

Balance365 Episode 35 Transcript

Annie: Welcome back to another episode of Balance365 Life radio. On today's show, Lauren, Jen and I are diving into the hot topic of counting calories - should you? Shouldn't you? What are the pros and what are the cons? Counting calories has long been regarded as a necessity if you want to manage your weight but is calorie counting a truly accurate and reliable way to do that? I invite you to keep listening because the information we share in today's episode just might surprise you. Enjoy!

Jen and Lauren we're all together again and I always love it when the three of us can do podcasts together, don't you?

Jen: Yeah. It's fun.

Lauren: Yes.

Jen: I don't think - people would be shocked how little the three of us get together even online, like to talk or I mean, we chat.

Annie: Yeah, we chat frequently but we don't, it's sometimes just me and you, or you and Lauren or me and Lauren or our other team members so it's not always the three of us all the time.

Jen: Right.

Annie: Although that would be great, if we like lived in a cul de sac like.

Jen: Yeah, that would be.

Lauren: Yes.

Annie: So you just pop over to the middle house for a podcast recording and some coffee, like that would be great.

Jen: I was actually telling a family member this summer about our company and how we work together and we live in these different cities and I said and he said,

"How's that living so far away from each other?" and I said, "Well, you know it comes with challenges. I think it would be really nice if the three of us were in the same city." And he says, "You know what, I think it's great because having a business is like having a marriage and it's like, if you guys all lived in the same place, it would be like 'Who took out the garbage last week?' Like, it could be nice having a bit of space sometimes." And I was like, "Yeah, maybe."

Annie: Maybe that's what's kept us from or encouraged us to be so successful is that we're not sick of each other yet.

Jen: Yes, maybe.

Annie: So today we wanted to talk about, we're just wrapping up the Power Bowl challenge, by the time this airs we'll have wrapped up the Power Bowl challenge and in our Power Bowl challenge recipe book, if you received that, you might have noticed that we included the calorie counts and the macro counts of each bowl?

But if you are an insider to our Balance365 program you also know that we don't recommend calorie counting long term and Lauren, our resident nutrition guru over here did a really great Facebook live in our private Facebook community which, if you aren't a part of that, it's Healthy Habits Happy Moms on Facebook. We have almost forty thousand women, or are we over forty thousand? I do this every time.

Lauren: I think we're over.

Annie: Are we officially over?

Lauren: Yeah.

Annie: Women, worldwide, moms, non-moms. It's a really great place to be where we're giving a lot of great content I think and a lot of great support to help you reach your goals with balance of moderation and food and fitness but Lauren did a really great Facebook live on a why you should take calories with a grain of salt. Right, Lauren?

Lauren: That's right.

Annie: I nailed it.

Lauren: You nailed it.

Annie: And you had three really, really good points or more than three really good points, but we just wanted to share that on our podcast because sometimes calories can seem really important, like they're the end all, be all, calories in versus calories out, we've all heard that like that's like what matters and that counting calories can be a really great way to help you reach your goals, but you brought up some great points about why maybe it's a flawed method. Right?

Jen: Yeah it's definitely a very flawed method and before we get started I want to say that the idea for this came up because we were having people tell us and even e-mail us and post in the group that they were punching the calories of their power bowls into their own calorie tracking apps and they were different from what our nutritional information was on the power bowls and it was really frustrating a couple times, like, you know, when I'm the one that calculated all of the macros for our power bowls and a couple times I was emailing people back with like my Excel spreadsheet to show them. Because I didn't know, you know, it's like, well, look, like, here's what I have.

And it's just frustrating because, you know, we know that they're going to be different for all the reasons that we get into and it showed exactly what the three of us are about to talk about, that people get really, really caught up in these numbers.

Annie: Absolutely. Should we just dive right into it, Lauren? You want to take us through the first reason there why you should take calories or counting calories with a grain of salt?

Lauren: Sure. The first one is inaccuracies and there's two parts to this. The first one is that food labels aren't always accurate and I find that most people, common sense believes that they are, right? I used to think that they were accurate. It's the label on the back of the box, you would assume it's accurate. But they're actually based on averages and the F.D.A. allows about twenty percent variance. They allow an error of up to twenty percent on the label so when you think about it that's a big difference when there's twenty percent that could be wrong or different each food you eat throughout the day. So I did in my live an example about, let's say, 2000 calories a day is what you're aiming for and you think you're eating two thousand calories a day. You could be consuming, really, up to 2400 which is 400 extra per day and when you add that up over the

week, it's about 2800 calories extra that you could be eating and that's a big difference, especially when you may be tracking really well, you think and you're not getting results and you don't understand why and you blame yourself. So that's a huge, huge reason.

Annie: And so even just on like a snack level if you look at the serving size at the back of you know some crackers or chips or I always pick crackers as the example in these podcasts.

Jen: You do.

Annie: Really like crackers apparently. I think that might be a mom thing, we always seem to have crackers in the house ,like goldfish or like graham crackers.

Jen: Crackers are big.

Annie: Yes, anyways, if it says 200 calories per serving size ,the twenty percent variance can be a plus or minus, so really, we're talking anywhere from 160 calories to 240. So like getting worked up about the exact number in exactly what you're consuming is a little bit out of your control for this reason.

It's just not really closely regulated and in fact I think there's even been stories, I don't remember which brand it was, but I remember reading in the news that a popular ice cream brand was pulled off the counters for having such inaccurate labels. They say per pint is, you know, 300 calories or whatever, it was really more, it was above the twenty percent, consistently above the twenty two percent so.

And I don't, like, I don't know, some people might hear this and they might be like, "Oh my gosh, you know, like, this is wrong? Everything I know is wrong?" and it's, like, we're not, like, saying that to scare you or to make you anxious or nervous about the calories you're consuming or the amount of calories you're consuming, I mean it's just more of a vote for why calorie counting should be taken with a grain of salt. Just don't put all of your eggs in one basket, so to speak with calorie counting.

Lauren:Right. Exactly.

Annie: So what's the other, what's the other part of inaccuracies, Lauren.

Lauren: Well, another thing I did was we took an example of lean ground beef and I typed it into three different calorie tracking websites and I got three different numbers. And these were big websites. I did My Fitness Pal, I did just Google and then I did Nutrition Data and they were all different, they weren't vastly different, but again, that's only, I did one ounce of food and obviously you eat many ounces of food throughout the day so when you add that up it's a noticeable difference.

And then, the other part of it is that humans, innately, are not accurate at measuring our food portions and calories. So, studies have shown that 60% of the time we're not accurate. So this isn't, like, a personal flaw it's a human in general flaw. So don't take it personally that maybe you aren't the best at tracking your portions because no one is, and studies also show that even nutritionists who are trained on how to be accurate at counting calories and measuring portions underestimate about 30% of the calories in a meal. So again, big differences there.

Jen: So you can stack that on top of the label inaccuracies and then we're just way off.

Lauren: Right. It's a disaster.

Annie: And to circle back, Lauren, to your variances that you found and to what Jen was saying when members would message us about the power bowl ingredients. You know, "Why do your numbers not match my numbers?" Well, it could be because we're using different databases, we're using different brands of edamame or brands of, you know, quinoa, but also, to be noted, that some of the entries, not all of them, some of the entries on sites like Myfitnesspal are user generated. Some, as Jen pointed out to us, are regulated or they are verified, they're Myfitnesspal verified, is that what they call them? That someone has kind of double checked it?

Jen: Like a staff member.

Annie: Like some thirteen year old in their basement.

Jen: Child labor, we better watch it.

Lauren: You look at MyFitnessPal and like, you type in something like ground beef and there's like hundreds of entries and, you know, I just picked the one that

seemed the most accurate based on what I had, but you know, a lot of them are just some random, like, Joe Schmoe just entering whatever and you don't know if that's accurate or not.

Annie: Right and just so they have fair representation here, I pulled this from their website, it says "Our database is compiled two different ways - we research and add many of the items, some are submitted by our other members. For the most part our members are just as precise as we are, however, there may be some entries that are inaccurate or incomplete."

Jen: And I think I shared with you guys just part of this podcast that there is another fitness/health/nutrition professional who went through myfitnesspal verified entries with his own and he found inaccuracies even with their verified entries. And he has all these spreadsheets and stuff in a blog post where he where he compares them all and, look, one thing I will say, I understand some people listening to this are probably feeling anxiety. I consider If It Fits Your Macros my last diet so IIFYM, If It Fits Your Macros, it is sort of a diet, it's just a trend, you could say, and it's about, it's basically just counting every macro and calorie that you eat.

Lauren: Tight and they count it, they call it like flexible dieting.

Jen: They call it flexible dieting, right. And while a lot of people call it freedom from clean eating, "clean eating", for others, it's really just another diet and I was on it for months, I was in a Facebook group full of women who were doing flexible dieting and I don't think I've ever been more anxious in my life about my food and weighing everything and then being part of that group was just, it was like, you know, it just fed, we fed each other's anxiety.

I saw some crazy things, like, you know, people would post in the evening "I have two grams of fat, fourteen grams of carbs and one gram of protein left for the day what can I eat?"

Lauren: I was just going to say that like, at the end of the day you'd be like "OK, I have twelve grams of protein left, zero carbs and one gram of fat you're like well, I better just get out the chicken breasts and start eating.

Jen: Or dive into a case of protein powder with a spoon. So yeah, it's just, so hearing all of this, I imagine, I wish someone had explained this to me prior to me

jumping into the on to the flexible dieting train and had I heard this when I was deep into it, it would have sent me over the edge, like and I can just imagine how the group would have responded because it was just quite an experience. So I think what, we're not we're not trying to give people anxiety, we're probably telling them, like, you know, "Chill out. Chill out a little."

Annie: Well, and to be fair, we're not saying you shouldn't calorie count ever, at all, anytime, I mean, I think the three of us have used it at various points in our life and it is something that it is a tool that we can, we believe can help create some awareness around portion size or how much you really need to consume or how much you need to or want to consume if you have a weight loss goal or weight gain goal. That's not what we're saying, we're just saying that, you know, for these reasons, this is part, all of these reasons, we have more to get into, is why we wouldn't recommend it long term. Like this is usually something we would recommend as a short term strategy.

Jen: Yeah, just an awareness tool.

Annie: If needed. Yes, exactly. And I also to just want to note that I know that there are people that are going to hear us talk about, like, the inconsistency between brands and databases and our our own ability to measure and they're going to say that, you know, well, we're consistently inconsistent and yeah, that's true ,and so you know, if we're consistently 20% off we can still see a trend in our intake or a trend in our body weight or whatever we're tracking, but it's just, again, the point is is to point out why we don't need to get so overwhelmed and consumed with every small detail and nailing, you know, to the gram, to the calorie, you know, five calories over, five calories under, like, that's just, in our opinion, not a good way to spend our energy or a healthy way to spend our energy.

Jen: Right, the other thing is, Lauren listed the websites she used for the Power Bowl challenge. I, first, I weighed everything, by the way, on a little food scale, and I do not put the weights in the recipes, and I I don't, unless it's meat, I often, because that's how meat is sold. But the reason I don't use the weight, I use cups or tablespoons, is because I don't want to give the impression that people should weigh their food. I know flexible dieters want the weights because they want to weigh their food and find out exactly what's in it but but I don't think that is realistic for most people, so I did not give the weights.

So, first I would look at the label and if I couldn't get the information from the label, for example, if it was, you know an apple or a pear that didn't have a label on it, I would go to the U.S.D.A. website. So that's a government website, it's the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and they have a whole database just like MyFitnessPal. And none of them are user generated and they're all input there and you think, if anything's going to be accurate, it's going to be the U.S.D.A. website, however, when people started questioning the macro counts, I pulled up, I think it was edamame I pulled up for an example, and just, you know, like other tracking apps there are several entries for edamame, several different, you know, depending on the brand and if it's frozen, if it's cooked, anyways, I chose three that were similar, there's three different brands and there was, per serving, there was a four gram difference between them, one was nine grams and the other one was thirteen grams, and then the other one was somewhere in the middle, for protein in edamame.

So, you know, again, like Lauren was saying, that seems small when you look at it on a food per food basis, but when you put together a whole meal and you have all of those different data points and then you put together a whole day, and then you put together a whole week, then you start to see that it's actually impossible. I mean the chances of you actually having an exact calorie and macro count for the week are very, very, very, very low.

Annie: And I mean physically, like it's not only physically overwhelming, I mean, just hearing you talk about that to me, it's like "Oh my gosh, it sounds so overwhelming" but also just the toll that could potentially take on you mentally and emotionally, like if that you know, I think that's like a person to person basis. Like if that's something that gives you anxiety and like, you're like feeling overwhelmed or anxious or fear that you've gone over, you've gone under, you have guilt if you've gone over, like maybe this isn't the right tool for you. Like, and that's OK.

Lauren: Yeah.

Annie: Alright, let's move on. Reason number two, Lauren, tell us.

Lauren: Reason number two is that we're all different and we use different cooking methods. So, again, I put a lot of information in here so, like, every point really has like two or three points in it. But, so, as humans, we absorb calories differently based on our gut bacteria. So we we all have a little bit of a different

make up or can have a different makeup that means, like, plus or minus one hundred fifty calories a day. So, again, not that much day by day, but when you add it up it can be a big difference.

And then the second point to this which, again, I don't think a lot of people realize, is that when you cook or blend or chop your food the calorie count changes and that's not the calories in the food changes, but the amount that our bodies can absorb changes. So when you cook food, chop food, or blend food, it makes calories more available for us to be able to absorb and calorie counts often don't reflect that, right? So when you go to buy raw chicken it may be telling you the calorie count for raw chicken, but you're not going to eat raw chicken, you're going to cook raw chicken and that changes the calorie count.

Jen: We should start a new diet. It should be the raw food, unchopped, uncooked diet.

Lauren: They do have a diet like that.

Annie: I think the raw foods diet. I think Gwyneth Paltrow made that one trendy.

Jen: Unchopped? The unchopped diet?

Annie: It was like the whole idea was that food was cooked, prepared or consume to below a certain temperature but I don't know about chopped or blended. But-

Lauren: You have to bite it right off the-

Jen: You have to just go out to your garden, and get on your hands and knees-

Annie: You can't even use your hands. I had actually had no idea about this and so when I heard you say that I just kind of did a little bit more digging and, just for an example, a raw egg, like an egg from your refrigerator has about 47 calories, but once it's been hard boiled, your body would read it as 74 calories, 74ish.

Lauren: Did you happen to look at like the raw egg carton? Did it say 47 calories? Do you know?

Annie: No, I should go do that though. But, you know, what it reminds me of is popcorn. Like the nutrition label for popcorn always has popped or unpopped.

Lauren: Right.

Jen: I've never noticed that.

Lauren: Why would you eat unpopped popcorn?

Annie: And also, really the serving size should just be like if you eat the whole bag.

Jen: And pour butter on it. And seasoning.

Annie: And maybe some parmesan. But really, like, popcorn does that though, but no, no other foods. I haven't seen that on the other foods.

Lauren: We need like a raw, a cooked, a chopped and a blended, please.

Annie: While you start talking about number three, I'm going to go check my eggs, OK? I'll be right back.

Jen: Okay, bye Annie.

Lauren: So I think number three is probably, to me, the most important and number three is that when we rely on calorie counting we lose touch with our internal regulators. And our internal regulators are going to be the most precise calorie counter that you have for yourself so, spoiler alert, two of our habits in Balance365, in the program are working on your hunger and working on your fullness cues and that is actually one of, or two of the hardest habits that people have trouble with because many people come to us having dieted for years and sometimes decades and we use these outside factors, like calorie counts or points or whatever to dictate how much we "should" be eating and we lose touch with those little signals that tell us actually when we're hungry and when we're full and how much we need to eat. So for me, when I was calorie counting, I used to all the time, like if I ever had calories left at the end of the day and I wasn't hungry I would eat them anyway, because I was not about to let those calories go to waste.

Jen: Right?

Lauren: Like, I was going to eat all my calories I could eat. And then on the flip-side of that, I know what also happens is maybe you run out of calories for the day and you are hungry and you try as hard as you can to, like, push that

feeling away and eventually you give in you get the eff-its and you eat the whole tray of brownies and you may have blown your day and so you continue eating.

Jen: Yeah and you feel awful about that, right?

Lauren: Yeah and it starts the shame cycle, right, when that happens. So, on either side of the coin, like, you're either, maybe, pushing your hunger away and then giving in to it later because as we always say hunger always wins eventually. Or, you're not hungry but you're eating anyway because the app says you have extra calories.

Jen: Right.

Annie: Hi, I'm back, by the way, hi. My eggs said seventy calories so that's interesting. That would reflect the hard, like the cooked, the prepared, data-wise.

Jen: Not the raw.

Annie: Not the raw.

Jen: So what if you're just pouring raw into your shake?

Annie: Like bro shakes? Like you're going to have some Arnold Schwarzenegger like type shake? Yeah, I don't know. I'll do some more digging. I mean, not that I care about the twenty calorie difference, I want to eat because eggs are high in protein and they have fat that leaves me feeling full. But anyways, I just thought I would add that in there but getting back to what Lauren and Jen were talking about, ultimately what happens in those situations is that we begin to value the information and the app or our food journal or a calorie counter more so than our bodies. And that can be kind of a slippery slope or a beginning of a slippery slope for people that they're paying more attention to what the numbers are versus are they hungry or are they full?

Jen: Right.

Annie: Yeah, so and you know, just to kind of add to that too, I missed the first part of it, but I think I know why she said that counting calories for some people often seems to be based on a fear that you cannot regulate, your body cannot regulate, the food intake or food consumption on its own or can you trust your

body and that you have to constantly monitor it or you'll spiral out of control and we would say that that's just not true.

Lauren: That's a big fear that a lot of people come to us with. One woman, in particular, I remember, was terrified to stop counting calories and literally thought she was just never going to stop eating if she didn't, if she wasn't hyper vigilant about watching how much she ate and counting each calorie. And what happened was she was eventually felt so much freer and that didn't happen, she didn't continue to eat and eat and she has now gone on to start reaching her goals and I don't think she's really counted calories since, maybe here and there, which is, if you're in the program, you'll know, like we recommend doing that short term at different points.

Jen: If at all, right so we have a podcast with Sarah Cole that we did, she's a Balance365er and she has never, ever counted one single calorie while in Balance365. And that's worked for her great, right.

Annie: And and she has gone through phases of maintaining her weight and losing weight without that, so it's possible. I mean these are just, these are tools, we look at calorie counting as a tool in the toolbox, it is not the entire toolbox. Like, it is not the end all, be all, it's just a tool and it might be a method that works for some some of the time, it might be a method that works for some all the time depending on the person, and might be a method that you don't ever have to use ever.

Jen: The other thing is it doesn't have to be all or nothing, right. So when we do record when we when we do talk about calorie or macro counting in the Balance365 program, we recommend looking at it by like a meal per meal basis, or a food to food basis, like not you don't have to just start day one and track everything, you know, all day, every day for X amount of days.

You really can break down your meals or look at them one by one just to give you that information you need, right. I do have to say that when I was calorie and macro counting I think I spent more time looking up the nutritional information of my meals than I did cooking and eating. Because, try cook something like spaghetti for your family and then to work out the macro content per serving, right? So you're putting in all these different ingredients. You know, ground beef, and onion and celery and mushrooms and sauce and you're putting it into a big pot, you're cooking it and then you're scooping it onto a plate.

So here's me with three little kids running around and, you know, trying to figure all this out. It would send me over the edge and then I would be weighing everything before I would put it in, then writing it down on a piece of paper or putting it into my calorie tracking app and then when it came to my serving size, scooping out half a cup, weighing it on the scale putting it on to my plate.

And it was just so much and I wish I would have known that it was unnecessary for me to do that because it was just a lot it was a lot and it was also something I decided that I personally didn't want my kids seeing me do on a consistent basis. So I just didn't, you know, I kind of thought one day like "Are they going to grow up watching me weigh every piece of food before I eat it? Is that what I want?"

Lauren: And you know they're seeing it. You know they're paying attention.

Jen: Right, and so I just, I personally didn't want my kids to see me doing that, especially when you add, you know it's not like just the weighing, it's not like, you know, measuring to put a recipe together. It was my whole anxiety around the whole thing, too, which I'm sure they could sense.

And there's, you know what, there's videos too, I was going to say earlier, there's videos on Youtube that would send me over the edge as well. So you can go up on YouTube and watch people compare the difference of say taking half a cup of oatmeal and cooking it and then weighing oatmeal and cooking it and showing, like, because we all would, you know, if you take half a cup of oatmeal, you might have ten more grams of oatmeal in your scoop than I do, do you know what I mean?

So it's these people showing the difference of calories and macros overall if you're not weighing, so they're basically saying, "Look, if you're going to track macros you better be weighing everything" and it's just like those kinds of things used to send me over the edge and I know the women in the Facebook group I was part of, it felt like everybody was kind of over the edge in that group.

Lauren: So like, we're just trying to say here, like, if this works for you, like, great. Like we're not trying to get anyone to stop doing this if this is what works for you and it's what you enjoy, but for the three of us and many, many women that we've coached it hasn't worked. It's been either been too anxiety-inducing or it just it's not giving them the result they want. You don't have to do it. Like there are other ways and ways that we feel are better.

Jen: Yeah, we just released in the Power Bowl challenge week one recipes inside that email, we had a meal prep guide and inside that meal prep guide we showed you a really easy way to estimate serving sizes by using your hand. So maybe we could link to that in the show notes.

Lauren: Yeah, and again, like, that's not going to be accurate, but when you're listening to your hunger and fullness cues and you know how to do that, which we go into in the program, you don't have to be accurate in your counting and measuring because you have a calorie counter inside of you, basically, that tells you how much you need to eat

Jen: Right.

Annie: Yeah and this is something in our experience, I mean, when I came, when I joined forces with Lauren and Jen and Lauren was trying to tell me that I didn't have to count calories to lose weight I was like, "How? How? Like how?"

Lauren: But how does that work?

Annie: I don't get it. Because listening to hunger and fullness cues for me felt really scary, like it was, like, well, I'm hungry all the time and I can eat until I am, like unbutton my jeans so full I can't walk, like I can eat with the best of them, like, this isn't going to work for me.

And this really was a practice for me, like it took some trial and error and it's taken well over a year, two years to actually, like, feel like "OK, I notice when I'm hungry, I arrive to meals when I'm hungry, I eat til I'm full or almost full and very rarely do I eat until I'm stuffed any more, which is really nice" but I just want to note that when you let go of something like calorie counting, especially if you're really, really restrictive with it, that the pendulum, we talk a lot of times about the pendulum, that pendulum can swing from calorie counting to this, like, "I'm just going to eat whatever I want" and that period for "I'm just going to eat whatever I want," for women can be like, "Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, I get like, I can't like, I just eat whatever I want, like, this is so scary, I've never done this before, I'm going to gain weight or I'm going to lose all my gains" or whatever you're talking and the temptation can be to pull that pendulum back to calorie counting.

But in our experience, in our members experience with Balance365, if you just, like, let that pendulum kind of settle in the middle that's where you'll find balance,

moderation, sustainability, you can listen to your body, you can trust your body, and you don't have to rely on those tools all the time.

Jen: It's really interesting to me how out of touch everybody has become from their internal regulators and just the example, you know, you being one example, Annie, and I'm another example, when I first met Lauren and was working with her on my internal signals, my hunger signal was a major trigger for me to feel anxiety and to binge eat, basically, because I was sort of in chaos, as you just described with my eating habits, and because I had committed to never dieting again, and I had gone so long, like a decade of going hungry all the time. And you know, you commit to not dieting anymore, the hunger was just a trigger for me to rebel. Like it was like, "Oh my God, I'm hungry, no, this can't be. I can't be hungry." And Lauren you describe it so well, when you compare it to feeling tired, do you want to go over that because it's really great?

Lauren: Sure, so when you think about, so hunger is just a bodily signal, right, it's a signal from your body trying to tell you something and we have other bodily signals like being tired or being thirsty. So like, when you yawn, you don't, like, freak out and run to your bed and I have to go to bed right now. Like, when you're thirsty-

Jen: I wish I would.

Lauren: When you're thirsty, you don't freak out and you know run and like put your head in a glass of water. Like these are just signals from your body telling you, "Hey, like you're getting tired, you should probably, you know, go to sleep soon." Like, "Hey, you need some water." Like and we take those as they are, but for some reason, well, I know the reason, but when we feel hunger, it's not, we don't take it as that bodily signal, we take it as "Hunger is the enemy, we must push it away" but when you honor your hunger and listen to your hunger, it's, again, I feel like a broken record but it's the best calorie counter that you're ever going to have. Right, because not only are there a million inaccuracies but everyone's different, everyone has a different activity level day to day, everyone has a different body composition and everyone's calorie needs are different so-

Jen: Right, so if you, so for example, that is such a good point actually, so for example, if your total daily energy expenditure is 2000 calories so some app or some website spits out 2000 calories to you based on your height, your weight and your activity level that you input, but two days a week you run ten kilometers.

On those days you are going to be significantly more hungry than on the days when you don't run ten kilometers and your hunger and satiety will help you regulate that and ensure that you eat what you need on those days when you need that extra fuel and on the days that you're not running, your hunger and satiety will feel different. And if you were just going by calories and trying to have just strictly two thousand calories a day on your running days, you would be famished. You would probably feel awful.

Lauren: You try and white knuckle through and you may make it or you may, like we said, eat the whole tray of brownies.

Jen: Right.

Lauren: and I also want to mention too that Annie said that it took her a while to kind of get back in touch with these and it does take time but I really feel, and I think you two would agree with me, that it's time well spent. Because once you get back in touch with those, you have them forever. Like you don't need to rely on anything outside of yourself again.

Jen: Yeah and you have to make mistakes to get it, that's the thing. So when you commit to listening to your hunger and satiety, it doesn't come overnight. You have days where you let yourself get too hungry and you feel ravenous, or you have days where you eat and you weren't hungry at all. You'll have days where you continue to overeat and you feel stuffed after and you'll have days when you undereat and you didn't really eat your full meal and you're hungry sooner than you want to be. So it's like, that's the kind of stuff we work through in Balance365 is an understanding it's not going to look perfect, but all of those mistakes, "mistakes" they give you data and they help you make a different choice the next time, right?

Annie: Yeah and I just want to share too, I think I might have shared this on other podcast but I just recently got my body composition check for the first time in six months and I have not, in that six months, I haven't counted a single calorie, I haven't tracked a single meal. I don't even, I may have weighed myself a couple times and I have maintained my body composition for six months without calorie counting, without logging meals, without macro counting and that I attribute to my ability to listen to my body and feed it when it's hungry and stop when it's full and it's that simple.

Jen: I have maintained, my weight has gone unchanged for three and a half years and that is something ten years ago I did not think was possible. I thought women or people in general had to be hyper vigilant about their weight. Weight is something you must manage at all times or it will get out of control. But really, you know, my body has given me the information I need and as I listen to it, I have eaten over time, you know, not on an every single day basis, there are probably days where I eat a little bit more and other days I eat a little bit less than I'm expending that day, big picture, long term, which is what we are trying to get people to see, you know, big picture, is that I have just eaten to my energy needs for three and a half years.

Annie: You just had one up me, didn't you.

Jen: Sorry.

Annie: I'm over here, like "six months" and Jen's like "three and a half years."

Jen: Three and a half years. But it's just that my youngest, he turned five this summer and it's interesting to me because, you know, you go through that pregnancy and postpartum swing, right, your weight is, you know, up and down and then if you add dieting in there that a lot of women do and reactive overeating it can just be swinging all over the place and so I'm sitting here going, you know, it doesn't have to be that way. Here I am, you know, I lost weight after my third and I was, you know, probably pretty close to my pre-pregnancy weight, you know, weight is always a range and yeah, to maintain that for three and a half years, I think is, you know, something pretty spectacular for me, or just the realization that I don't have to be actively managing my weight at all times. It's just really so freeing.

Annie: OK let's do a little recap real quick before we part ways here. These are our top reasons why you should take calories with a grain of salt if you are into the calorie counting and you're finding that it's kind of driving you batty. The first one is inaccuracies and that could be both with the food labels, the nutrition database and also humans, like just as humans were not very good at estimating portion sizes and you know, why does peanut butter always come to mind? Like a tablespoon of peanut butter is never, just a tablespoon.

Lauren: No. I think it's impossible to measure out a tablespoon of peanut butter that is actually a tablespoon.

Annie: I know.

Lauren: Like two and a half for me.

Annie: Yes, exactly. Reason number two is we are all different and we use different cooking methods. So what Lauren was talking about our gut bacteria, the makeup of gut bacteria can mean a difference of plus or minus 150 calories a day from person to person and then how we cook our food, what did you say? Chopping, blending and cooking.

Lauren: and cooking.

Annie: What's cooking?

Lauren: But what does microwaving do?

Annie: Yes. That's really what I want to know and what about frozen pizzas in the oven? Can all affect the calories available for our body to absorb and the third reason we really think you should take calories with a grain of salt is that when we rely on calorie counting, we lose touch with our internal regulators, that's hunger and fullness signals. So anything you two want to add before we sign off?

Jen: No, I thought that was great. Thanks, Lauren, for all your knowledge bombs on this podcast.

Annie: And just if you're listening to this, we, Jen and I, are going to record another podcast to follow this up with about what to do when tracking becomes problematic. And that's tracking anything, so if you are listening to this, it won't be released for a week until after this podcast has come out but I think this is going to be a really great follow up just to continue the conversation. All right, thank you ladies.

Jen: Bye.

Lauren: Bye.