it goes into Do Not Disturb mode. So using those features on your phone to help limit your screen time. And of course, if you're a parent, you know, you want your phone next to you in case of an emergency and so forth. But you know, trying to put down those screens because it's stimulating rather than relaxing. So it is going to have the opposite effect, especially if you're trying to wind down and go to sleep.

ANNIE

We have here on our outline, trying to sleep.

BARBARA

Yeah. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Trying in quotes, I think I know where Jen was headed with this.

JEN

You know what? I coached somebody several months ago, and then she posted an update for our community and for her to accept this season of life and accept sleep disruptions has been revolutionary for her, and in turn led to more sleep. And she can't believe it. And she said prior to coaching, she was really ruminating on the loss of sleep, really frustrated with it, really anxious, laying there, checking the clock, like all of these things that we talked about. And when she decided to just accept it, and she said she would stay in her bed, but she wouldn't, she stopped trying to sleep. And for whatever reason it has number one led to more peace of mind. And number two actually led to more sleep.

ANNIE

It's almost like performance anxiety, like, "Oh, like I have to do the thing now. And now it feels like so much more stressful." But actually what Jen, where I thought you were going with this was we have a very special team member who was posting a while ago about her struggle with sleep. And she had messaged her husband about, "I'm tossing and turning, I can't get to sleep." And he, I think his advice was, "Have you tried to sleep? Have you just like, gone to sleep?" And she and she was like, "I hadn't. I was like laying in bed. But I was like playing with my phone. I was like, I was thinking about all the things." She was like, "I hadn't. Like, I was kind of almost going through the actions but actually hadn't like, disconnected from everything." You know, really like given it a solid effort to actually go to sleep, and she's like, "And then I did." So that's where I thought you were you're going with it. But I do like the idea of like letting go of forcing it.

BARBARA

Yeah, and that I think that ties back to mindset as well. You know, it's really acknowledging that importance of sleep and then making that commitment to yourself. Of course, not putting too much pressure on yourself. But some, you know, as women, we're really good at looking after everyone else. And making sure that we prioritize sleeping and a lot of times it's okay, I can get that one. One more thing to do later tonight, before I go to bed, so just changing that mindset of being intentional about it.

JEN

There's also options between all or nothing, between being wide awake and being like in a deep sleep, right? So, and Annie and I talked about this, or we tried to make sure we're mentioning it in all of our content when we are talking about the importance of sleep, but it's like, resting can be a good option of doing something restful.

ANNIE

And just like sitting down.

BARBARA

Yeah, yeah.

ANNIE

Sit down. Take a load off. If you can't take a nap, can you rest?

BARBARA

Right. Yeah.

ANNIE

Or like my, my mother would say, "I'm just resting my eyes." - "Mom are you asleep?" - "No, I'm just resting my eyes. My eyes are just tired." - "Okay, mom. Okay." [Laughs]

BARBARA

[Laughs]

ANNIE

Barbara, what about sleep aids, over the counter sleep aids?

BARBARA

Yeah, there are a lot of different sleep aids that you may see over the counter. Melatonin. Others. And again, as Jen mentioned it, you know, beyond my scope of practice, but there definitely have some value and work for women. So I would suggest, you know, going and doing your research on some of those, the supplements out there. But trying the lifestyle habits first, of course, some of these tweaks that we've talked about, and then incorporating those, of course, consulting your doctor first. But there, there are benefits to those. I have seen women sleep better with taking some of them. So.

JEN

I also want to mention HRT, because I don't know if we really went into that. But if you find yourself a good evidence based menopause healthcare provider, then exploring hormone replacement therapy as an option can be just life altering for some women. And I know some women don't see enormous impacts when when doing HRT, but some women, it is incredibly helpful to them. And there's a lot of misinformation and stuff out there in the world about hormone replacement therapy. So just make sure you have a great health care provider that you trust and is practicing evidence based menopause care. And yeah, then there's that option.

BARBARA

Yeah, definitely. As you said there, it's different for every woman on what works and what doesn't. It's such a individual journey. But understand that if these lifestyle habits aren't helping

to reduce your symptoms, then there is value in either over the counter, or hormone replacement therapy.

JEN

I imagine it's probably also very helpful to not compare your menopause journey with other women. And thinking back if the listener has experienced pregnancy or postpartum, some of my takeaways from learning about menopause over the years have been, it's similar in that everyone's journey is different. And how I navigated pregnancy ended up being different than how another woman might.

BARBARA

And it's something that I feel women don't share with each other enough. It would be helpful to, I feel like we don't talk about it enough with friends. With family. It seems to be this taboo subject. I think women are talking about it more these days. But you're right. Don't compare your journey to other women. But I think it's great for women to also share with other women, "I'm not failing, I'm not going crazy." There's a lot of times, when I have that coaching call, and I share the symptoms, and women are like, "Oh my goodness, I'm not going crazy." So having those discussions with other women to validate and understand that, you know, this is a stage of life that you're going through, and that there are things out there, there's options out there to help you and do your research and find a reputable doctor to help you. But yeah, so talking to other women. And understanding that this is that stage, this is a stage of life you're going through but it doesn't, you don't have to feel like you're a victim. There's definitely lots of options.

JEN

I guess we should also clarify that even people who don't identify as women will go through menopause, if you have ovaries or if you have female sex hormones, I guess it would be, you will experience menopause.

BARBARA

Yes, yes. Good point.

ANNIE

So we've talked about how menopause can impact sleep, what's helpful, what's not helpful. True to Balance365 values, we don't want anyone feeling pressure, or think that our takeaway message here is that you need to get, you know, seven to nine hours every night. What would you say? Like, what would you want the takeaway message for women to be listening to this who are struggling with sleep during menopause?

BARBARA

Yeah, so you heard a lot today. And I'm not expecting you to take all of this and try all of these things all at once, right? Think about what area you feel that you can improve. What is one thing that you could take away to improve your sleep? Start small, of course. And remember that sometimes it takes trying a few things to see things improve. So don't feel like you've tried one thing and it didn't work. And that's it, everything, every woman's journey is very different. And

then also understanding that there's going to be this, you know, this trade off, you know, saying yes to 30 minutes more of sleep, what are you willing to trade? Is that saying no to television, or Facebook, understanding the trade offs, but understanding that this is really a time that you need to prioritize yourself. And I always encourage women that, you know, you've spent years of your life taking care of others. And this is a time where your body is really screaming out for you to prioritize it. So finding something small that you can do to help you improve your sleep, and it could be something small, is going to have a great impact.

ANNIE

Yeah, we cannot outsource sleep. [Laughs]

BARBARA

Yes.

ANNIE

I can get maybe, I can be in a position to maybe hire someone to help with meals or clean my house or delegate some tasks and responsibilities, but sleep is not one of them. You got to do it for yourself. Right?

BARBARA

Yeah.

ANNIE

Yeah. Jen, anything to add?

JEN

No, I don't think so. I feel like we covered everything. I love the mindset or approach of like, you know, here's what we can control, here's the things we can change. Here's the things we can't really, or here's kind of the unknowns. But bottom line, like take care of yourself.

ANNIE

Yeah. And what that looks like will be up to the individual, like what you need and honoring that. But hopefully, we gave you a some good ideas and suggestions and if you are struggling with sleep at this stage of life, know that you're not alone. It's a thing, right? And there hopefully are some strategies whether you implement on your own or with a primary health care provider that can help reduce the effects of it. Thank you, Barbara. It's good to talk to you.

BARBARA

Thank you, ladies.

JEN

Thank you.

ANNIE

Where can people connect with you? Anywhere in particular, Barbara, do you hang out on social media?

BARBARA

I have social media accounts. I haven't been as active but definitely can connect with me, my Instagram is @forever_b_fit. My Facebook is Forever Fit & Healthy, but I love my Balance365 community so Balance365, that's where you'll find the most.

ANNIE

So if you are a coaching member get on that midlife and menopause coaching call that Barbara hosts. Okay. Thank you, Barbara. Thank you, Jen. We'll talk soon.

JEN

Bye bye.

ANNIE

Thank you.

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