

Balance365 Episode 51 Transcript

Annie: Today's long awaited guest has been a longtime friend and supporter to Balance365 and whenever we ask our community which guest we should have on our show his name always comes up. You might know him as the man behind Body for Wife but we can't get enough of his straight shooter honest approach to behavior change. Joining us today is the one and only James Fell.

James is a highly regarded science based motivator for lasting life change. James recently launched his second book and on today's episode he shares with us how love and a Joan Baez as quote changed his life forever, how getting clearing your values can make change feel easier and why relying on willpower is a bad idea. We had so much fun recording this episode with James and we know you're going to love it too, enjoy.

Jen and Lauren, we have been waiting for a really, really long time for this podcast episode and I know our community members have been too. Are you ready for this Lauren?

Lauren: So ready. We had to reschedule.

Annie: Jen, are you?

Jen: Yes I'm ready.

Annie: Sorry, Lauren, what was that? I'm so excited I just cut you off.

Lauren: I was going to say, we had to reschedule so I've been waiting for like an extra week.

Annie: I know and every time we ask our community insider Facebook group Healthy Habits Happy Moms who we should have on as a guest, notoriously this man's name keeps coming up. It is James Fell. Welcome to the show, how are you?

James; I kind of feel like a rock star right now after that intro.

Annie: You kind of are a rock star.

James: Yeah, well, tell my kids that one.

Jen: We also get a lot of referrals from you so thank you.

James: Oh you're very welcome, you know-

Jen: A ton of women that said they found us through you.

James: We have like minded followers I would say.

Annie: Yes. We, James and Healthy Habits Happy Mom's which is what Balance365 was before it became Balance365 go way back so we've been pals for a while and Jen and James, you guys met, I think before James and I met, how did you two meet?

Jen: In Vancouver. Oh, like, we just met online, small world as we talked about, when you are not shucking B.S. to people and then we met up in Vancouver and we had coffee which was awesome.

James: Yeah, that's right, I was in Vancouver for a conference. So we got to do the, you know, going from being internet friends to real life friends which is always exciting when that happens, so high five!

Annie: Yeah and I met James when I went to the fitness summit in Kansas City many years ago, I mean, gosh, that was probably 3 or 4 years ago I suppose but it was, like, one of those whispers in the lobby like, "That's James Fell."

James: Don't make it weird, Annie.

Annie: That's what the women were whispering in my ear and I'm like "Oh, OK, OK." It was fun to have a couple of drinks and since then our relationship with our company and you have fostered and we are excited to bring you on because you have a new book coming out. This is actually your second book, second to Lose It Right, is that correct?

James: That's correct!

Annie: It comes out January 2nd and I told-

James: January 22nd.

Annie: Oh, sorry, January 22nd and I told you before we started this that we have labeled our podcast as clean, which means it doesn't have any explicit lyrics and the title of this book is called the Holy S. Moment and that's what we're going to call it for this podcast because we know we have people listening with little ears within earshot but you can probably imagine what the title of that book is and I just have to say it's not actually out in print yet, is it?

James: No, no, we're, so January 22nd, so as of recording right now we're 6 days away, so it depends on when you publish this.

Annie: So by the time it's released, this episode is released they'll be able to find it, where can they find it?

James: Anywhere, so it's being published by St Martin's Press in the United States and Canada and if you have any listeners in the U.K. Harper Collins is the publisher there so this is this is my 1st international released book. My 1st book Lose It Right was just published in Canada.

Annie: That's exciting, do you feel good about it?

James: Oh yeah, I'm really stoked. So yeah, they can find it in any bookstore, any platform, there's an audio recording too so if people don't hate my voice, I'm the one that did the narration for the audio.

Annie: I love it when authors do that.

Jen: I do too. You really feel connected to that author.

James: Yeah, I love it too because they paid me to do it.

Annie: Winning and the cover of the book, unless it's changed, because you were kind enough to share the digital format with us, the cover has a lightning bolt on it, right?

James: Yes, it does.

Annie: And I don't know if you can see that but I've got a big old tattoo on my trap so, you know, I feel like it was clearly, this was a book that was meant to be in my house.

James: Annie Brees, me and Harry Potter are all big on lightning.

Annie: Except I've never seen Harry Potter, I've never read Harry Potter-

Lauren: What?

Annie: I know nothing about. I know.

James: OK, you just lost some fans.

Lauren: I'm sorry. I'm not cool.

Annie: Okay, I just wanted to get this out too because on page 6 it just says "hi mom" and I was like-

Jen: Oh, that is so sweet.

Annie: So you definitely earn some bonus points but what I want to talk about is, if you know us, you know that the 3 of us are all about slow and sustainable change but you actually wrote this book because you found yourself as a coach encouraging slow and steady change but that actually hadn't reflected your experience in how you forever changed your life. Would you mind sharing the story about the moment and the quote that you think shifted for you?

James: Yeah, so before I get into that briefly, like, when it comes to say health and fitness, I don't mean, you know, jump into your first session with Attila the trainer and go hard core and wreck your self on day one. When it comes to the the change of changing one's body, you still need to be rational and don't destroy yourself but the change that I'm talking about is the way that you're motivated, that quite often we talk about motivation as a form of baby steps, being a tortoise not a hare as well, you slowly, step by step drag, yourself over a motivational tipping point developing, you know, habits that become sticky and the reality is that there's a lot of people that don't do it that way.

They go from 0 to 100 miles an hour in a moment and they stay that way because of some transformative life changing event that just wakes up a part of their brain where they achieve a new purpose in life that endlessly and vigorously drives them forward. So that's what the book is about is the science of that event and so there's the, you know, all the scientific aspect but there's also a lot of anecdotal stories that run the gamut of, you know, relationships and career change and battling addiction but also, yes, there are some weight loss stories in there as well but to my personal, the first big transformative experience for me

happened when I was about 22 years old and I was in university and I'd actually gotten a letter that said, this isn't verbatim but it boils down to "Your grades suck, we're kicking you out" and I was, you know, I was in debt, you know, the credit card companies were calling.

And I wasn't looking after my health, I was drinking too much and and I was in a state of despair and part of that had to do with my girlfriend was that she was a very driven woman, straight A student, destined for med school and I knew that if I got kicked out of school and I do not say this to ever speak ill of her but I knew if I got kicked out of school that it was going to be the beginning of the end, that, you know, she wasn't going to stay with a guy that was a drunken dropout who was letting his health go to hell and so I was, I was really kind of freaked out about what am I going to do and so I'm reading the university newspaper and there was this section that's like there classified ads called 3 lines free and it's, you know, a mixed bag of things from quotes and witticisms and proclamations of undying love or temporary lust or whatever and there was a quote in there from of all people Joan Baez the folk singer and the quote read "Action is the antidote to despair."

And I read that and it didn't hit me immediately but it's the 1st thing was I realize that, you know what, all these problems that I have can be fixed via action. If I get down to get to work I can fix this stuff and that was the first little wake up and then the next part that hit me bigger was the realization that I had been pretty lazy my entire life. I've been skating turned on cruise control, not really putting much effort into anything, these problems that I was experiencing were of my own doing.

You people know me that I'm not one of those guys that say "Oh, just suck it up" and you know, I realize that there are people that, you know, life is garbage sandwich and it's not their own doing but my this was my fault. I had dug this hole myself and only I had the ability to dig my way out and and so there was that realization that I've been really lazy and I was actually putting effort into being lazy by, you know, the mental gymnastics it took to, you know, shirk my responsibilities each day and that was when my brain woke up in an instant where I said, "If I just put effort in a positive way, if I just got down and started working, I could fix all this" and that's the way that these life changing epiphanies work is that they are there a big picture concept, they're fuzzy, they're not usually very concrete.

The concrete action plan comes afterward, after you have the event but the event happened was like, "If I just work I'll fix everything" and in that moment I experienced what's known in Psychology of behavior change circles as dramatic relief, where suddenly you see the light at the end of the tunnel, all the problems haven't gone anywhere, still there but you know you're going to fix them and you know that the light is there, you can see it and you're going to race toward it and everything's going to be OK. And from that moment, in that instant, I was a changed man.

Jen: Wow.

James: I got 2 master's degrees. I didn't flunk out, I went on and got 2 master's degrees, oh and that woman, the girlfriend, we've been together for almost 30 years now and so yeah, I told you she was the one and you know, got in shape, got out of debt all that good stuff, I don't brag.

Annie: I don't want to spoil, I didn't want to spoil it for everyone but when I was reading this part about your, like, this moment that you were having reading that quote I was like "Did he do it?" and he did! And that's, oh my gosh, that's so sweet. But I love that realization that you said, I was in this position because I had put myself there and while that can maybe feel a little like, "I did this to myself" it can also feel like that "I can get myself out" like the flip side of that coin is, "Yeah, I put myself here but also I can get myself out" and that's really like encouraging and empowering I think.

Jen: I got goosebumps and I don't know if you can see that on camera but my hair is standing on end. So I see that shift with some of our Balance365 members sometimes and I agree some people get a garbage sandwich but it is so important to reflect on our contribution to where we're at in life. I believe that wholeheartedly that it is so important to reflect on that.

There are obviously things that were out of your control but there are also things that you have done and you know, for this is a very complex topic but especially, you know, just the different members we have in the different lives they come from but I feel like that can be such a light bulb or that lightning bolt they need to go, you know, maybe they can't change everything about their life but maybe they have more control than they have let themselves believe, leading out to that moment.

James: And the thing is that there's focal changes and then there's global changes, what I experienced was largely a global change, that I just decided that it wasn't that I was going to get in shape or that I was going to stop flunking out of school, I was going to fix everything and so that was a global change.

Other people had these focal changes, like the example in chapter one of Chuck Gross, who had started with his weight because he weighed over 400 pounds and that was a life changing epiphany after having struggled and tried and failed to lose weight many times, he had this transformative experience and that he knew it was going to work and the direct quote from Chuck was "I didn't have to struggle with my motivation. It came built in."

And he lost over 200 pounds and has kept it off for more than a decade but the interesting thing there is that these experiences often have cascading effects where afterwards, he ended up, he went back to school and he was a straight A student, he went through a personality shift where he went from very introverted to, you know, more confident and more extroverted, it was better for his relationship and it just had a lot of other positive impacts throughout his life.

Jen: What about, something on the other end of the scale, I was listening to a podcast the other day with a therapist and she was talking about the high failure rate of relationships after somebody has weight loss surgery and they didn't dig into that but it relates back to what we're trying but here is because a lot of people, it's not about the weight loss, it's about the identity change that they have because of that huge event and I can also see it going the other way, that, I mean, this happens all the time in relationships, I guess, you have people go through identity shifts throughout their life and it can also affect your relationship negatively.

And so I can see it also, you know, not that anyone should stop themselves from changing but it's just to show this is radical, right, it's radical what happens to people and this cascading effect that you're talking about, it can affect, we have in Balance365 these women that go on, like, one woman has founded a feminist nonprofit in Vancouver and is building this huge community and she talks about how it was Balance365 that just, it just was that moment, right, everything changed from there and it's just interesting to see and we've had women applying for jobs they didn't think they were qualified for and we've had women leave their husbands, we've had, you know, it's just that radical personal growth shift that just, yeah, cascades everywhere.

James: Well the research you're talking about with weight loss surgery, of which I am very supportive, I've written an article about how I think that if people that think that that is the right decision for them I'm the last person that would ever shame someone for doing so because the research shows that it can be quite effective but I'm not aware of and I'm not denying it, I'm just saying that I can't speak to that.

Jen: Right.

James: However, in these instances I didn't interview anyone for the book that had undergone very bariatric surgery but there were a few people that had experienced significant weight loss and as well as gone through many other changes and the one theme that I noticed is that what we're talking about is, yes, there's an identity shift, yes, there's a value shift, that's what makes it effortless.

There's the whole, it refers to Roky, social psychologist Milton Roky teaches model of personality which is, like, the whole, you know, ogres are like onions. Well, people are like onions, too. We've got our actions and behaviors at the extra layer which is, if you focus just on changing behavior, that's why you need to be slow and steady because you're in conflict with those more internal layers of your values and your identity, whereas if you go through an identity shift and a shift in values, the outer layers just sync up effortlessly which is what happened with Chuck Gross.

He went through a rapid identity and values shift which just brought his actions and behaviors into line immediately. But so here's the thing that, yes, this entire book is about a shift in identity and values which sounds scary. So this is anecdotes, not data but the examples in the book, many of these people were in relationships when they went through this dramatic shift, those relationships got better.

Jen: In the examples in your book.

James: And I can posit a hypothesis as to why that happens, which is that it's actually and there's even some philosophy in there and psychology is that this is not a false construct that you're creating. When you go through something like this, it's more like the current identity that you're letting reign is the fake one, that's the one that is, you feel that you need to survive each day because of societal pressures and pressures of, you know, maybe toxic people in your life or

your job or whatever else is going on that this is the thing that, you know, it can be referred to as the despised self that you're letting rule your life and then all of a sudden, the true self that, this is the person you've been yearning to be your entire life, is suddenly let loose.

It's not invented out of thin air, it was there deep down and it was like every little movie that you watched where there was a hero that did something that impressed you or a story that you read that you say "I wish I could be that brave" or all these little things are tiny bits of data that get lodged in your unconscious that that have the ability to coalesce in a profound way in a moment.

So when you go through this type of identity change, this is not slow and steady, it's such a dramatic emotional event that it's something where it's unleashed, it's like, it's like a volcano where the magma has been bubbling under the surface, building for years and then all of sudden kerblew, it explodes.

That's why it's a, it's a holy s. moment because you have this sudden realisation and because and when we look at our relationships with other people that when you fall in love with someone, you have a tendency to idealize them and you're falling in love with what you, the vision you have of them as their best self. You see, you know, they're not always that way but when you see the best in them, you have a tendency to overlook the bad parts the parts that annoy you, hopefully. I know my wife does it with me all the time. Then when that real true best self comes to the surface and is allowed to let reign, it's, like, yeah, the other member of that relationship is very welcoming of that, so I'm not saying it's a guarantee, I'm not saying it's going to work that way every time but it sounds good, they said.

Jen: James, what do you think of this, all of this in terms of dieting. So in our community, really, what we have founded everything on is that dieting does not work and a lot, I mean, it doesn't work for the majority of people and what happens with women is that dieting becomes a part of our identity over time, so you are or losing weight or maybe you'll tell me, I'm not using the correct scientific terms for all of this but it may feel like part of our identity. It is so ingrained in us to be basically defining our self-worth based on our ability to lose weight or at least trying to lose weight makes us feel worthy and we get, you know, many pats on the head for it as women when we're doing that. I would say

men probably experience that as well and so feel like when women join Balance365, when we help give them, you know, turn the light on a little bit and they join Balance365 and they realize dieting doesn't work, and for some of them it happens like in "Zing! This does not work. This I have been doing for 25 years does not work" or sometimes it happens slowly, it's like, "OK, maybe it doesn't work" but then they, like, come back, you know, and then maybe they pull back from us a little and go, "Well, I'm just going to try one more diet, just to double check" and then would you say that's a change in identity happening?

James: Absolutely and I think you really nailed it, that a lot of people, so that's that is, sort of a despised self identity that is being allowed to flourish because their values are the approval of other people or living up to some toxic ideal that you see in an air brushed model on a cover of a magazine and looking at food as something that, you know, what they consume is something that they need to suffer through and this is, the thing about these type of events is the whole goal is to remove suffering, when you focus strictly on behavior change, that's why the tortoise's preached over the hare because if you change too much all at once, the amount of suffering you experience is quite high because it's at odds with the more internal layers.

And that's why they say baby steps is because you're trying to minimize the discomfort until it gets to the point where you just kind of get used to it and you come to tolerate it and yeah, you know those things can work but we all know that the failure rates are pretty high and what can be a much more positive shift in identity is having self compassion, realizing that you are a fallible human being and that food is something that is supposed to be enjoyable and nourishing and necessary for life and that you can stop caring so much about what other people think and worrying more about the way that you, what you think about yourself.

And how you feel about the way you look in the mirror and how you feel physically, like, when you wake up each morning and you know hopefully bounce out of bed and then looking at food as something that nourishes you and because you have compassion for yourself that you want to feed yourself in a healthy and nourishing way and that you want to exercise because it's good for you and it's enjoyable and it's OK to have some vanity goals but if vanity is your overrunning motivator I've never seen that work out well. Yeah, you know, for many years I had a shirtless photo of me on my website. And you know, I'm wearing the short sleeved t-shirt-

Jen: Snug fit.

James: And I think it's OK to have some of those motivations but you also need to think about the, you know, I'm never going to be as buff as the next guy, I'm never going to be as ripped as the next guy but that's OK because my wife likes the way I look, I like the way I look and I like running, I like lifting weights, I like riding my bike, I like fueling appropriately, I like the way I feel when I eat mostly healthy food, I like the way I feel when I don't drink very much, all those types of things, that's part of my identity, that just being kind of Zen about this whole thing. You know, just do the best you can, enjoy your life, enjoy your food, enjoy your exercise, that's identity and values right there and that's a positive one as opposed to all "Oh my God, I've got this flab from Christmas" which I totally do and you know, that's a positive shift that people can make because they hear me talking about it, they hear other people talking about it, they read it and this type of information percolates in your brain and maybe one day it bursts through the surface and you say, "That's who I am."

Lauren: Can I ask a question before we kind of move on or switch gears? When you were telling your story, I kind of had this realization that I listen to a lot of podcasts and there's always people, you know, being interviewed and telling their stories and it's usually someone who has accomplished something or done something and a lot of times you'll hear them have that Holy S. Moment, you know, whether it's, you know, they had a big realization or whatever and I am realizing that a lot of times, it's kind of like they're, it's a bad moment, right, like, they're kind of in a low place when they have that moment, is that and I know you have a lot of examples in the book, is that true for all of them or is there another way you can kind of come to that moment?

James: It's common but it's not the law so, you know, in my example when I talked about the one when I was flunking out of school, yeah, the whole action is the antidote to despair quote, I was in a state of despair so that's one of the reasons why it really spoke to me. Despair is not same thing as depression, just so we're clear. And but and so what happens with a lot of people, one example is called crystallisation of discontent which is a psychological term which refers to discontent is, you know, say there's one problem that's bugging you and it's not that big of a deal by itself you're like, "Yeah, whatever, I can live with that. Crystallization is when you look at all the other little problems and the whole is greater than the sum of it's parts where they suddenly crystallize all together and

you reach a point where you're like "OK enough of this, you know, we've got to go in a new direction because this is just not working for me anymore." So that's an important shift people can make.

Then going deeper, we also have the breaking point, which we see quite often with addiction where people are in a horrible state and they realize that they just can't do it that way anymore and they've got to go in a different direction and it is very common for people battling addiction where one day they just "No, this is it, never again" and they're done and they are done so that's another way but on the other end of the spectrum, we also have the good to great mentality which is and I'm stealing that from a book of the same name by Jim Collins and the book is actually about corporate change where corporations want to go from being good at something to being great but it actually, there's a lot of good stuff in that book that applies to people as well and what it is is someone, you know, life is pretty peachy, things are going along OK, you know, it could be better but then suddenly a quest enters your mind, like, "I gotta do this" where where it's not like you want to be great for greatness sake, you have discovered something that makes you want to try to create it.

And you know, for me people who have that big life changing event often have more later on clarifying epiphanies and for me it was being a writer that I had reached the age of 40 and I had an MBA, I had a successful business career and I didn't hate my job but I did not love it and I knew that writing was something that I love to do and I realized life was too short to spend the majority of my waking hours doing something that I wasn't really passionate about and I was going to give it my very best effort in order to make a career out of this and so that was a, life was good and then I became a writer and it became great. Maybe not quite financially great right away. But trust me, you know, I just turned 50 last year and my forties were awesome because I decided to become a writer and my fifties are looking to be even better.

Lauren: Right, that's good to know, you know, you can have these epiphanies without being at like rock bottom.

Annie: I would just like to say that James pretty much just described my last year of therapy in like 15 seconds. Because we actually have a section of our program called The Story of You which is where we help members get clear on their values and I think Old Annie, Annie 2 years ago would have just poo-pooed that, like, "Why does this even matter, I just want to lose weight, I just want to build

muscle, I just want to, you know, run this or lift this or whatever, like, I want to look a certain way or I want to feel a certain way, why does my values even matter?" and you wrote in a blog post that you encourage people to spend less time worrying about the exertion of will and engaging in continual resistance and suffering and forcing yourself to do what you really would rather not and spend some quality time on examining who you really are deep down and you encourage people to, like, really look at their values, like, what really matters to you and you've found in your book evidence that supports that that will help, as you said with that one gentleman that he didn't have to rely on willpower because this is just what he wanted, like this is was him.

This is what he wanted and so we hear it from a lot of women that they feel like they need more willpower and more self control and you've dug into self self control, self love and willpower in your book and on your blog post and as you know, the fitness industry loves this like "No excuses, just shut up and do it, grind through it." So after looking at your work in the book and knowing you and knowing your personal and professional experience, what do you think about that? I mean do you want to expand on that barfy noise?

James: There was a lot of research in the book debunking the whole myth of willpower and seeing it as a limited resource that you can strengthen and you just gotta suck it up, we know it doesn't work, people have been told to suck it up forever, there's research showing that the efforts to to strengthen willpower are futile. There's more research in the book that people who do use what they call grit, that you just tough it out no matter what even though you hate what you're doing, it's actually physically damaging, it has negative cardio metabolic effects as well as negative effects on I think the telomeres which has to do with your life expectancy and so yeah, it's and it's just not fun.

Willpower and grit and powering through all imply suffering and I just, we don't want to suffer, we seek to avoid it. Our entire evolution as a species has been about trying to find ways to make things more comfortable for us so instead a person's ability to do things, like, I will get up and put on a ridiculous amount of layers of clothes to go out for a 6 mile run in minus 30 and it's not because, you know, I don't hate doing it, I actually feel a sense of accomplishment, like, it's kind of cool for me knowing, "Hey, I'm out doing something that other people think is crazy" and so that's one of the things that motivates me to do it is that it's, you know, it's just I get a bit of a an excitement out of it even though, yes, it's really

cold out there and I'm kind of slow because I'm trudging through snow but it's just, it's this neat little sense of accomplishment and also a shower after a run at minus 30 feels really, really good.

Jen: And I'm over here like, "No way." It brings me zero joy to do something like that.

James: So that's not, I'm not suffering.

Jen: Right.

James: All that being said and I'm really hoping this book takes off because if it does, not only will I feel validated which I kind of need, then I want to write a sequel about what happens after the holy S. Moment and you know, how do you keep snowballing the success from it and I think that doesn't rule out discipline, so discipline is different from willpower.

Discipline is about things, like, you know, getting, formulating routines that you stick to even though you don't want to and yes, there are days that I don't feel like running but you know, I just, you know, I figure I'm still a runner, that's who I am and I don't always succeed but there other times when I don't want to but I'm going to do it anyway and you make yourself do it and then you get out there and yeah, maybe the first kilometer and sorry for the Americans that are listening, the first kilometers kind of drag but then you get into it and after it's like, "Yeah, I'm really glad I did that" so there's it's not like everything is a joyous "Oh yeah, I can't wait to do this." But it's just, it's because it's who you are, it's not that big of a deal.

Jen: Annie just talked about this in a workshop last night that we did for our members around exercise, you know, it's like we do encourage people to find exercise they enjoy or can tolerate and Annie just said "Look, it's not always going to be super fun, you're not always going to be like I can't wait to get to the gym but even if you can tolerate that exercise and afterwards feel accomplished and glad you went"

Annie: Then, yeah, there's like this like acclimating period for a lot of people that aren't super jazzed about exercise or movement that it's like they kind of just have to get over that hump of maybe they're a little bit sore or they're getting into a new routine, they're like, I think of it as like snowplows, you know, like or you're

going through a gravel road, like the first time you go through like fresh gravel it's like a little bit wonky and then you keep going through and you keep, like, grinding those, like, pathways and-"

James: Grind isn't a good word to use, we don't want to be in a rut.

Lauren: No.

Annie: But eventually, the pathway is a little bit smoother and you have less resistance but initially, when you're getting going or maybe you're trying something new, you're learning a new skill, it's not all fun and there's certainly days where you're just tired and you just don't want to do it for whatever reason.

James: And sometimes you do and that's great and other times you don't, you know, don't beat yourself up over it because you know, tomorrow's another day and one of the things that I want to be clear about is that, you know, not throw out the tortoise approach to this because if you think about motivation as, like, a mountain and at the base of the mountain that is 0 motivation to do the thing. And then the peak of the mountain is absolute 100 percent motivation to do everything associated with this goal with inspired vigor. Well, if you're down at the base of the mountain, you don't just hang out there and wait for sudden inspiration to arrive and Star Trek transporter your butt all the way up to the top.

That can happen, sometimes it does, that's what happened with Chuck but it doesn't always work. You increase your odds of success if you start to hike awhile and you do those baby steps, because what it does is that it opens up new experiences to you. It gets you thinking because this is something that happens in the brain and if you are having these new experiences and starting to think about this and examining yourself and how you feel about it and looking at your, this is an emotional experience and that's what happened for me is I talked about the, you know, the change in school and the change and you know, getting out of debt, all that kind of stuff. I didn't get in shape right away, that came 2 or 3 years later when I finished my undergraduate degree, stuff was really busy with school and I was really busy with working to pay off my debts and those kind of things and I didn't do anything about my body because I felt like I didn't have time and then as soon as I finished my degree I looked in the mirror and said "Wow, I got kind of heavy. Maybe I should do some about that."

That became my next mission, I'd learned how to work hard but it doesn't mean that I liked it. I started going to the gym and I did not like it one bit and it was after about 2 months that I was, you know, just forcing myself to go because I knew that this was something that I had to do and I was powering through on that grit and that willpower and I came close to quitting so many times and I felt like I was losing no weight whatsoever and then, so I was doing that that slow hike up the mountain of motivation and then one day I'm walking out of the gym after a couple months and the person at the front desk said "Did you have a good workout?" and I stopped and I thought about that for a moment and I said to myself, "Well, it didn't totally suck" and I thought "It used to totally suck" and hopefully we can say suck on your podcast.

Jen: Yes.

Annie: Yes.

James: OK, so it went from totally sucking to not totally sucking and I thought, well, if I could evolve from it toward it not sucking then one day I could learn to love it and in that moment, I wouldn't say that I transformed into loving it but I did make a life altering decision that said "OK. One day I can learn how to love that" so therefore, I'm going to keep doing it until I die and that was 25 years ago still going so, go me!

Jen: There are a lot of aspects that suck about running a business, it's coming together but ultimately when you're, you know, values, you know wake up in the morning and being safe, having financial autonomy is so so important to me, I will, we will show up and we will do those sucky things because ultimately our value of having financial autonomy overrides the pain of doing those sucky things.

James: Yeah and it's, you know, the alternative is is worse, right.

Jen: Right, is way worse, yes.

Annie: I think that that's an important point that I hope our listeners grab, especially, you know, I'm talking about exercise because I'm a trainer but so often people think that they love something so then they'll do it and that's how you do more things, right, you have to love it first but like you just described, you can actually do something, get a little bit better at it and that cultivates a sense of love

or enjoyment, so you can, in essence, learn to love something, like, you learn to love exercise and I think that that's what so many women who don't naturally love exercise like I do, I get it Jen and Lauren have expressed that they don't share their passion for exercise like I do all the time. But that that doesn't mean that they're just out of luck.

James: And for the analogy that I would use to describe it is that when you take this approach hiking up that mountain and then waiting for sudden inspiration to move you much further up the mountain, you know, dramatically increase your motivation all of a sudden, I refer to it as acting like a tortoise but thinking like a hare and so people need to be receptive to the possibility of this sudden gaining motivation and if they're more receptive to it, if they're more mindful of it happening, it dramatically increases the likelihood of it taking place.

Annie: I like that, that's really good.

Jen: One of our members, her husband's in the Army and she had this really good saying on one of our podcasts around motivation and behavior change and self-awareness, I guess, sometimes you need to know when to advance and when you just need to hold the line and I feel like that was a real, like, that's kind of the hare and the tortoise thing, right, like you just, sometimes you have an opportunity in your life to advance and you need to take it. Motivation isn't bad, it's just knowing, yeah.

James: Something interesting happened with me, so I was talking about how new experiences and an openness to new ideas that wake up a part of your brain that wouldn't have happened if you hadn't gone out and tried that thing, that's what absolutely happened to me with running. So when I decided to take up running, so I'd lost a fair bit of weight with weight lifting and dietary changes and then I decided, well, I want to lose more and this was before Facebook, so I actually knew that that running was good for weight loss, that it could work because I hadn't bought into all the fit pros saying "No, cardio makes you fat."

So I decided that for me that running would be a good choice and that it would also be not just good for weight loss but just good for my health, it's good for organ health and all that kind of stuff and so I decided to start doing it and I was terrible at it and it was painful but I just started it, really short distances and gradually built myself up and I was just thinking about the outcome, like, this is good for losing weight, this is good for my health, that's why I'm doing it and

something completely unexpected happened was that that being a writer and being a person that likes to create stories and tell himself stories is that became the most creative part of my day was when I go for a run my best ideas come to me, either when I'm running or going for a bike ride and I just love the free association that I get to do.

I'm away from technology, you know, I don't have my phone with me or anything like that and it gives me that time alone in my head that, you know, that I just didn't realize how much I craved that. And it makes such a big difference to me that that was really what I fell in love with, that if I hadn't actually tried running I never would have known that that was the thing that I needed.

Annie: Yeah, that's really pretty, that's a beautiful story.

Lauren: That's really pretty.

Jen: James, can I get your take on another behavior we see quite often?

James; Sure.

Jen: So what happens very often in our community when women have the epiphany that diets don't work and they've been living for years and years under a very restrictive way of living, they have their pendulum swing out the other way so many of our members talk about, after they join Balance365 they overeat, go swing into this period of eating all the things that they have denied themselves for so many years and that usually comes with weight gain and a lot of them say it became a necessary part of the process for them in order to have their pendulum swing back to center and be able to be more objective and balanced in their approach. What is your, do you think it's necessary and or do you, is there any science or anything that you know of to explain that or what's your take on it?

James: So, I mean, I, the first caveat is that I'm not actually a psychologist.

Jen: Right.

James: I interviewed a whole bunch of psychologists for the book and we didn't specifically get into that type of stuff. I would say that if you are hearing a lot of people saying that that was necessary for them and that it worked, then it sounds like there's got to be something to it. For me, like I always would like to say err on the side of caution a little bit but you've got to do what you gotta do.

Jen: Right.

James: If you have been punishing yourself this much for so long and you reach this breaking point and you just got to go in another direction where you're like "OK, I'm sorry but this is, I just need a break" and that what happens then, then that makes sense to me but at the same time, you need to keep something in the back your mind that says "This is temporary, that this is a reset" because you don't want to go off the rails, right? You don't you don't want to never stop because and it's not about shaming people for their body weight but just being concerned for their health and you being concerned about your own health and how you're feeling and that as long as you realize that this is a temporary reset and that it's part of finding a mentally and physically healthier way to move forward it sounds OK to me but-

Jen: Right.

James: Just realize, OK, how far does that pendulum need to swing the other way before it comes back and don't go beyond what's necessary? So just little bit of caution.

Jen: We have to have these come to Jesus talks with our members often on how far that pendulum has swung out and how far, how long they're willing to stay there because in the end, a lot of women feel they came from a space where they were controlled by the diet industry saying-

James: Oh yeah.

Jen: Right, but then they're screaming out into this other space where I'm like "But you're still not really free, like you're still not making free will choices if you can't get your pendulum to come back to center."

James: Exactly-

Jen: You're just in a rebound state.

James: You let the food hedonism rule instead.

Jen: Right.

James: You go from restriction ruling the life on one hand to highly palatable food ruling it on the other hand.

Jen: Right.

James: So you're still, like you said, you nailed it, you're still not really free, so be careful how far you let it swing-

Jen: Right.

James: Consider it a bit of a mental reset that it's almost like a statement that you're making-

Jen: Exactly.

James: A rejection of this toxic diet mentality where OK, and then you make your point, "Forget you diets." And then you come back to what you really feel is going to be both physically and psychologically nourishing for you.

Jen: Right, exactly.

Annie: James, I know you have to get going because you have more interviews, you are just an in demand man. The first time we tried to schedule this episode you were just coming off of another interview and it was right before another one and everyone wants to talk to you, so I'm so thankful that you gave us some of your time. I know our community is just going to really enjoy this episode and I bet they cannot wait to get their hands on your new book which comes out the 22nd of January, so by time this should be available.

James: Yes, indeed.

Annie: And where, I know they already know where to find you but if they're new to you, where are you hanging out online, where is the best way to connect to you?

James: So if they want to find a book probably easiest place is well, they can either walk into a bookstore or go to bodyforwife.com and there's a book tab that has links to every possible platform they can want. I think I mentioned that I did the narration for it so they can also get the audio if they want to do it that way. We have a lot of fun on my Facebook page, really good crowd there.

Jen: Oh yes.

James: It's, I think we're over two thirds women on the page and they're very accepting, very feminist environment, sometimes some very foolish men show up and get their butts handed to them righteously and that's an awesome thing to witness.

Annie: You've had some threads that are like "Get your popcorn ready" sort of thing.

Jen: You know, I don't even say a word, I just read through them and I'm like, "Whoah!"

James: Yeah, well and the thing is that people like the smack down because it serves as a lesson to other people and I learn things by, because there are so many really intelligent women on that page that, you know, people say "Oh, you know, you really get this whole kind of feminism thing" and it was like "Well, it's only because I've been reading comments on my Facebook page from awesome women who know this stuff really well" and so yeah, that's Facebook.com/bodyforwife, Twitter, Twitter sucks. I'm on Twitter let's stick-

Jen: What about Instagram?

James: I'm not on Instagram, I don't take good selfies. So Twitter is Twitter.com/bodyforwife as well.

Annie: Awesome, well James, thank you so much, I cannot appreciate you enough, I'm really excited for everyone to check out this book and we'll hope to have you back soon, OK?

James: I'd love to and in closing, the one thing I will say to everyone that's listening, that when it comes to these types of life changing epiphanies, the most important thing is to understand these things happen all the time and it is really important to believe that it's something that can happen for you because that's what opens yourself up to actually experiencing it.

Annie: Awesome, thank you so much.

James: Thank you.

Annie: We'll talk to you later.

James: Bye.

Lauren: Bye.

Annie: Bye.