

Balance365 Episode 45 Transcript

Annie: Thanks for joining us here on Balance365 Life Radio, I am really excited about this episode and we actually jumped this topic to the head of the line because we felt it was just that important, especially this time of year. Today Lauren, Jen and I discuss the importance of setting boundaries with your friends and your family as it pertains to discussions about bodies and behaviors. Women's appearance, exercise routines and eating habits seem to be free game and constantly open for discussion and debate.

Conversations about who's gained weight, who's lost weight, how Aunt Jan has given up carbs or the latest supermodel that got her body back so quickly after baby number 3 can unfortunately be heard across the globe. After working with thousands of women, we know that with the holiday season many of us might find ourselves on the receiving end or at the very least, within earshot of comments of this nature. This unwelcome commentary can be shocking, infuriating but most importantly, it can be really harmful, especially to the little eyes and ears that are watching and listening.

On this episode, we dive into the importance of women and mothers setting boundaries around diet talk and body shaming, share ideas on how to respond and address these comments if and when they happen and finally, how to help you and your children process those same situations.

As always our free private Facebook group can be a great space to continue the discussion if you so wish, you can find us on Facebook at Healthy Habits Happy moms. We'll see you on the inside.

Lauren and Jen, we are all three together, it's been a while.

Lauren: Hi!

Annie: You're just here for the party, we know, Lauren and Jen, how are you?

Jen: Good, I really missed recording with you guys. I was away and you did like 3 episodes without me.

Annie: I know, you you were on a little family vacation.

Jen: Yeah.

Annie: Looked fun, we missed you though.

Jen: Yeah, I missed you guys too but it was like my first holiday in, with my kids, in years so it was a lot of fun and I have to say, for the parents listening that it is a whole different world to go on holidays with children who are 5-6 and 9 than babies and toddlers.

Lauren: That's really good to hear.

Annie: So there's hope.

Jen: Oh yeah, well it just got, for us, it got to a point where I was like "We aren't traveling anymore. I can't do this. I can't take 3 car seats and a double stroller and a diaper bag on every holiday. It's too... I might as well just stay home because it's more stressful on holiday."

So now it was just surreal to just be sitting back and watching my kids handle themselves, like carry backpacks and yeah and just like not have myself loaded down, you know, like, I just had a backpack too. It was amazing.

Annie: I heard a comparison made that there's a difference between vacation and trips and you take a trip with your family. It's not, it doesn't always feel like a vacation, it's sometimes a lot of work.

Jen: The other thing when you have little babies and toddlers is we would always do like AirBNB apartments because we just felt like we needed the space and with kids getting up in the night we, you know, we just needed like different rooms etc and but that meant that we were also cooking and cleaning up after ourselves on "holidays" too and I would sometimes be like "Why did we leave home? Like, I just feel like I'm in the kitchen all the time."

So on this trip we only stayed in hotels and we ate out for every meal and I can't even tell you how great that was too to not cook for 10 days. It was amazing.

Annie: Yeah that sounds really nice and the weather looked so nice.

Jen: Yeah, it was beautiful.

Annie: Yeah, but we're happy to have you back-

Jen: Thank you.

Annie: Because we have a really good topic and I think it's going to be best addressed and best covered with all three of us on board and this is actually kind of a combination of two topics that we've discussed either in a podcast or a blog post that we kind of married together and we actually are doing kind of a last-minute recording because we wanted to squeeze this topic in before the holidays because what comes up so frequently in our community, which if you're not a part of it, it's Healthy Habits Happy Moms on Facebook, over 40,000 women, it's a great place to continue the discussion, ask questions get support if you need it but something that comes up in our community often is how to respond to comments about your body or behaviors and how then to set boundaries with family members and with it being the holiday season, it seems like we're exposed to so many more opportunities to have those comments thrown at us, right?

And it's a really common experience with women in our communities that are our bodies and our behaviors, what's on our plate, how we are exercising, how we're talking, how we look, always seem to be free game for discussion and debate and it's really regardless of your body shape and size because prior to this, when we covered it in a podcast the first time, I did a poll in our community and women of all shapes and sizes has experienced comments and remarks like this and it can not only be shocking but infuriating and they can also be harmful to everyone within earshot, right?

Jen: Right.

Annie: and Jen, you made, it was, we're approaching the two year anniversary of the blog post that you wrote that was amazing and it's still on our blog today, but you made an amazing analogy of the harmful effects of body shaming, disordered eating behaviors, negative body talk as it relates to smoking, can you share a little bit about that?

Jen: Yeah, first of all, it's wild, two years ago.

Annie: I know.

Jen: And so we are talking about the same things, which is great, we hope it's sinking in, two years later, so I am the analogy queen in our community and I find that sometimes drawing parallels in other areas of life is what really gets the stuff to stick with women and the other thing, when we talk about disordered eating, I just want everybody to know that in, like, eating disorder, I guess, literature and circles, dieting is considered under the realm of disordered eating, so dieting is disordered eating, so when you are talking about dieting around the Christmas dinner table or Thanksgiving dinner table, you're actually talking about disordered eating, your disordered eating behaviors and 100 years ago it might have been shocking that somebody would speak up at dinner to say that they're purposely starving themselves or cutting out carbs but over the years, it's become normalized, so it's part of our normal conversation to discuss these things.

So what I compared it to in this blog post was that at one point, smoking indoors used to be completely normal. My step mom talks about how she had my older sister in hospital and they whisked the baby away after and the first thing she did was light up a cigarette in the hospital. And everybody had an ashtray right beside their hospital bed and so this was about 40 years ago.

Today, that would never fly. So the damaging health effects of smoking and secondhand smoking is well researched, we know the effects, smoking is banned in public spaces, we keep it away from children. I don't know what the rules are down there but in Canada, it's illegal to smoke cigarettes inside of a vehicle if you have anyone in the car that's under 16. And we have family members who smoke and I don't think they would dream of smoking inside my house, however if they came over and tried, I would immediately, I would have, you know, no issue with saying "Oh, can you please take that outside, this is a smoke free home."

So the parallel I drew is that we also know the effects of discussing bodies and disordered eating. We know that they have serious long term effects to your own personal health but also to the little ears or the children in the room listening to all of this and setting a boundary with friends and family around smoking is probably not a problem for anyone listening, however it still feels extremely uncomfortable to set this boundary around talking about weight, bodies, disordered eating, dieting but if you really put that into context, "Hey, we know this is extremely harmful."

And if you're having trouble setting the boundary for yourself, just really think, like, now is the time that you need to step up for your kids and say "Hey, no this is not OK to discuss around our kids. If you want to talk to me about this later, that's fine but you know, there's little ears in the room."

Annie: And oftentimes, you know, the difference here is that unlike smoking, many people aren't aware just yet of the harmful consequences of this type of talk and how contagious it is and how detrimental it can be to the eyes and ears that are watching and listening and I think if people knew, which is part of our mission, right, to draw attention to the negative consequences of dieting and body shaming and weight talk, if people knew like they know the harmful effects of smoking, you know, maybe they would be changing the conversation.

Lauren: Yeah.

Jen: Absolutely, so it's sort of like, in the "olden days" they talk about how the big tobacco companies went to great lengths to hide the negative, they knew what the negative effects of smoking were and they went to great lengths to try and sort of cover that up and they were lobbying government et cetera, et cetera, they would have doctors as their spokespeople saying smoking was safe and that, basically, is happening today with diet companies. You have, you know, huge diet companies, they have crazy popular spokeswomen or spokespeople, I should say, fronting their brand but the research hasn't caught up with the public yet.

It's not common knowledge yet so, but we know, it is well researched, we have decades and decades of research about how harmful dieting is, how harmful body shaming is especially for children. Like, body based teasing is one of the biggest contributors to future disordered eating/eating disorders.

So the other thing is that I think I feel like awareness around mental health is just coming to the forefront, I guess, where in years gone past we haven't talked about mental health as much. The focus really has been on physical health. And now we're starting to see more talk of mental health and taking care of our mental health and what that means for people but I don't think talking about mental health is as widely accepted yet either, so it's quite a big conversation.

This podcast, what we wanted to cover and talk about in just sort of bring to people's consciousness is it's OK to set boundaries in your home around what you expose your children to.

Annie: Right, because it's, you know, essentially in that blog post, which we can link in the show notes, along with all the research or just a handful of the research that we've looked at and essentially, you know, kind of compares it to being trapped in a smoky room, you know.

Jen: Right.

Annie: When, you know, when you are filling your home over the holidays or your environment with that sort of talk, I mean, it's, the parallel is there, right? And it's not it's not one time that's going to make or break but it's that constant exposure, the fact that they don't have a place to process this, that they can't escape, that they don't have an alternative, that there's no discussion about, you know, the consequences and why you would do this or that, like that's really what we want to begin to bring to light, right?

Jen: Yeah and children are listening, like they want to listen, right? I catch my oldest son, he's 9, I see him all the time, I can just see him, he's paying attention to what the adults are talking about, he wants to know, he's interested, he's learning how to be an adult, right?

And so this is something that we pretty much hand down to our children as acceptable and OK. So what we see today and we see this a lot in our Facebook group and just on social media in general, you hear a lot of women talking about, or sharing stories of somebody commenting about their body and how offended they are, whether somebody asks them if they're expecting or if they've lost weight or what diet they're on and women are saying, "Hey!" You know, they're starting to notice, people comment on our bodies all the time but this is learned behavior, right, this isn't some evil person, you know, or mean-spirited person popping out and just body shaming. It's learned behavior. We make it acceptable at an early age so anybody who's making those comments today probably grew up in an environment where it was absolutely OK and I think we're still in that environment.

If you are checking out at the grocery store and it's full of trashy magazines around you, you'll see that, we have, it's open season on women's bodies and

men's to a degree. You might have a National Enquirer there talking about whose, which celebrities have "let themselves go", what weight this celebrity is, what weight that celebrity is, who has "gotten their body back after baby", you know, the quickest.

It is open season and that's the kind of stuff that goes on around us that might not even be, you know, in our consciousness, right, so if you start paying attention, you'll see it's not just happening around the dinner table at Christmas, it's happening everywhere and at some point you need to step up and say "Hey this is not OK" and you need to go to your children and say "This is not OK. This is not what our family values and just because, you know, Uncle Ted, you know, talks about women's bodies that way, it is absolutely not OK" and you need to set that boundary with Uncle Ted or whoever your uncle is or Aunt, and let them know that's not OK and if that has to happen in front of your kids, all the better.

Annie: I just want to circle back, just in case people aren't familiar with some of the statistics out there that I feel like we share frequently but you can never hear these enough, in my opinion but I think as you said the research is out there, it's our kids are listening and some of the statistics about it are just shocking, I mean as it pertains to adult women, approximately half of women engage in disordered eating and risky dieting practices, including one 3rd of women report purging.

Jen: Right.

Annie: 75 percent of women report that their weight interferes with their happiness, which, I've been there, that's been me at various points in my life. A study of 5 year old girls, a significant proportion of girls associate diet with food restriction and weight loss and thinness, like, how do they know this? Where are they learning this?

Jen: Right. Absolutely.

Annie: 37 percent of girls in grade 9 and 40 percent in grade 10 perceive themselves as too fat, again, where are they learning this? Why do they think that? More than half of the girls and a third of the boys engage in unhealthy weight control behaviors, for example, fasting, vomiting, laxatives skipping meals or smoking to control their appetite. Again, like, they're listening, they're watching, they're observing.

Jen: Absolutely.

Lauren: Mhmm.

Jen: And by the time a girl is 17 to 18 years old, that stat is up to 80 percent, so 80 percent of 17 and 18 year old girls believe they need to lose weight, like these aren't like, you know, these aren't like, outliers. This is the majority of our population and again, this is all learned behavior.

Annie: Right. And it's, you know, we have a little bit of control over here and that's why we're in the business that we're in because it's not just enough for the three of us to parent our kids, like we need everyone on board to really make a really big impact.

Jen: Absolutely.

Annie: So that's the part of our mission, to like, create this big wave, this ripple effect, like everyone's on board and everyone's promoting healthy balance lifestyles without all this other unnecessary, unhealthy behavior.

Jen: Totally, I look at my local supermarket and the changes that they've made to have a healthier physical environment for my children so when I take them shopping there are, they're called, like "junk food free aisles" so that you don't have to deal with, like, your kid seeing the treats and wanting, you know, asking for treats so you can choose to go down those check outs instead of the ones that are lined with candy and also, in my local supermarket, they have a basket of fruits and vegetables for kids to just take for free to eat while you're shopping and so I think "Wow, look at these changes they've made for our children's physical health, right, taking away the less nutritious food and offering more nutritious food. So now let's take it a step further and how can they support my child's mental health?"

So it's one thing to have an aisle that's free of junk food, but now I have to take my kids down this aisle that is instead stocked with magazines full of body shaming and my kids can read now and so I'm going, which is worse? You've taken away the junk food, you've replaced it with this basically, junk for your brain.

Annie: Right.

Jen: Essentially, yes.

Annie: But, you know, as we said, I remember when you wrote this blog post and you and I had this conversation and I think we came across the saying "Prepare your kids for the road, not the road for your kids" because this is unfortunately part of our culture, you're going to be outside of your bubble, especially in the holiday season or you know, even as summer approaches, you know and more skin is shown and you're at barbecues or you know, year round, it happens, you're going to be outside of your little bubble, inside of our community it's like, this stuff doesn't happen, right?

Lauren: Right.

Jen: Right.

Annie: But when we leave our homes it's like, or we go to the grocery store, it's like "Oh my gosh, it really is everywhere." It's going to happen. So what do you do when it happens? You set a boundary. You can set a boundary and as you said, it can be so uncomfortable to think about setting a boundary for yourself and speaking up for yourself, but if you put it in terms of like, "I'm standing up for my kid" then it's like-

Jen: Totally.

Annie: As a mother it's like, "Oh", it becomes so much easier, right?

Jen: Yes, then it's like "Roar!"

Annie: Mama Bear, right? Mama lion.

Jen: Exactly.

Annie: Yeah, so, you know, setting boundaries, let's talk about how to do that because it can be uncomfortable. It can be scary but I think you, in that blog post again, you gave a couple very concise, clear, non-confrontive, kind-hearted responses and I think you could just put these in your back pocket, you can put your own twist on them. The first one is "Hey, I understand that you're struggling with your eating behaviors right now, can we save this conversation for when little ears aren't around?" and I think that's perfect, you know, so I picture myself at the buffet table, you know, and my Aunt Jan's putting stuff on her plate saying "I

shouldn't have this many carbs and I'm just so excited to eat this and I'll just have to work it off afterwards and it's going to go straight to my butt" and you know, like that sort of talk.

Jen: Yeah, total disordered talk.

Annie: Right.

Jen: Totally normalized in our culture.

Annie: Oh yeah, like, I mean, 4 years ago I probably would have been like "Ahahaha!"

Jen: Right.

Annie: Now I'm like "Oh no, no, no, no, no, no!"

Jen: Yes.

Annie: "Could we save that conversation for when little ears aren't around" and it's, the three of us have had this conversation so many times, we feel very comfortable being like "Yeah, I'd be happy to talk with you about how to balance your meals, more sustainable practices for your health and wellness and how that talk isn't really serving you, like we could talk that all day." Some of our listeners might not be willing or interested in having that conversation, that's totally cool too, but I think that just acknowledging little ears are listening and we're just going to zip it, right now, right?

Jen: Yeah, like if somebody, I mean, I know we all probably swear a little bit but if somebody like came roaring into the kitchen and was just like dropping F bombs every second word and your kids are sitting there you might be like, " Hey, there's little ears here, maybe we could cut that back" Except Annie's giggling, because she's like, "No."

Annie: Yeah, yeah.

Jen: Don't tell me how to talk.

Lauren: Well, Jen, I think the second hand smoke analogy was so, so good because I'd like to coin the term now "secondhand dieting" because like, that's

basically what it is and if you've listened to the podcast you'll know I started dieting when I was 12.

Jen: Right.

Lauren: And it's because secondhand dieting was constant. It was a constant topic of conversation in my family, especially on one side compared to the other, but it was it was constant and I would never, you know, blame my family for any of that, everyone's, as we know, we're doing our best, no one's doing it on purpose, but it's how, it's how, like, my grandma's generation and my mom's generation was raised.

Jen: Absolutely.

Lauren: And they didn't know any better, just like before we don't know any better about smoking.

Jen: Right.

Lauren: And so when I think back to that, like, I would sing the Jenny Craig song like-

Jen: Oh my goodness.

Lauren: Like I knew the Jenny Craig song, right?

Jen: Let's hear it, Lauren.

Lauren: 1-800-Jenny-20. That's all I remember but like I would sing it and I just cringe now thinking about all the stuff I listened to and that's kind of what I draw from, if I ever have to set that boundary for my kids, like my daughter just turned 5 so I'm at the point now where it's going to, I'm going to have to be more intentional and more careful about it moving forward and if you've listened to the podcast you'll know last year we already had like our 1st incident with that at preschool, talking about, you know, good food versus bad food and I had to start that there earlier than I even thought I would, but at this point going forward, it just gets, you have to be more and more intentional about it.

Jen: And it's everywhere so as Annie had mentioned before, like you can't, you can, media literacy is one of the most powerful tools in this sort of disordered

eating/negative body image crisis we are in with our children and I can't always be there to filter for my kids but I can teach them how to filter, right?

Lauren: Right.

Jen: And so one thing I noticed, we haven't had cable for years and last Christmas we were up at the ski hill here where we live and we were staying there over the Christmas period, staying at a hotel and we would watch T.V. in the evenings and I was shocked at how many diet commercials came on what we're watching T.V. and I probably wouldn't even have noticed this 5 years ago because it was just part of my life, it's part of everybody's lives, where now I'm so conscious of it and suddenly I'm going like "We are muting the T.V. during commercials because this is ridiculous."

Every single commercial break there was a Weight Watchers ad and just horrible toxic messaging. I remember just. in particular. one woman saying "I can eat whatever I want and still lose weight" and I was like, "Oh! My kids are taking this BS in." Like, so then we started muting it during commercials because I just, I just do not, and I'm like, you know how kids are, they just, like, stare at a T.V. and they're just zoned out, whether it's the TV show or the commercial and I was just like, this is not something I want them hearing over and over and over every commercial break, it's like, they're like hypnotized by it, being brainwashed.

Annie: And I think that goes back to, you know, just that awareness that you said before, Jen. Sometimes you don't know how well prevalent it is until you start listening and you just, like that might just be your first step, you don't have to take any action, maybe you don't set a boundary this holiday season, maybe-

Jen: Right.

Annie: where you're at is you're just starting to pay attention and you create awareness and you know, you know how, like, when you're pregnant or maybe you're trying to get pregnant and all you see is pregnant women?

Jen: Right.

Lauren: Yeah.

Annie: Like, that's what this is.

Jen: Yeah it is.

Annie: The power of suggestion. Once you see it, it's everywhere. I mean, I swear, I tell people, like, "What do you do for a living?" "Oh, I'm a personal trainer" and it's like, all of a sudden they go to confession.

Jen: Right.

Annie: It's like, "Oh my gosh, I haven't been to a gym in years, and I ate, oh my gosh, I need to get back and I need to do" and I'm like "It's OK, I'm not, like, you don't have to repent your sins to me."

Jen: Right, right.

Annie: And it's just, yeah, like it's the magazine titles, it's the conversations with your hairdresser when you're getting your haircut, you know, the woman that's evaluating your food at the grocery checkout line, like "Oh is this a good food? I heard this was healthy for you." You know, it's like, it's just everywhere.

Jen: You can't, you have to be really, you have to be, and that's why it's so important to hand those tools off to your kids to be critical thinkers about it, right, so my son when we were on this holiday, we're talking about at the start of the show, we were watching, again T.V. in the hotel room and this, we're in San Diego, California and one thing I've noticed from previous trips to California is weight loss advertising is cranked up there compared to where I live in Canada, which might just be the culture of California, so it's like, it's on the radio, everywhere and I just found it, like, "Whoa! it's definitely not as prevalent where I live" so the commercial that came on was like a freeze the fat thing, like, it's like a, I don't know if it's like a liposuction procedure or whatever, it's just a commercial and it came on and I was like "Here we go!" and my son was like, "This is ridiculous. It doesn't even work." I was like-

Annie: Nice.

Jen: Yeah! So you can, right, you can teach them and I try and just say to my kids like, you know, we obviously don't shame people who are dieting or whatever, you have to be careful of that too, as well, but I just say, like, "You know that stuff doesn't work and there's a lot of companies out there who will take advantage of people who are struggling and with how they feel about themselves but you know this stuff does not work and there's a lot of fake things

that go on behind the scenes that trick you into believing it works but it doesn't."
So, yeah.

Annie: Well and to add to that, just as there are people in my life that I love dearly and I look up to in many ways, they also smoke.

Jen: Right, absolutely.

Annie: There's a lot of great people that are also stuck in diet culture and body shame and weight talk and that doesn't mean that they're bad humans or they are terrible, you know, like I love them just as much and they don't need shaming.

Jen: No.

Annie: You know, my mom smoked for years and I hated that element of her but I loved her, I hated that behavior, I should say, but I love her dearly.

Jen: Well, you know, if you go back to our stages of change podcast where people are with smoking is OK, the awareness is there, it's not good for you, the tough part with smoking is that it's an addiction, right, so they are constantly and I mean, I think pretty much all smokers are in the cycle of change, most smokers are probably thinking of quitting all the freaking time, it's just so difficult. Where, when it comes to dieting and disordered eating, there's not an addiction there but if you've listened to previous podcasts about the diet cycle, it almost mimics one where you just can't stop trying to diet, like, you just keep going back to it, you get stuck in that cycle but most dieters are not even, the awareness isn't even there that this is something that is unhealthy for them and that they could even stop doing it.

It's just part of their everyday life, like, that's what we do, we diet or we don't diet, we're on the wagon or we're off the wagon and that's what their whole life is, right? So when you are setting this boundary with people, just keep that in mind, like, this could be brand new information to them, it likely is, that this is, that your family doesn't diet, your family doesn't body shame, your family doesn't sit around talking about your own weight or other people's weight and it's harmful. It's harmful to you and it's harmful to children to hear, that will be brand new information. So if you decide to set that boundary, go gentle, as Annie said, you don't have to set that boundary, that is an option, I would personally talk, if I was in a situation where I felt very uncomfortable setting that boundary, I would make

sure to speak about, I would speak to my children about it later "Hey, you know, when Grandpa was saying this or that, like, just so you know ,that's not what we believe in, that wasn't accurate."

Annie: You're jumping ahead a bit.

Jen: Oh, I'm sorry.

Annie: You just got so excited. No, I think that's a great segue, just to circle back to setting boundaries, you know, like comments, if you need some actual statements, I always have a hard time putting words on my emotions and my feelings, so I like to have these one liners to put my back pocket that I can practice saying and it can be, you know, like I said before, "Can we save this conversation for when the kids aren't around? My child can eat what he or she wants, eyes on your own plate, please. Can we change the subject? Simple as that and then as far as comments made to you about your own body or about someone else, whether they're in the room or not, I mean, one of my personal training clients talks about how her father always comments about women in the media and their bodies.

Jen: Right.

Annie: Like it doesn't matter because somehow they are immune because they can't hear us and they're celebrities and like they don't count.

Jen: Right.

Annie: But it's still worth addressing in my opinion but the first step is decide if you want to have that conversation or not. And sometimes you may not want to, it might be the wrong time, the wrong person, you don't have the energy and in fact, Lauren and I remember you talking about a family member that you were just like, "This just isn't a conversation I'm willing to have with her at this point in my life, in her life," do you remember that?

Lauren: Yeah, there's a lot of my family members actually that I do not really speak about nutrition or whatever unless I'm asked and so as far as I go, it's like a boundary unless I'm asked about it.

Annie: Right. You know, and then the second option, I think, too is, if someone makes a comment to you, I think Jen, you gave this suggestion a couple times to

be curious and just simply say, "Why do you ask that? Why do you say that? Can you tell me more? That's interesting" and just see where they're coming from and see where that goes because so often, you know, someone makes a comment to me and again, years ago, you know, 4 years ago Annie would have been like "Ugh!" and I would have been offended and embarrassed and ashamed and angry and infuriated but so often, like, that's not usually how conversations, like, end well.

Jen: Yeah, or "Why does, you know, why does that matter to you? Why is this relevant? How does that affect your life?"

Annie: Yes, am I reacting this strongly because I'm worried that there's some truth in what they're saying, is this about my own body shame and my own negative weight talk and all that, you know, is this the baggage I'm carrying or is this theirs? And now I'm clearly, like, they make a comment about a body or my body and it's like "What Susie says about Sally says more about Sally than Susie", like they're separate, like that's on them and yeah, that has nothing to do with me.

But decide if you want to have the conversation, then be curious, you know, I think that's a great way to, if you're not super confrontational, if you don't want to be confrontational, like, "Why do you say that? Like, that's interesting, why do you ask that?" and then find your voice. You know, Jen, I think we've talked about, like, you tend to be a little bit more like, "No, I don't want to do that, like, we're not going to talk about that, let's change the subject" where I would be like, "Hey, look, squirrel! How about the Cubs?" like, you know, like something like just totally redirect or you could be super sincere and honest and say "I'm sure you're coming from a place of love and you care but your comments are hurtful, your comments are alarming, they're concerned, fill in the blank."

Jen: Or "I'm really uncomfortable discussing my body or other women's bodies in a setting like this or period."

Annie: And you know what? It might get awkward.

Jen: Yeah that's the the thing but-

Annie: It might get a little like-

Jen: But change is uncomfortable, right? So, you know, we talk all the time on this podcast about needing a cultural shift or we hear it all the time on social media, society needs to change. Well, guess what? We are society and change is uncomfortable so this is going to be uncomfortable but it doesn't have, discomfort doesn't mean mean-spirited, discomfort doesn't even necessarily mean confrontational, it just means uncomfortable and I think if women paid attention, they would actually see that there are many areas of our lives where women take on discomfort in order to not make the people around us uncomfortable and I'm at the point where I'm like, "Why? Why do I have to take on that discomfort all the time?"

Annie: Yeah. And as we've said numerous times already on this episode, if you can't find the courage to do that for yourself, maybe you can find the courage to do it for your kids.

Jen: Absolutely.

Lauren: Yeah.

Annie: And if you're not there yet, if you're just like creating awareness and like, kind of getting your feet under you and kind of deciding what, like, where, how you feel about your body, where you stand, like, that's really cool too, like this wasn't an overnight process for the three of us. It's not like we just jumped from 0 to 100 and now we're, like, "Chop chop! Like, no, we're not going to do that!" Like, this was like a, this is a process-

Lauren: Definitely.

Annie: Where we grew in our comfort to have these conversations.

Jen: Is there time for me to share a quick personal story about just this as a reality?

Annie: Yes.

Jen: So this is based on my own history of very disordered eating and lots of weight talk with my sisters and the effects of that. So my kids are a bit younger and I've been able to be on the ball with them from a younger age which has been great. My sister's children are older, my younger sister, my older sister's children has children as well, but I'm speaking about my younger sister's children

and so her daughter at 9 years old, she came to me once I got to the house, she came to me and she had just sprouted up. And you know, different kids have different growth patterns but what with my nieces she kind of plumped out first and then she shot up.

So what happened when she shot up is that her jean shorts became too big on her around the waist and it happened in just a matter of a couple of months so I get there one day and she comes up to me and she's like "Auntie, look, Auntie, look!" and she was trying to show me the gap between her denim and her waist and I realized she's trying to show me and basically bragging at validation and connect with me that she has lost weight and she's 9 years old but I also was hit with this just feeling like I wanted to throw up, thinking of all the times I had shown up at their door to talk to my sister and the first thing out of my mouth was "I lost 5 pounds last week" or "I put on 5 pounds" or, and my sister's oldest daughter had just grown up with her aunt, who she loves and admires and looks up to so much, I'm pumping my own tires here but I'm pretty sure that's how she feels about me.

Annie: Naturally.

Jen: She has grown up with that "cool auntie" speaking like that around her so of course she's now coming to me at 9 years old and trying to connect with me over it the same way she sees her mother and me connecting and she's just trying to be part of our crew and I was devastated and so not OK with it and so had to take a hard look at myself and go, "This is not OK. This is not OK that our family talks like this and I have been a big contributor to it and I will not do this anymore."

So that was about 5 years ago now, so very happy to see it going in the other direction and what my sister says now, because now we're these empowered women fighting diet culture, she can't believe that her daughters have gotten to the age they have and not talked about dieting with her yet, where my sister remembers dieting at a way younger age than even her girls have, so there's hope, there's hope here, right, we can make a huge impact.

Annie: Absolutely and you know, I just had a little lunch talk a couple weeks ago and it was with a group of about 10 or 12 women, mostly moms and they cannot, they kept expressing concern about how to say the right thing, like, they're so worried about saying the right thing when it comes to body talk and how we talk

about how to take care of our bodies and how to respond when they're talking about weight loss or how their body looks or they want to wear makeup or they want to wear certain types of clothes.

They're just so worried about saying the right thing that they sometimes don't say anything at all. And I think, you know, when they were asking about what to do and how to approach this, the first thing that came to mind was what Hillary McBride and her Mothers Daughters and Body Image podcast which, if you haven't, if this is a topic that concerns you, if you haven't listened to that, please listen to that, but she pretty much hammers home that perfection, in this situation isn't required, it's intention and consistency that make the most difference and so you don't have to say the right thing all the time.

It's really your intent to have the conversation behind it and just as I said, you can just be curious about when people make comments about your body you can just be curious about what your kids are saying, like, how does that feel when this happens? How do you feel about that? Did you enjoy that food? How's your body feeling? How did you feel when Aunt Jan or Uncle Ted made that comment about me or about your body or when Gramma said that about your plate? Did you think about that at all? Like, it can just be as simple as that.

Jen: The thing is if we talk about diet culture brainwashing children and us, we don't want to be on the other end, brainwashing our kids, right? Like I want to raise critical thinkers and the way to do that, I think, is to ask them these questions and ask myself these questions and maybe and you can even process it together, right? Like that is totally OK.

Annie: Yeah, but I think the key is, you know, is setting the boundaries when you're ready and when you're comfortable and then to keep having these conversations with your family members, with your community, with your kids, like, they're hard conversations, they can be uncomfortable, it can be a lot of emotional ties and baggage that come along with some of these conversations but it's worth it. It's totally worth it and I just want to kind of wrap up by just acknowledging, again, that we've kind of touched on this but there's work to be done kind of on sort of 2 levels here: at the individual level, you know, like our own selves deciding what our own biases, acknowledging those, creating awareness about our own behaviors, our own talk, you know, like, how many days, how many times a day do you talk about someone else's body or are you reading about someone else's body or are you listening to comments about

someone else's body? At one point in my life that consumed me. I talked about other people's body all the time.

Jen: Right or what articles are you clicking on where, you know, there's those little like click baity ads at the bottom, "How this mom got her body back in 3 weeks" or "What this mom's abs looked like at 4 weeks postpartum" and then the picture just like cleverly hides and you're like, "I gotta click on this."

Lauren: That was me constantly reading about every single diet.

Jen: Yeah, right, where now I just, you know, I know it's all B.S. and I know the more we click on it, the more we are telling these marketers that we want to see more of it, right and they'll just keep showing us more, so I'm like "Nope" and on Facebook when I see stuff like that I report it as inappropriate.

Annie: So yeah, there's definitely work to be done on an individual level, you know, our own behaviors, our shame, our conversations that we're having and then at a community level, you know, and community can mean just in your own home, you know. That's-

Jen: Yeah, so speaking of that, I'll just share what I've been up to since my holiday is that I just completed my Free To Be Talks facilitator training and I'm going to be teaching body image workshops in my children's school and I am trained to be able to talk about this to kid boys and girls in grade 6, 7 and 8 and so that was me, that was on my vision board last year where, you know, we were doing all this work through Balance365 and I was like, "You know what? I really want to be out there in my community and I would love to start talking to children about this when they're younger."

So I just did that training and that's my way of contributing and being part of the conversation in my community and I would encourage anybody who is interested in that to to check out Free To Be Talks. It's a nonprofit organization out of Vancouver, Canada but when I was on the training there was lots of women from the States on the training as well who will be doing this in their schools but you can and that's a thing, like don't, do not, you know, we read these stats to you guys and it's shocking and you can sometimes feel powerless, like how can I even stop this? But you can and you can make a difference in your community and if all of us had that attitude, the change would come.

Annie: I just get chills and for verklempt, like we could do this, guys,! Yes!

Jen: Yes!

Annie: I think that's awesome, snaps for Jen.

Jen: Thank you very much.

Annie: Yeah, anything to add, Lauren? Anything you want to add before we wrap up?

Lauren: No, I think you guys hit it all, I know I was just kind of a more quiet bystander, but you guys were just right in your groove and I think you guys hit it out of the park. I'll just note that as someone who experienced secondhand dieting, and then the path that it led me down, that fuels me to be the change and not be afraid to stand up and say "Hey, this isn't OK, we're not going to talk about this."

Annie: Oh yeah, I think that's, I mean, I don't want to speak for you, Jen, but I think that's why the three of us are in the business we're in, we're trying to be the change that we needed when we were younger.

Jen: Yeah, totally.

Lauren: Yes.

Annie: Like, the voice, the message, the solution, the opportunity that we needed when we were younger and that's, you know, how we are paying it forward, so to speak and I'm going to start crying so I'm going to stop talking.

Yeah, so anyways, just to wrap up, when you're out of your bubble this holiday season, moving into the new year, moving into summer, spring and summer, don't be afraid to have a conversation. It doesn't need to be confrontational, argumentative it could just be like "Hey, could we change the subject. I don't want to talk about this when my kids are in earshot and you know, just start creating awareness and shifting the conversations that you're having within your home and with your girlfriends and with your family can make a really, really big impact. To me, it's, I picture waves of an ocean and you know, what one wave just kind of moves right into the other and it's like, we just all connect to each other, eventually.

Lauren: Yep.

Annie: And if we're all in the same page, if we're all moving the same direction, we can make a really, really big impact on our own lives and more importantly, the lives of our kids so they don't have to grow up in diet culture and negative body image and weight talk and all that junk.

Jen: Yes, we do not have to normalize for them what was normalized for us.

Annie: Alright, awkward ending.

Lauren: As usual.

Annie: You know what, that's going to be on my topic, on my to do list today, so find a way to wrap up the podcast that's not extremely awkward.

Jen: That's not like, "OK, bye!"

Lauren: Okay, bye!

Annie: No. But, alright, thanks guys.

Lauren: Love you, bye!

Annie: It was fun, kay, bye!

Jen: Bye.

Lauren: Bye.