

# Balance365 Episode 62 Transcript

Annie: Welcome to Balance365 Life Radio, a podcast that delivers honest conversations about food, fitness, weight, and wellness. I'm your host Annie Brees along with Jennifer Campbell and Lauren Koski. We are personal trainers, nutritionists and founders of Balance365. Together we have coached thousands of women each day and are on a mission to help them feel healthy, happy, and confident in their bodies on their own terms. Join us here every week as we discuss hot topics pertaining to our physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing with amazing guests. Enjoy.

Annie: Welcome to Balance365 Life Radio. I am so excited for today's guest because today's incredibly smart and talented guest goes way back with Balance365, so far back in fact that he knew Lauren, Jen and I before we were even a business. Josh Hillis has been a longtime friend and mentor to the three of us and I'm so excited for you to hear his wisdom on today's episode. Josh helps people beat emotional eating using a skill-based not diet-based approach that allows people to create a new relationship with their bodies and food and get results that have previously never been possible. Josh is the author of *Fat Loss Happens on Monday* and the upcoming lean and strong and yet untitled emotional eating book coming out in 2020.

Josh has been writing for his blog [losestubbornfat.com](http://losestubbornfat.com) since 2004 and he currently attends MSU Denver and is doing his thesis on contextual behavioral science and emotional eating. He's the perfect guest for this topic. The current standard answer to emotional eating and the health and fitness industry encourages individuals to just have more control, more control over their diet, over their thoughts, over their emotions, more control over your cravings. But on today's episode, Josh shares why that advice usually doesn't work. For those who struggle with emotional eating and provides multiple practical tools to help you overcome it, I think you're going to love it and joy.

Annie: Josh, welcome to Balance365 Life Radio. We're so happy to have you. You go way back with our team like way, way back. How are you?

Josh: I'm good. How are you guys? It's so cool to see you guys again.

Annie: I know, like, we're still, like, we're still together. The last time we were Facetiming was under a little bit different context. We were Healthy Habits Happy Moms then and we were, you've kind of helped us mentor us as far as like habits and skills and philosophies and you're just a really great coach. Just flat out really great.

Josh: Thank you. From you guys, that's awesome.

Annie: So we're so happy to have you and Jen and Lauren are here too. How are you guys?

Jen:Hi-

Lauren: Good. Josh goes way back to like before we were even a thing.

Jen: We met Josh the same time we met each other.

Lauren: Yeah.

Josh: Wow.

Jen: Years ago.

Annie: Yeah.

Josh: Oh Wow. That's awesome. That's amazing.

Annie: So you're kind of a big deal to us, are we making you uncomfortable yet?

Josh: That's awesome.

Jen: When our book comes out we're going to have a page for acknowledgements and I was just telling the girls last week, like Josh Hillis is going to be my number one acknowledgement.

Josh: Are you serious?

Jen: Yeah, just like all your work and your blog, like it's been so insanely helpful to me. And even just watching you in conversation with people, like, as creepy as that sounds, but just how you handle people, how it's just and you're just so

objective and, and really what we try to embody at Balance365 as far as there's no right one right way for every single person and just being open to tools and helping people build a, just a more varied toolbox and they currently have for their health and wellness.

Jen: And also the other big thing that we come up against is that, because we're all about self acceptance and embracing oneself, we also often get lumped into a segment of this industry that we all know about, which is basically the anti weight loss movement, which is like weight loss is so bad. Why? Like nobody better talk about this. And a lot of dietitians are on that train as well as psychologists. And so it's just, it's like frightening for me at times. And I found myself questioning, you know, cause you go to the, you see these other professionals and you're like, "Oh man, like, she makes a good point, like what's?" And you've question your own values and what, but ultimately we have risen as like, look, we're just, we're just trying to take a messy middle approach. And there is really nothing inherently wrong with weight loss, changing your behaviors.

Jen: And I so appreciate that and you, because I see you as a real leader and professional, not just in the health and wellness industry. Well the health and fitness industry I should say, but you are now a part of the psychology industry.

Lauren: Say, "Hey, this is okay. Come on"

Annie: And you're not a jerk. Like you're not, like you're not out there shaming people and you're like still able to like help them achieve the goals that they have in a really like compassionate, positive way, which is awesome.

Jen: Yeah. And you've got a couple of clients I was reading yesterday on your page that you have a couple of clients that have lost over a hundred pounds. That's like, that's a, that's a life changing, values altering like those clients, like you've totally changed their lives.

Josh: Yeah. Yeah.

Annie: So now are you uncomfortable?

Josh: No, this is like the coolest, most thoughtful, most wonderful compliments I could ever get because you guys are acknowledging me for the things that I've worked the hardest at and that mean the most to me, like in the world. So I totally appreciate it. I totally, totally, totally appreciate it.

Annie: Yay. Well, we're like, we can just be your ultimate hype women when you're having a bad day. You can give us a call. Okay.

Josh: Can you guys introduce me on every podcast?

Annie: We can. But peaking of podcasts, we should probably talk about the topic that I, that you actually wanted to talk about because we've been trying to get you on the show for a while and you're a busy guy. So, when I said, are there any topics that you wanted to jam on and you were like emotional eating, like top on your list. So what is it about emotional eating that you love so much?

Josh: I think, so a couple of different things, on like the bigger, like zoomed out level, I think it's access to making the kind of difference that I want to make with people. If they can get, what's really neat is if someone really struggles with emotional eating and they can get that under control it tends to spiral out into other areas of their lives and they have like better relationships and do better at work. I mean like it's, it's really like I don't coach any of that stuff and that kind of thing shows up. The other thing that I like about it is I think it's a place where people feel so out of control and they feel like they can't be this kind of person that they want to be and like they're like, they're being driven by this other thing. And so I like it cause I want to put them back in the driver's seat. and then also the framework that I study, which is contextual behavioral science is just really good for that. And so that's-

Annie: I think it's great because I, you have, you have an incredible blog. One of the blog posts you shared with me, you noted that the typical response in the fitness industry to emotional eating is like control, like just control more things and then like, you'll be fine. And, in order to control emotional eating, individuals just they need to control their diet, then control their thoughts, their emotions, their cravings, and you think that that's pretty much crap.

Josh: Yeah.

Annie: So tell us why, why do you think it's crap? Tell us more. I mean, we agree.

Josh: Yeah. So, one thing I just want to preface this with, because it's the most surprising cause I do think it's totally crap and I've gone that way for a while, but I was really surprised this year that I found some studies where they separated out people that had a high degree of emotional eating and cravings, eating and

external eating, which is like, you see food and you want it versus people that scored really low on that. And for the people that scored really low on that control was actually fine. Control actually totally worked just just fine. But that's not the clients that I get, you know, they don't hear me. So, the flip side is that control, if you do have issues with cravings or emotional eating, tired eating or and you're procrastinating or any of those things, then control will have an opposite effect. If it works, it always rebounds and the rebound is always, pretty un-fun. Like people really feel like a really, really bad loss of loss of control and they feel kind of gross and they don't feel good about themselves.

Jen:So it's sort of that the more tightly wound you are, the faster, harder you'll spin out. And applied to eating, I think people get that release, like they're so tightly wound around food trying to control everything then getting out of control, they just, I mean in the moment it's like a release, right?

Josh:Yeah. So you bring up these two really big points. Oh man, it's so cool. So on one hand you've got this like rule based way of living and the problem with having a totally rule based way of living is you break the rule and you're like, I'm off. I'm like explode. Like do it all because this is the last time ever. So, there's that huge like explosion release thing there. And then the other side is that, like, food really does work temporarily for numbing emotions. So, those two things kind of spiral together where people, like, break the rule and they're like, "Oh no, I'm, I'm off my diet and I'm going to go into all the things." And then they start to feel guilty about it. And then they actually are eating to numb the guilty feelings they have about breaking the rules. It's like-

Jen:layer one and layer two.

Lauren:Wow. The plot thickens.

Josh:Totally.

Annie:So I understand if you have emotional eating issues or cravings control strategies backfire, like they aren't helpful. What does work?

Josh:Great question. So, it kind of all fits in the world of like acceptance based strategies and I get, I like, I have some clients to kind of freak out when I say, like, "acceptance", you know, cause they're like, "I don't want to accept." But that's just kind of like a family of strategies. And what kind of falls inside of that is,

the first thing is actually normalizing. It's just recognizing every single time that you have uncomfortable thoughts and uncomfortable emotions, that it's normal to have uncomfortable thoughts, uncomfortable emotions and, like, the foundation is people, like, believe that that's not okay. You know, cause they've heard so much about, like, positive thinking or controlling their thoughts or all of these things or they were, maybe it wasn't cool growing up for them to have emotions or whatever.

Josh: But for whatever reason, they think they're supposed to be a shiny, happy person. And just recognizing it's normal to feel sad sometimes. And the number of coaching calls I get on where something really bad happens to someone and I have to say like, "It's okay. It's okay to feel bad. It's okay to feel sad. It's okay. It's okay to have all these feelings." So recognize that it's okay and normal and healthy. Sometimes we can even pair with, well, that's jumping to the next thing. So the next thing is getting a little bit of distance from uncomfortable thoughts and emotions, in act and acceptance commitment training they call it diffusion or fusion. So if you're fused with your thoughts, you feel like they're coming from you, you feel like they're true or true or false, and you feel like there are a command, you feel like there like something that like urgently needs to be fixed.

Josh: Diffusion is getting enough enough distance from your thoughts. You can see that like these thoughts might have come from my parents or the media or magazines or whatever. But like, my automatic thoughts aren't me. Right. They aren't true or not true. They're just thoughts. They aren't an urgent problem that needs to be fixed, right? It's normal to have these thoughts and feeling and so diffusion is a matter of, if people have done any kind of like meditation or mindfulness and like, noticing your thoughts and like not so that's where people get caught up. A lot of people have done, I've tried to meditate or do mindfulness in such a way that they were trying to change their thoughts and not have thoughts. So, it's not that, but it's like being able to notice like, "Oh, here are these thoughts and these emotions."

Josh: And it could be as simple as saying, "I notice I'm having the thought that blank" versus just treating the thought like it's true. Or probably a little later we'll get to, there's a metaphor for all this called, let the monsters ride the bus and it will kind of pull this together, but, basically get it, get enough distance from those thoughts that you can be with them and that they're not driving and then the third

thing is you've got to drive. Like you're the bus driver, but like you can have these thoughts and still take actions that fit your values in your life. And then the last thing is that requires having actually, like, clarified your values.

Jen:Right? Right.

Annie:This is like my therapy. This is what I discuss with my therapist.

Josh:Do you have an acts therapist?

Annie:I don't know. But there's, it does feel very similar into that, like just acknowledging like, these are my thoughts. These are my emotions. What is this? Where did this come from? I don't have to act on them. I can just acknowledge them and, and then sitting with them, not like trying to numb them, not trying to run away from them or like avoid them. Yeah.

Lauren:I've realized recently that my, I'm very prone to, what did you say? Fusion?

Josh:Yeah.

Lauren:Where I'm like, this is my thought and I have to fix it right now.

Josh:Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jen:We know that about you.

Annie:We could've told you that, Lauren.

Jen:She's doing that thing again.

Lauren:Well, I recently found this about myself.

Jen:This is like my inner Spock. Like when my inner Spock is like, "Halt." You know what I mean? When we have to, "Let's analyze this." Yeah.

Annie:So, okay, so Josh, what does this, what does this look like? So people have stress, they have an emotion. They have like, I mean, it could be emotional eating, it can be a wide continuum of emotions. It could be happy. It could be-

Jen:We didn't define emotional eating either at the beginning.

Annie: Yeah. Do you have a definition, Josh, that you, or a way to define emotional eating?

Josh: So most of what I'm looking at is disinhibited eating. So that's, like, a feeling of loss of control with food related to strong emotions, good or bad? Good, good or bad. Wanted or unwanted would probably be more accurate, external, like, seeing things and cravings and so it'd be eating in response to any of those things. With my clients I also lump in, to me it's all the same thing. I also lump in procrastination eating, tiredness eating. Those are the other two. Yeah.

Annie: Tiredness eating being that you eat when you're tired.

Josh: Yeah.

Annie: That's me.

Annie: I do that I think. Yeah. Okay, so you experience these emotions, any of them. And then you have a behavior around food. Is that-

Josh: Yeah.

Annie: Any behavior or it could be a wider range of behaviors?

Josh: Oh, it's typically like feeling some degree of loss of control. Like you're not, you don't feel like you're choosing to eat the Brownie, like, I woke up and there was brownies everywhere.

Jen: It would be different than happy eating cause we had someone in Balance365. I feel like her emotional eating was out of control. She ate when she was sad, but she also ate when she was happy. But it's more of a loss of control aspect to it. Not a, "Oh, I'm so happy. Let's grab a cake. Celebrate." It's right.

Josh: Yeah. It's not, "Let's have a bottle of wine at on date night." It's not, "It's my grandma's hundredth birthday. I'm going to have a chocolate cake." It's not that at all. Should I get into stuff like what, what we do about it?

Annie: Yeah. Go for it.

Jen: If you want to.

Josh: So the simplest thing to do is to put in a waiting period. Right. Could be waiting. 10 minutes, could be waiting a minute. Does it matter? All we're trying to do is they've got this really, really ingrained pattern of have an emotion, eat and if we can separate that, we're good. So that means, like, if I've got clients with pretty legit emotional eating problems, we'll start off with, they have an emotion. They wait 10 minutes, they eat the thing anyway, almost every time. That's fine. We can totally start there.

Jen: Progress being the waiting period.

Josh: Yeah. Yeah. So, the progress is it's not automatic, they might have to like struggle with it for that 10 minutes or they might have to think about it for that 10 minutes, but at some point, but they've got enough time, they get to choose in that case where they're having it all the time, they don't, they don't have a lot of choice. But it's at least we're breaking that pattern where it's automatic, where they might not even know what they're feeling. They might not even know what they're thinking. Which is actually really common, which is really, which is why, another really, so things you can put in that 10 minutes, you can put it in like looking at a feelings wheel and being able to just like pick out this is what I'm feeling, which actually creates some diffusion that creates some separation. And there's something really magical about people being able to figure out like going from, "I feel bad" to "Oh, I'm sad. I'm sad because this the, you know, my boss yelled at me and that sucks." Right? Maybe it's normal to feel sad when my boss yells at me or whatever.

Jen: I do this with my kids like they, but Brene Brown talks about how she has some research that shows, she's done research on college age students and they can only, they only identify three emotions and that's like-

Josh: Really? which ones?

Jen: Happy, mad and sad. And so she talks about how, you know, in order to be in touch with our emotions, we need to be able to identify emotions and we just aren't taught how to identify. I do this with my kids and we, like, talk about all these different range of emotions outside of mad, sad and happy because you can feel so many different things. But it's so interesting for you to talk about this because I also see so much child psychology stuff that actually applies to two

grown ass adults as well. Like we need, you know what I mean, because we weren't taught in childhood. So it, yeah. So it needs to be brought in.

Josh:All of the emotion regulation stuff for kids I use with adults. It's awesome.

Annie:There's Josh Hillis' coaching secret. Kid psychology.

Jen:Go grab your feelings wheel.

Annie:Where are you on the spectrum?

Jen:Next time Lauren has a meltdown I'm going to say "Go grab your feelings wheel."

Annie:All of our slack community, our corporate communication is now going to be, "I feel because" statements, so Josh, you, so you create some distance, you identify some feelings or what your feelings, you get really clear on what that is and then you can eat the thing if you want to still, right?

Josh:Yeah. And so they're sort of like these, like, kind of guideline-y things, like waiting 10 minutes. Another like guideline-y thing that I'll start off with, like, either don't do it, do whatever you want. If someone is eating the thing every time then we'll add in like a 50% guideline where 50% of the time they'll eat the thing and 50% of the time they'll find something else. And again, that's just sort of like some training wheels to have to like think about it and choose and be like, you know what, I ate the thing three days in a row. Maybe today I should try going for a walk.

Jen:Right, right.

Annie:And the point is to really just disrupt the autopilot, right?

Josh:Yeah, yeah.

Jen:Yes. Right. And also sounds like scaling a little bit.

Josh:Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jen:Rather than, again, what we see big, big, big problem is people try to go from zero to 60 and it never works. It never works. And Lauren had a really good idea for bridging the emotional eating gap. She said if eating a piece of cake is your

coping mechanism, try pair it with a bath, go eat your cake in the bath, and then eventually your association can be more, can become about the bath and then remove the cake and then have it be about the bath, right? It's about scaling that towards a healthier coping mechanism.

Josh:That's awesome.

Jen:Yes. Go Lauren.

Annie:Are there, Josh, do you have any other ways to create distance or to even just feel comfortable feeling your feelings without food?

Josh:Yeah. So there's always going to be three different things that you can do, three different effective things. One is you can create distance and just sit with it. Like, just accept this is normal. Right? And a lot of times that's really cool. If you're in a situation where you can't do something else, right, Like maybe you're at work and you've got to keep working, and so what you do is you notice those feelings and you come back to being present with your work or your family or whatever's going on around you. Like, you actually get present with that. The other thing would be to have a menu of different self care things that you can do. And so you notice you have those feelings and then you take a walk or do some deep breathing or take a bath or read a book or whatever. At this point I think I've got a list of like 70 different things in like 15 categories.

Jen:I want to just say one thing for the moms who listen and the dads, when I find myself emotionally eating, my kids are often a trigger and alternative forms of self care are not available to me. Right? Like I can't go take, I can't check out of parenting and go take a bath or even go meditate or whatever. And so sometimes I'm just freaking eat a bowl of chips. One thing I would say is that I've scaled it from diving headfirst into a bag of chips to like getting out a little bowl and putting some chips in there and then just eating them and going, "Yeah." So I would say like, I mean my emotional eating skills are not, but they have greatly improved over the years.

Josh:Well look at that. So there's a couple of great things about what you just said, right. Number one, parenting is a great context for, like, being able to just, like, accept it and be there. Also, you, you did look at, like, separating out the chips and, like, having a certain amount versus just, like, grabbing from the bag, which works for all kinds of treats all across the board. And then the third thing

that that brings up is, it's actually, and this is another thing that's such an important thing. It's normal to eat to chill out your emotions sometimes.

Jen:I totally agree. I don't think the goal is like 0% emotional eating. It's like, really, how often are you doing it and how, what is the loss of control there, right? Rather than-

Josh:Yeah.

Jen:Like emotional eating isn't all bad and it's like, really? Is it?

Josh:Yeah.

Jen:A couple of chips when my kids are losing it? Is that so bad.

Annie:Is it problematic for you?

Josh:Oh, and it's one those things where like, like the goal is psychological flexibility. So psychological flexibility is the ability to make different choices. Right. It's just an ability to make different choices.

Jen:Right. Right.

Josh:Like, never emotionally eating is rigid.

Jen:Totally.

Josh:Always having to, like, where most of my clients had is they've got like a rule, they don't, they don't say it as a rule, but like they've got a rule that if they have emotions they eat, totally rigid.

Jen:Right.

Josh:If we can get in the middle we're rocking.

Jen:Totally. Yes.

Annie:That sounds so familiar, Jen.

Jen:The messy middle, yes. That's where we like to hang.

Josh:I loved that so much. That is like the best phrase in the world.

Jen:Brene Brown, I've brought her up a few times now. You can see I really like her.

Josh:I like her too.

Annie:But-

Jen:Yeah, she talks about being in the messy middle, but when you're in the messy middle you get arrows from both sides, which we have also experienced as well. Being in the messy middle between hardcore health and fitness and hardcore body positive anti weight loss. Hanging out in the middle is can be quite lonely and you can get arrows from both sides. But-

Josh:I get that.

Annie:Okay. So say you're finding yourself, like, face deep in, like, cake or chips or whatever it is and you're, like, you have this, like, moment of, like, "Whoa, what am I doing?"

Josh:Yeah.

Annie:Like you're like in this middle, like an emotional eating extravaganza.

Josh:Yeah.

Annie:What do you do? Do the same thing, like, create some distance still or are there different rules?

Josh:Oh no, that's, you nailed it already. It's the exact same rules. So, you notice you're in the middle, you separate yourself from it geographically. You give yourself some time to think about it. You do some sort of diffusion exercise. Whether that's, well, where I talked about, like, a feelings wheel, but also I've got some clients that will journal, they'll write out everything that they're feeling and just writing it out gives them a lot of distance. The biggest thing my clients use actually a metaphor called "let the monsters ride the bus" so we might as well dive into that now. So, it's a really, really common act metaphor and the metaphor is, you're a driving a bus and sometimes you get really cool passengers that get on the bus and they're like, "hey, you're great and we love you and high five!" Like that.

Josh:And they get on and off when they want. And sometimes they get monsters, they get on the bus, they're like, "Hey, you're ugly and stupid and you always do it wrong" and they get on and off when they want. And your job as the bus driver is to drive the bus and you could always make a left turn towards, like, numbing and controlling, or you can make a right turn towards your valued actions. And what this allows people to do is allows people to realize like, "Hey, I've got these monsters that will get on, will ride along with me and I can still take a right turn towards my values. Even with the monsters on the bus. Like, my job isn't to get rid of the monsters. It's not to not have monsters. It's to let the monsters ride the bus."

Josh:And my clients have identified, they almost always have identified, like, what their most common monsters are. And my clients get to a point where they have identified the monsters that they have in the middle of emotional eating. I've got a lot of clients that have a monster that's like, "One more will be fine, one more will be fine, one more will be fine." Or they might have a monster that's like, "You've already ruined it. Might as well go for broke. Let's start again Monday." And so when they have those feelings, again, they don't treat them as true. They don't treat them as, like, them. They're like, "Oh, there's that monster again. And that guy can ride along the bus. And I know that when I'm in, when I catch myself in the middle, my monsters are super loud."

Annie:Are you familiar with Pema Chodron's work? She's a Buddhist nun.

Josh:No.

Annie:This is feels very similar because you have in that blog post, and I think, I think I pulled this quote from your blog posts it said, "The irony is that when people accept cravings as being normal" or I'm assuming these uncomfortable emotions, "they have an increased capacity to tolerate cravings" and that's just very similar to her work. That's like you actually, by just acknowledging the feelings and emotions you suffer less, like, and that's, like, instead of trying to avoid it or like do all these things like this contortionists, like, "I'm going to avoid it in any way possible. I'm going to do all these things so I don't have to feel the thing that I'm trying to avoid feeling." If you just like feel it and like acknowledge it, like, "I see you, monster, you're on the bus, I hear you, but I'm not going to listen or I'm not, you know, whatever."

Josh:Yeah.

Annie:It's like you can still take action as you notice, what did you, how did you say, that aligns with your values?

Josh:Yeah.

Annie:Yeah. Even though you hear them, even though they're on the bus-

Josh:You nail. Yeah. Yes. The same. And that's a really, really, really big. So, here's the paradox there. You're 1000% right. The paradox is that when you allow the monsters to be there, it is a lot less painful and it's a lot less intense. The paradox is that you don't want to approach it as, "I'm going to allow the monsters" to like force it to be less intense because then it doesn't work. And so that's not actually doing it. But what you're talking about, which is really cool, it's really, really cool, is that there's two kinds of pain. There is normal human pain, which is like the feelings and an uncomfortable thoughts that we all have. And then there's like the added pain that comes from trying to, like, control and fore and not, you know, and so, you do get to avoid all of the added pain and you're not the first person to be, like, you know, there's this Buddhist that kind of sounds a lot like these acceptance and commitment training people.

Annie:Well I think it's, I think it's, I don't know if it's just the universe, like, I've been doing kind of this emotional work to like make these messages become really clear to me. But it seems like I've been trying to, and I've talked about this on other podcasts, outsource feeling good or feeling great all the time. Like you said, like we get this message that like, "Maybe I shouldn't be feeling these things" or like "Everyone else feels great all the time and they never have bad days" or "They never have self-doubt" or they never have body image issues. And it's like, "That's actually just not the case. Like, just acknowledging that like you get to feel all the things and you still live, we're going to be okay," like that. It's like, that feels really powerful to me. But I like that you say like, I love that analogy of let the monsters ride the bus. I could see that becoming a big phrase in our community. Can't you Jen?

Jen:Yeah, I was already picturing it as a hashtag soon.

Josh:That's awesome.

Jen:The other thing is I think when I was hearing you say, Josh, is because we have this other guests, she's been on twice now. Her name is Hillary McBride.

We have to, we're going to call her Doctor Hillary McBride soon cause she's almost done her Phd and she is also psychologist and she works in body image and she has a book called Mothers, Daughters and Body Image. And so she has sort of encouraged the same process as far as thoughts about your body, like kind of stepping outside of it. But, and then I think her version of monsters on the bus is to acknowledge the monsters on the bus. But to say, is this really true? Just that simple question, is this really true? And I just sort of have this vision of being a driver on a bus hearing all the monsters in the back, but being able to say, "Is that true? Like, do I have to do that? Am I, you know, am I helpless to this? Is that true?" And you know, the answer is often, like, "No, it's not actually true." And then you can kind of just, yeah. Keep doing what you were doing.

Josh:Yeah.

Jen:Yeah.

Josh:Just to, like, it's, like, notice.

Jen:Yeah, just notice. Yeah.

Josh:Like it's, it doesn't, yeah. Cause we, it is so normal for us to treat it like it's true.

Like it's, like, it's so true.

Jen:Right. It feels true. Right?

Josh:That's awesome.

Annie:Okay. So Josh, we discussed, being aware, creating distance, normalizing the experiencing of different emotions. Is there anything else that comes to mind when I'm addressing emotional eating? And again, I do want to recap that this is like as you, as you said at the beginning, that those are tools that work for people that have emotional eating issues. If you don't have emotional eating issues then, like-

Josh:You probably don't have to-

Annie:Then it doesn't apply. Or what was the difference that you said? That thought control or thought suppression would work for people that,-

Josh:yeah. So, here's where it gets really funny. Cause I got really spun whenever the research that thought suppression worked for cravings and emotional eating for people that don't have cravings and emotional eating issues. And but, like, at first I was like, "thought suppression is always bad. Like how does that work?" And so I actually talked to my friend, Amy Evans, who's this brilliant behavioral analyst and she's like, "Well, of course not because the function is different, right? So if the function of that controllers is trying to like push away these uncomfortable emotions and cravings, then it's like an avoidance strategy. But if you don't have issues with those, then it's actually kind of like, maybe it's just like conscientiousness, right? Like it's a totally different thing." And I'm like, "Oh!" So it's good to have genius friends.

Jen:Right? So can you give us an example in context? So person A doesn't have ongoing emotional eating issues, so we're talking about, but then something, a craving pops up or, or they're feeling emotional and they're feeling some kind of urge to eat if they don't struggle with ongoing emotional eating issues, then suppression works.

Josh:Apparently. Yeah. I mean I don't coach that, but in the, in the research, yeah.

Jen:So what would suppression look like for them?

Josh:Yes. So, I'm guessing if they didn't score very highly than it's just a simple guideline that they're just like, "Oh, I don't, I don't eat between meals." I don't eat from the, you know, which is, which is totally fine.

Jen:Right? Yeah. We call these self-loving guidelines in Balance365. They're not rules. They're flexible guidelines that keep you in a place of self care kind of thing.

Josh:Yeah. So like-

Annie:Oh, sorry, go ahead, Josh.

Josh:I was just going to say if someone doesn't score really high on cravings and they have a little craving, it's pretty easy for them to go like, "Oh, I'm not going to do that."

Jen:Right.

Josh:"If someone scores really high on cravings-

Jen:Then it's a bigger deal to say, "No, I'm not doing that." Yeah. Okay.

Annie:I think it's important to note though, as you noted, as we noted in the beginning of the podcast is that that can work for some people, but right now the majority of the health and fitness industry are selling thought suppression.

Josh:Yeah.

Annie:To everyone. Like, that is, like, the widely accepted common answer versus, "Hey, like, maybe this is normal."

Jen:They're also selling emotional eating at any point as as unacceptable. And so, you know, a person who is has an emotional eating episode one day, that's, you know, we're trying to say in this podcast that that's not wrong. And really, if you don't struggle with emotional eating, whether you do or don't engage in emotional eating is not a make or break for anyone's life. Right. It's not, whether you choose the chips or don't, it's just not really an issue. Like it's really a small, tiny little rock that really, you know what I mean? Like we're talking about, there's people that have real loss of control that going on, you know, sometimes daily for them around emotional eating. So, and it comes down to the frequency. How often are you engaging in these behaviors and ultimately what does that end up? What does that look like for you? After three months, 12 months, three years, 20 years, right?

Josh:Frequency's everything.

Jen:Right.

Annie:Josh, you're so much fun to have on our podcast. Do you have more?

Josh:Can I throw one other thing out there? The other thing that, the biggest misconception that I've gotten when I've talked to people about this and I've got it so much that I want to make sure not to miss it. This is still a behavioral approach, right? Like they're like, "Oh, you're like deal with your thoughts and like that" but you still, like, you still have to clarify your values and attach behaviors to that. But it's like, so self love guidelines was that?

Jen:Self loving guidelines.

Josh:Self loving guidelines, or like kind of like more, more intuitive skills or like, all these different things. The whole point of all this is to be able to do those things more frequently.

Jen:Right?

Josh:Right. So, all of my clients, I shouldn't say all of my clients. The majority of my

clients track behaviors, right? So they track how often they have like a mostly balanced meal or how often they have vegetables or how often they, you know, snacked between meals or how often they noticed their hunger before they ate or how, you know, like how often they were full and stopped and like, they track actual behaviors and things that we can count the real world. Monsters on the bus is another thing that they track and count how often they use it. They also track if they didn't need it, like, "Oh, I didn't need it today," but-

Jen:Oh interesting.

Josh:If they're like, "Oh, I didn't need it and I used it" or "I didn't need it and I didn't use it." Those would be different things and it seems really weird maybe to use like a metaphor as a behavior to track, but it works really well.

Jen:So ultimately you're tracking, the behavior change that you have people track is not necessarily emotional eating episodes, but how they dealt with those, whether they dealt with it in a manner that is more healthy than bingeing.

Josh:Yeah.

Jen:Right. Okay.

Josh:Yeah. And so that could look really differently for a lot of different people, but it's like how often did you use this metaphor? How often would you use a diffusion technique? How often did you use your menu of things you can do?

Jen:Right, right, right.

Annie:Great. So, so you're putting behaviors with it. That's great.

Josh:That's what grounds it in the real world.

Annie:Yeah.

Josh:Otherwise it goes way.

Jen:Josh had a thread on his page, several months ago where you said, "sometimes I think" as far as your weight loss clients, you said "If we changed nothing at all except working on stress reduction methods, people would lose weight without changing anything at all." And then I had mentioned or just sleep, like, just a sleep habit, which is, you know, kind of goes hand in hand with stress-

Josh:So good.

Jen:Isn't it? So it just sort of like, yeah. So imagine if people just, so what we find is people hyperfocus on food, like they just are hyper focused on it and if you zoom out and you get back, if you just laid your foundations for say stress reduction, better sleep hygiene, anything you identify that helps your wellness wheel go, the food just doesn't matter. People will kind of eat until they're satisfied. Do you know what I mean? Like it's often these, the overeating tendencies we have are often a result of these high stress, sleep deprived, poor coping mechanism, lifestyles that we're living, the rest of the overeating issue. You don't have to be so hyper focused on the food or crank the wheel to the right and jump on the Keto wagon or cause you're really never getting to the underlying issues of why you're overeating in the first place. Right?

Josh:Yeah. With my most successful clients, all these things we're doing show up as self care.

Jen:Right. Totally.

Josh:And it's like, and then the people that struggle are the ones that keep trying to do it as punishment.

Jen:The food, the food. Yeah, totally.

Josh:And the thing about sleep is no one makes phenomenally great food decisions when they're exhausted.

Jen:Nobody. That's right. Yeah.

Josh:I will throw out there in case there's any people that work like swing shifts or

anything like that out there. For a while I had a ton of clients that were nurses that worked overnight and so for them, a lot of it was just acceptance of every time their schedule shifted they were going to be like unusually hungry. And so that is workable. But for everyone else, if we can just turn off screens like an hour earlier, like, man, this all gets easier.

Jen:Totally. We just interviewed a sleep doctor before we interviewed you.

Josh:Oh really?

Annie:Yeah. He said the same thing.

Jen:Same thing. Our podcast is the best.

Josh:Your podcast is the best. This was so much fun.

Annie:Are you always this energetic? I mean, every time, I've talked to you twice in five years, like you always have such great energy about you-

Jen:And smiling. You're always smiling.

Josh:You're super great. It's fun hanging out with you guys.

Annie:You are welcome back here anytime.

Josh:Also, this is, like, my favorite stuff to talk about.

Annie:So yeah, you are, you're welcome back here. Anytime. Anything, any projects you're working on that you want to tell us about or where can we, where can our listeners find you or keep up with your work?

Jen:You're working on a million books.

Josh:I am working on a million books, so, [losestomachfat.com](http://losestomachfat.com) is still my blog. I still do celebrity workout stuff and emotionally eating research, which is now a weird combination. I've got two books coming out. Lean Is Strong is coming out at the end of this year. And then the untitled emotional eating book is coming out next year. And that's my big stuff right now. It's top secret.

Annie:Oh, okay. Oh, okay. Alright, well thank you so much, Josh.

Josh:Thank you.

Annie:We will talk soon, hopefully.

Josh:Okay, cool. Thanks guys.

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