

Balance365 Episode 90 Transcript

Annie Brees

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, nutritionist, and founders of Balance365. Together we coach 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 well being with amazing guests. Enjoy.

Thanks for joining us here on Balance365 Life Radio. Before I dive into today's controversial topic, I want to share a review left for us on iTunes. This listener says "Smart funny, thoughtful, blessedly sane. Like three of your girlfriends handing out a huge dose of wisdom and not so common sense about health and body image. I am so thankful for Balance365 and we are so thankful to everyone who has left a review and a rating for us on iTunes that does help our podcast get more reach so we can change the world together.

Okay, let's talk about today's topic. It's often assumed that truly loving your body means you accept it as is. But what if for you truly loving your body means also changing it. Can weight loss and body positivity coexist? The term body positivity has grown rapidly on social media with the hashtag being used on a variety of posts pertaining to size acceptance, self love, and even body positive weight loss. It seems that as the movement grows and popularity, the term body positivity has also become diluted and in some cases misused. On today's episode Balance365 Community Manager and personal trainer, Michelle Philips, Jen and I discuss the definition of body positivity, whether or not it can coexist with weight loss, and how the movement has impacted all of our health and wellness journeys. Enjoy. Jen, it's you and me with a special guest for this episode. How are you today?

Jennifer Campbell

Good. And we have three distinct accents. Three distinct North American accents.

Annie Brees

But we're all kind of from the Midwest of the North America. So-

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, but I listen to Michelle, like, when we first got on with Michelle. Michelle, you had to pop off for a second, I said to Annie, "I love her accent."

Annie Brees: Michelle, how are you? Welcome to the show.

Michelle Phillips

I'm amazing. I'm so excited to be here.

Annie Brees

We're so excited to have you. For those of you who aren't familiar with Michelle, she is our new community manager, just an all around great human. You are a personal trainer. How about I let you do that you tell us about you instead of me doing it for you?

Michelle Phillips

All right, I am kind of a jack of all trades, I guess, I am a certified personal trainer, women's fitness specialist. I have been a Zumba instructor, which we'll get into a little bit later. I've been a Balance365 community member for over two years now. And now I'm the community manager and it's, I love being able to use the many years in the fitness industry I have to use it towards something so positive now and wonderful.

Annie Brees

And you just have, like, just the best personality ever. You're just energy. I mean, it makes sense to me that you're a fantastic Zumba instructor because you're just bubbly and energetic and fun. And like-

Jennifer Campbell

You'd be so fun to do a Zumba class with.

Michelle Phillips

Full of attitude. That's what my husband says.

Jennifer Campbell

Exactly. You've also, you, I feel like you are always doing continuing ed courses.

Michelle Phillips

Mm hmm. I love to learn.

Jennifer Campbell

You love it and you power through them.

Michelle Phillips

Mm hmm.

Jennifer Campbell: It takes me ages to, remember I messaged you. You were doing your PN one. And I messaged you and said I mean you posted that you had you were like done seven chapters. I was like "How? How?"

Annie Brees

Jen and I got the book ten months ago and haven't opened it.

Michelle Phillips

At the time, it was just perfect timing. I enjoyed the course. And I had some college classes too with nutrition. And so some of it ran right together. And at the time, it just, it was perfect timing. And I love doing it. I just love education courses.

Jennifer Campbell

And you did it. What was the most recent one you did, you shared with just inside of our coaching circle?

Michelle Phillips

Yep, that was the ACE weight management specialist. And that was a wonderful course all about helping people in all sorts of different bodies and different

lifestyles learn to appreciate themselves where they are, and also develop habits to where they want to be, just like what we do in Balance365.

Jennifer Campbell

That's lovely. And it sounds like it had a real compassionate tone that's very aligned with our community and the way we coach. So I know we have a lot of coaches listening, and I thought we should mention that in case anybody wants to take it.

Michelle Phillips

Mm hmm.

Annie Brees

And one of the reasons, one of the many reasons we wanted to on this particular episode is because we want to discuss body positivity and weight loss, can they coexist? Should they coexist? Can they not coexist? It's a highly debatable topic right now, as you both know, body positivity is a term that is gaining a lot of traction and popularity on social media. A lot of people might argue that it's become diluted from the original meaning.

And, you know, there's just, it's common to have confused or conflicted thoughts about this movement, because it's pretty complicated. Right? And you have some strong opinions, Michelle, as a fitness professional, as a woman, about can they coexist? And how to go about navigating these conversations? And I'm excited to talk about that with you today.

Michelle Phillips

Yeah, let's do it.

Annie Brees

Alright, so I thought the first thing we should maybe do is to look at the definition of body positivity. From bodypositive.com they define it is the focus of body positive is not on weight at all, but rather the decision to make day to day about how to parent yourself and meet your needs. There's also another, in doing research for this episode, another popular website that I came across Everyday Feminism, which I think you're both familiar with.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah.

Annie Brees

And she notes here that the actual intention of body positivity is not any action that makes you feel positive about your body. The intention is size acceptance. And I think that's where it goes a little bit south on social media or larger platforms is that people think body positivity is just about-

Jennifer Campbell

Loving your body.

Annie Brees

Yeah, and about doing things that feel positive, right. And she goes on to say that she wants to be clear that having a goal for intentional fat loss is not body positive period. She says that that's literally antithetical to the definition and intention of body positivity, fat loss goals are about intentionally changing your body weight in the context of weight loss, and body positivity is about not intentionally changing the body weight, the two things just don't mix.

And she does go on to say that it doesn't mean that you can't write a blog post about fat loss goals, or that you can't coach fat loss goals. But she's just asking people to not throw a body positive label on it because that's what the audience wants to hear. That's what selling I mean, it does seem to be kind of a marketing-

Jennifer Campbell

That's trending.

Annie Brees

Yes, it's a little bit of marketing or a lot of marketing as well. But she just does want to be sure that her readers understand that body positivity is about not making exercise a means to a physical end. In other words, not about having fat loss goals. If fat loss happens, as a result of the actions you take to introduce intuitive and gentle healthy lifestyle changes, then it happens.

So that's where we wanted to start the discussion. We wanted to like give kind of the definition one side and i think i should say, always, you know, the answer you're going to get to this question or the opinion you're going to get about this topic is going to depend on what camp you're in. Right? And you can find both ends of the spectrum. And either side of the extreme, right?

Jennifer Campbell

I also think that body positivity can be body positivity, and weight loss doesn't have to be part of body positivity. And I can totally honor and respect that someone's request to not throw a body positive hashtag on a post about fat loss, and agree, right. So I see body positivity as a political movement. And more than like a feeling, right, where I think that's where it's gotten quite blurred. But that doesn't mean that you can't have a weight loss goal that comes from a place of self care. Do you know what I mean?

Like it's just like, people think body, the phrase body positivity belongs to them and means something to them. But it's actually a, it was created, it's almost like a trademark term, really, that meant something else. And because of social media, etc, has been sort of watered down to mean something different. But the intention was never there to use it as a weight loss, to have in conversation with weight loss. But I'm not sure, Michelle, why don't you take the reins here?

Michelle Phillips

Yeah, I completely agree with what you just said, Jen, I don't think it was ever intended to be associated with weight loss, it was definitely meant to be more of a movement for those who needed their own light. And they needed to be able to feel good in their bodies. And to have that size acceptance, I really like that definition with size acceptance, because there are so many people in these larger bodies who are struggling to exist and who are victims of weight loss or weight bias, excuse me and stigma with our society the way it is. So to have that body positive kind of community, it really helps them to feel accepted and to flourish in their own little way.

Jennifer Campbell

And weight stigma is everywhere. So the other day, a woman who follows me sent me a post and she she's been on this journey herself of size acceptance for

quite some time. And she really tries to keep her social media environment safe. You know, because that's just the environment she needs right now.

And so she follows different hashtags, one of them being fat acceptance, another being body positivity, and a personal trainer posted this huge rant, who is also PN one certified the same as you, Michelle, which is crazy to have somebody with such a dramatic, different perspective on it, she posted this awful rant about larger bodies and the size acceptance movement is wrong. And you know, we've all heard it, we know what, you know. And so she she just told me, it was so jarring to be in what she felt was a safe space and to see this come across her feed.

And so I actually tried to engage with this coach to bring her to a place of understanding and she just like lashed back at me. I just walked away, and so did a couple of her followers. And it's like, who are you? And I even tried to say this, like, "Who are you to take those hashtags, like you're essentially targeting people with eating disorders with this message, which is a contributing factor to the development of their eating disorder, it is so rude, it is so entitled to believe that your message needs to infiltrate this space that people have created.

And so I yeah, I'm 100%. Okay, I mean, we have, you know, we talked about weight loss, and I'm 100%. Okay, going body positivity communities is not where I talk about this, right, I'm not entitled to take that conversation wherever I want.

Michelle Phillips

Totally agree. And that's really hard one. We've talked about this a little bit in the past, where I remember when it was probably about a year and a half ago, I would have considered myself to be very body positive. And there was a time where I kind of, I don't want to say separated from that movement, because I still, I'm actually still proud of that movement, because it has its place, and it has those people that need it.

But there was a time in my life where I had to move away from it a little bit because the fat loss portion in my life needed to be okay for me, I couldn't find the balance between body positivity and fat loss. And that's something where I became okay with saying, "All right, I can support those people in what they want to do and do something else for myself, too."

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, and that's something I experienced that as well, Michelle, which you and I've talked about in that I was very involved with the body positive movements years ago, when I was in that stage of my life. And then when I brought up the fact that I did desire fat loss, especially after that pendulum swing that we all know about and talk about on this podcast, I felt like basically, like, that's not welcome in this community. Now, looking back, I think I was very emotional and trying to kind of be more rational about it, I thought.

You know, I just don't think it was communicated to me properly. Why I can't talk about that in that space. Why it isn't part of the body positive movement. And I felt as if they were saying "Weight loss is wrong. And so and therefore you are wrong." But sometimes I look back and go, "Was that them saying it? Or was that like my own interpretation of it?" Because you know, and I don't know, but I do think there's a lot of people, there's some very compassionate people in the body positive movement. And there's some people that do actually take it to their own next level, and they are telling people they are wrong, right. And that is wrong.

Annie Brees

I think that's where I really struggle. And I find it rather heartbreaking that women, we service a lot of women that I think fall in this category are trying to make peace with their bodies, accept their body, love their body, and also want to care for it differently, also have different lifestyle goals, where they can tie their shoes comfortably, they can have the energy to play with their kids, they can, you know, live in a body that they feel like they can do all the things that they want to do confidently with.

And they, as a result sometimes, and you know, I'm not sure it's kind of like the chicken or the egg that you were saying, Jen, they feel bad about having weight loss goals, or they feel conflicted or they feel that like "Maybe I shouldn't have these goals. Like if I really love and accept my body then like I maybe I'm not as far as long on the acceptance journey as I thought it was."

Jennifer Campbell

Or I'm not being body positive or I'm doing an unkindness to my body. So Michelle, what's your journey been ?

Michelle Phillips

This is going to be fun. So I'm a little background for those of you that haven't met me on in the Balance365 group yet. I have been very passionate about helping women learn to love their bodies and move their bodies through fitness. And one of the biggest things I did to do that was become Zumba certified, or ZUmba licensed. And it was quite honestly the most exhilarating experience of my life. At that time, I was fresh out a diet deprogramming. And I was learning how to use my body in a way where I experienced a lot of weight gain. And I wasn't sure where I belonged in the fitness community at this point.

And so I was learning how to navigate this. And people started to define me as a body positive and fitness instructor who would absolutely help people just have this workout that they loved, and were so energized by it, and they would leave just happy and ready to pursue the rest of their lives. About a year into teaching I had an extreme worsening of a condition called plantar fasciitis.

If you're not familiar with that it is inflammation underneath the it's the tendon underneath your foot. And what ended up happening is I had to quit teaching. And I had gained a little bit more weight, my energy levels were just zapped. My body was hurting. I was trying so hard to push through for all of these people who I felt were depending on me to just be this larger body fitness instructor. And it wa breaking, my body was just, it was hurting.

Jennifer Campbell

So you felt like, you really felt the weight of your body had started to hinder the quality of your life.

Michelle Phillips

It did. And because my, I remember this, it was so hard, I'm probably gonna cry here. Sorry. We were on a family vacation. And we went to this amusement park. And I was so excited because my in laws had taken our kids for a little bit and I went to go on this roller coaster with my husband. And my hips didn't fit in the roller coaster seat. And I remember walking away, feeling so much shame. And my feet were hurting because I had this plantar fasciitis, my right foot, and I had my sunglasses on. So people couldn't see that I was tearing up as I was walking away from this roller coaster ride.

But that was kind of the moment where I went, "I'm losing my my quality of life, my daughter asks me to run after her and I can't because it hurts so bad. I wake up and my body feels in so much pain. And my tummy is getting the way of when I try to tie my shoes." There are some very basic things that were important to me in my relationship that I just I couldn't do it anymore. And I was pushing myself so hard, I wasn't taking the time to recover because I didn't want to let people down by saying "I need to heal my body."

And I wasn't comfortable saying "I need to lose weight." Because it was at a point where my weight had started to affect the quality of life I want when I couldn't do things with my family. And I couldn't even teach Zumba without having to come home and take an ice bath. That's how bad it had gotten. So it was really hard coming to terms for that on my own. And then and then eventually I came to the point where I had embraced it a little bit more.

And I announced on Instagram that I would be talking more openly about my personal decision to pursue fat loss habits. And whew, that didn't go over well with the audience that I had at the time. I had people message me very nasty things about how they were so disappointed in me and how they couldn't believe that I would do that and how I was going to fail because everything, every you know, it's considered to be diet culture.

And if you have fat loss goals, so many people cling to this, as you're not changing a habit, you're on some sort of diet to pursue these, and therefore you're unhealthy, or you're not being a good example for people anymore. And some of the things that people said to me, I mean, I, at that point, I had just had to quit teaching. And so I was kind of shutting down inside and outside, it was a very sad time to feel like I'd lost that, the body positive community. And then also I lost an identity with being physically mobile. And instead, my life now revolved around physical therapy and rest. It was hard.

And so many people didn't understand that. But you know, if you're transitioning from that, from a place of body positive, and you're moving to a place where you need to change some things in your life, you really need to focus on what you need for your own body and for your quality of life. Because let me say those Instagram followers, they weren't on that roller coaster ride with me that day, my husband was. They're not the ones in the backyard playing tag with me, playing tag with my daughter. Like you really, you need to look at what you need for your life. And it made me so angry.

Jennifer Campbell

It's just like how, you know, we've interviewed different dietitians, obesity medicine doctors. And you can have two people with very similar body sizes experiencing that body size differently, right, like there are women that are the same size as you, Michelle, that did not have pain flare ups. And so we have to, it really comes down to being very human and like listening to people, right?

We are, Balance365 is not in support of helping people lose weight so they can better fit into our society from a beauty ideal standpoint, we're here to really help people think about centering their health in their life. And I am starting to hear more and more from women that it's about the quality of their life, and like how they want to experience this life from and they don't want to be on the diet roller coaster. But nor do they want to live at the heaviest weight that they've ever been. Because they're also experiencing frustrations. And sometimes pain and sometimes health issues there, right.

And it's this spectrum that we see and I honestly feel like this conversation ends up being discussing the spectrum of like, you're either trying to be the leanest you've ever been or you're either body positive, and you're trying to be the heaviest you can possibly be, which is just like, it's just so nuts. And I get so tired it and that's why, you know, that's why as Annie said, I struggle with this conversation, because I feel like it's so black and white and so frustrating.

And when I tried to approach that trainer on Instagram and have sort of a nuanced, more compassionate conversation, you know, it's just like, well, then I'm part of the problem, you know what I mean? I'm promoting obesity, and, you know, we all just need to simmer down.

Michelle Phillips

It makes me so sad and personal trainers too, they don't, they can't look at it. It's almost like they're triggered for lack of a better word by the body positive movement. Because when people start using those hashtags on Instagram for body positivity, and it's not actually a body positive message. It's almost like they're trying to cling to people who might take the bait.

Jennifer Campbell

It is predatory.

Michelle Phillips

Yes, that's the exact word. And those people who might be trying to recover, or distinguish, like, "Okay, what's important for me?" and they distort it, or they, like you just said, they completely distort the message of body positivity. And think it's people just whooping it up at, I don't know, doing things that are harmful to their bodies, when they have no idea.

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Annie Brees

So, you know, another thing that we, I know, the three of us have talked about in various circles before is, who is sharing the message of anti weight loss, and that it has been or can be thin white women that are saying, "Don't lose weight, or you shouldn't lose weight or weight loss is bad." And I know, Michelle, you have some thoughts about that, about other people having opinions on what you should be doing with your body.

Michelle Phillips

Yeah, this is this one is a really touchy subject for me, because when I mentioned the people nastygramming me on Instagram, it was a lot of very thin, able bodied, seemingly healthy women who try to promote this, you don't have to, you can be healthy without doing anything.

It's like these women in smaller bodies, who don't understand the physical difficulties that can go along with having a bigger body telling me who is struggling to get out of bed because of physical pain, they're telling me I shouldn't lose weight, they're telling me I shouldn't have a goal to do this. They're telling me I'll fail. They're telling me that what I'm doing is part of the problem.

And those kinds of messages, it's aggravating to hear someone who is in a position where they can go to a store, and find the size that they need right away. Or that can go order whatever they want to eat, and not be judged for it. And all of these different things telling me that I should just learn to accept myself the way I am when I don't feel good in the body, like I feel, I feel happy with who I am, but I hurt. I mean, and when you're in pain, my goodness, that's not fair.

Jennifer Campbell

And you're not trying to, I've never seen you project your own weight loss desires on others. And that's what we hope we don't do. Because if a woman, I just want women to be happy and comfortable in their bodies, and have a good quality of life, and be confident with the trajectory they're on. Like body size is boring.

Like, that's boring to me, talking about, you know, even talking about weight loss, but we have to, we just, we seem to have a problem as women of letting people do what's right for their bodies, when we are making a different choice. It's like, we're out there seeking validation for, we need our choice validated with other people's choices.

And it's like, if you are that confident, whether it is what you're doing with your habits, if you are embracing body positivity and size acceptance, or if you are embracing weight loss, or if you are, the way you've decided to parent your kids, the community you decide to live on, the school, you know, it's just endless, right?

And it's this, it's a whole problem of picking apart other women for what they're deciding to do, because it's not the same as you. And we have the saying in Balance365 called "Good for her, not for me." It's like can we just be happy for people in what they're doing?

Michelle Phillips

I love that phrase, "Good for you, not for me" because really, it can be applied to so many things in life too. And I know when you had mentioned that the first time, I was actually able to use that with family members who are doing things that I didn't necessarily agree with. And I had to step back and just focus on what was going on over here. And realizing that the things that were making me upset about what they were doing to was mainly because I felt so strongly about body positivity, or the different phases that you go through where just certain things really bother you more, and then eventually you can just let it go.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, I mean, you do. I mean, most people do go through a phase. I remember when a friend of mine, I was deep in the trenches of body positivity, and just trying to let myself be where I was at. And a friend of mine announced that she

was going to start training for, like ,a bodybuilding competition. And I remember trying to talk her out of it and like basically saying, like, "Why would you do that to yourself?"

But you know, I just couldn't see it from the perspective of like, "Okay, if I were to do that, it would be an extremely disordered situation." But for her, it seemed to be a very effective powering decision, like something she was just going to do to try out. She wasn't obsessed with it. She wasn't trying to fit it in, your know what I mean. And so I just couldn't wrap my head around that at the time, where now I see it actually quite clearly where I'm like, we gotta let people be on their own journeys.

Michelle Phillips

Mm hmm.

Annie Brees

I had a girlfriend, I think I shared on the podcast a couple episodes ago about how she called me and she's like, "I have to tell you something." And I was like, "What?" She's like, "I started this new plan, and I had to buy these supplements. And I'm doing it and I like it." And I'm just like, I just felt bad. "I just needed to tell you" and I'm like, "Okay, like, you know, like, not what I would do, not what I would choose if she asked me to choose for her. But like, I can do my own thing. And she can do her own thing." You know, of course I left a little remark like, "I'll be here when that phase passes."

But, you know, I think that that's also, I think, something that Balance365 has done a really great job of is acknowledging that between Lauren, Jen and I, we have tried a lot of things. And we actually had to try those things to get to the point where we are today. Like it wasn't just enough to hear like, "That's not going to work. This is good. This is bad. Take this, don't do this. Avoid that." Like I had to live that experience before I could come to a place that I'm authentically at today.

And so for us to, like, leave that door open. Like, you know, like, "Okay, great. You, like, go do your thing, do whatever you need to do get it out of your system, whatever, like, will be here. If you have questions, you can come back anytime,

doors open." I really feel good about because it's not like, "If you do this, you're dead to us."

Jennifer Campbell

I know, you know, what's really common, I think even when a woman joins Balance365 and afterwards, you gotta you like, it's like when you dump that boyfriend for the last time. But then it's like, two weeks later, it's like just a quick one night stand.

Annie Brees

Let me just check what he's doing on social media. Let's just see.

Jennifer Campbell

That's like, how your exit from dieting might feel like we've heard from women that were like, "Oh, I ,you know, I joined Balance365, and then I have a confession to make. Two months later, I signed up for Weight Watchers. One more time, I thought, okay, maybe I can like do Balance365 and do Weight Watchers." And then they're like, "I just think I just needed that one more time out of my system."

Like, yeah, I get it. When I quit dieting I did, I was like keto keto keto for years and years and years and low carb. I went to If It Fits Your Macros, and like that is essentially just another diet because it is so very restrictive and particular about eating. And it's like, I just couldn't hard stop. I just could not hard stop. That was like jumping off a cliff without a parachute for me. And so yeah, it's like it was like my one last flirtation with restrictive eating

Annie Brees

Flirtation.

Jennifer Campbell

Like "Hey boy!" in the bar. I'm supposed to be off boys. "Hey, boy!"

Annie Brees

Well, that's what happens when you, that's how restriction works. Remember, the minute you say like, no boys-

Jennifer Campbell

Like yeah, then you're like "Just one more."

Annie Brees

Oh, how did we get there?

Jennifer Campbell

Sidetracked.

Annie Brees

Yeah. So Michelle, what's your opinion? Can weight loss be body positive?

Michelle Phillips: No.

Jennifer Campbell

And that's okay.

Michelle Phillips

Yeah. And that's okay. I think that's completely okay. I think let the body positive people have body positivity, and we can still be happy for them. We can still use that "Good for them. I can make my own decisions for myself." And, you know, I think, I'm just gonna speak for myself here. When it comes to what I learned throughout the body positive portion of my life, it really helped me to make decisions once the time came where I was comfortable with saying, "Okay, I need to make some changes in my lifestyle that are permanent and safe."

And I was able to say "This is for me, this is not for someone else's validation. This is not for applause. This is not for helping lift these other people up. This is just for myself." And I was able to finally, for the first time in life, make decisions, I mentioned that I was in so much pain, I made those decisions out of rational thinking, instead of this crazy rush to do something as quickly as possible to try to get out of pain as quickly as possible.

Annie Brees

Hey, friends, Annie here real quick, I wanted to sneak into this episode to tell you why it's important for you to love your body right now, even if you want to change it. And more importantly, how you can do that. You can learn the exact process we use with our clients in our free workshop, the five step process to overcome overeating, getting off the diet roller coaster and restoring a healthy relationship with food that you can pass on to your kids. And you can get all of that for free. It is super simple. Just pause the show open up your browser and type in balance365workshop.com. Or you can click the link in your show notes. All right, let's get back to this episode.

Jennifer Campbell

Well, I was going to say that that's my whole kind of goal for women in chapter one of boundaries. These five called Diet Deprogramming is like, we need to get to an objective place where we can objectively look at our issues because we know we all have them and look at our bodies and just be super neutral there and not emotional, and then determine if weight loss is part of your wellness vision. Because the emotionally driven decisions are just, they typically haven't been doing too well for us.

Michelle Phillips

Mm hmm.

Annie Brees

You know, the thing I want to add to that is I think it's important to note or distinguish the fact that you can strive for weight loss from a place of self care and self love. And in my experience, that was the only way I was able to make any sort of weight loss stick. Because all of a sudden, I was exercising because it left me feeling good. I felt strong in my body, I could embody my body. I was sleeping better. I was able to manage my stress better. I was eating balanced meals, because it turns out I do crave a variety of fruits and vegetables and meats and I was full longer and I left feeling like energetic instead of like, "Oh my gosh, I'm so tired, I need to sleep for three hours now because I overate."

And so the what I was doing might have looked similar as far as habits, but the why behind why I was doing what I was doing definitely was rooted in love and

care for my body and how I would take care of my kids or how I would encourage them to take care of themselves or what I would do for a friend. And so for me to apply that to myself felt like a very positive experience that happened to result in weight loss.

Jennifer Campbell

I also see in both of you, but I've known Annie longer, the most profound part of your what some might call "weight loss journey" has been the inner change in Annie, I would say, from what I've witnessed knowing you for five years, and Michelle, how would you describe your weight loss journey?

Michelle Phillips

I would agree with that completely. Because for years, pre Balance365 I was so defined, like everything involved my exterior, my appearance, how, what I weighed, what size I was, I mean, it was so obsessive. And I didn't feel like I could be a good instructor if I wasn't a size x or it was just so sad. And then honestly, when I I think one of the biggest things I've gotten out of Balance 365, to be honest, is joining, I finally got a therapist. And that's where a lot of this inner work really started to kick in.

So for all of those members out there, when you're learning to work through all of our stuff, get into that inside stuff. Because when when it takes longer for you to reach your fat loss goals slowly, you are okay with that. Because you're inside work, you know who you are. You know why you're doing this, you know that your reasons are solid, they're not panic driven. They're not emotionally driven, they're, I don't even know how to describe it. It just, when you feel it inside. It makes a profound difference in your efforts in what the results are.

Jennifer Campbell

And the behaviors are willing to use, right? Like, I would never someone asked me why I don't struggle with dieting anymore. And I'm like, "Because I'm a different person inside. I would never, ever put myself through some of the stuff I used to do when I was dieting. It was like I was abusing myself. And I love myself. I would never treat someone I love that way. And I am just no longer a person I hate."

Michelle Phillips

You just want to give your old self a hug because-

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, like, girl, love yourself.

Michelle Phillips

I think of 20 year old me and I'm like "Man, if I could go back and just give that girl a hug because she has no idea what's going to happen her the next six years and just say you are going to make it and guess what you are amazing. Stop beating yourself up all the time."

Annie Brees

That's come up so often in therapy, she, my therapist keeps just repeating to me like, "Sounds like a lot of the work you're doing is to protect your younger self." And I'm like, "Yes, that's exactly it. Like if we can help women work through, avoid, sidestep some of the hurt, the pain, the experiences that we had to go through and save you some time, like I'm all about that. Like, let me just hand you the shortcut. But it does require a lot of inner work." And we've said this time and time again on the podcast that it's so much easier to lose weight than it is to go and show up for therapy and do that inner work week after week after month after month or whatever. Like that's hard.

Jennifer Campbell

Josh Hillis, who we've had on our podcast before, it talked about how, and his specialty is emotional eating. And he talked about how dieting for a lot of people is just like a distraction from having to do that inner work, right. And I can totally see it. Because when I wasn't feeling loved, when I didn't feel connected to even like my partner or friends or just the world I did fall onto dieting as a means to get that. And even if I was never the size I wanted to be it's just like, going through the action of dieting and feeling like I was working on it made me feel more connected to the world and more love because of the praise I got for how good I was with eating or good I was with exercising.

Annie Brees

The podcast with Mel Bosma talked about that too, about getting needs met that dieting is often a way of seeking belonging or attention or just validation-

Jennifer Campbell

Or to be seen. I want to be seen.

Annie Brees

get love. Yeah. And so when you haven't, if you have an opportunity to look on addressing some of this stuff that's going on inside instead of trying to fix the exterior. Like that's a real opportunity for lasting change. And like big foundation, I mean, you know, it's like we've talked about like, can we just list off all the podcast episodes we've done about the before and afters where Jen talks about the exterior of her house, you know, and, you know, to me, it's like changing out new shutters, when what you really need is like a foundational fix, like-

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, you need to fix the foundation of your home.

Annie Brees

Yeah, your house can look great with some fancy new shutters, but it's gonna fall apart at some point if you don't get that basement concrete patch up.

Jennifer Campbell

Michelle, can I ask you one more question?

Michelle Phillips

Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

And correct me if I'm wrong, I'm speaking off the cuff here. When you were talking about your period of time, as a Zuma instructor, living in a larger body, and very immersed in the body positive movement, the way you described, the pressures around that, honestly sounded almost similar to me, to where people land at when they lose weight, and they're and they feel you know, I mean, I felt it when I was at my smallest, and I've heard this many times is that you feel

pressure to stay there. And all eyes are on you, because you are all of a sudden on a pedestal of like, health and you know, or whatever. So do you think the feeling is similar? Or?

Michelle Phillips

Yes. Oh, my goodness, this is? This is a great question. Because, yeah, it is, it is definitely a similar feeling. Because you start to really cater people's perception and expectations of how they, what they think you should be and conforming to what others expect of you. And so when, when I was kind of teetering this line between, I need to make some changes, but I'm afraid to because I'm afraid I was literally afraid of losing followers.

That's, and that says a lot about where I am today, because it's been like two years, since it's a year and a half, two years since it's happened. And now I don't care. But at the time, I was so afraid to lose people and community and feel like I didn't belong, that I was essentially forcing myself to not listen to my fullness cues to avoid becoming smaller. Does that make sense? Like I was worried. At the time, I was afraid that if I become smaller, I will no longer be seen as being body positive, as being like the girl who wants to just teach people to love themselves and to really embrace larger bodies. And by doing this, I am losing my sense of self.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah. And like, it's really you're losing community, right? Because it's not just about getting followers like, but I think where women start struggling. And this is when that inside work starts bubbling up is that when we're building these Instagram platforms, what we're actually building are communities, and I love my Instagram community, and I love my Facebook community.

But today, I'm very conscious about not letting that community hold me hostage to not growing and changing. So that's why I'm always so authentic. I ran into a mom at soccer the other night. And she said, she just said, "Oh my gosh, I follow you and I, a friend of mine shared your stuff. And I was like, I couldn't believe that was you from soccer." And she said, "I can't believe how real you are and so honest and vulnerable."

And I do that because I feel like I need to be. And I need that because I want my audience to see that I'm changing and growing. And it's just a really dangerous place when you're involved in any community that holds you hostage to not being able to change and evolve, right. And I guess that's how I felt when I was leaving the body positive community. I am so thankful for what I gained. But it was time to go, right because it there's just too, there were too many people in the community I was in that were needing to project their own, I respect that I can't talk about weight loss in there.

I 100% agree with you, Michelle and respect that. But it was like it was time to go because I, at that point, needed to make changes, because I also was feeling I have some hip issues. And I was also feeling pain and different things from the weight I was carrying on my body, which just didn't feel natural to me. And I needed to go as well. And so I try to just think there's a really great saying that you can, that you just, you have to, in order to let things go, you have to say "What did it teach me?"

And so instead, you know, I've been resentful to the body positive community at times. But at this point, I'm going it taught me what I needed to learn. And then I had to kind of release. Right. And that's, and I'm so grateful. Right. And some people may resent me in that community. And that's okay, because it's also okay, that we disagree. Right?

Annie Brees

Well, and what I hear both of you saying, to honor or to stand by decisions that ultimately or goals or values that ultimately aren't yours in an effort to maintain some sort of relationship is like, essentially self abandonment. And yeah, that's not what we would want for anyone, we want, we preach autonomy very much so in our community. And as I said, already, like what's good for some people, it might not be good for you, and vice versa. And we don't have to agree, but we can be respectful.

Jennifer Campbell

Totally, I often wonder with different people I follow, I often wonder, especially, I mean, the bigger you are, and the more followers you have, especially if you all of a sudden have a financial interest in keeping followers, I sometimes wonder,

you know, if on both ends, right, personal trainers, we see it all the time, there's an enormous amount of pressure to be super lean.

And then on the other end, I often do wonder if there's pressure for some of those women to either not address their weight if it's hurting them or not change habits because they just, you know, they're feeling that pressure you did, Michelle, that they now have been identified as a body positive trainer and they just can't "Will I still be accepted?" You know, so that's tough. So I really feel for different influencers who feel trapped in a box really well.

Michelle Phillips

Do you guys, do follow Sarah Sapora?

Annie Brees

I was just going to mention her.

Jennifer Campbell

You put me on to her?

Annie Brees

Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah.

Michelle Phillips

She went through kind of the same thing. It was over the summer, I think, where she, I don't even she was just really put on a pedestal as being considered body positive. And I don't think she ever actually said "I am." But there was this perception of what people had of her. And she, man, when she said that she had to make some changes. I don't even think she said it as directly as I did. But she, her community said some nasty things in the comments. I sent her a message. I'm just like, "Hey, I just wanted to give you a big hug. Because it really sucks when you when you're in that position, where you want to help people but you

need to do what's important for your own physical health. And having people turn on you, I just."

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, and she's, I also love Sarah Saporita as a good, really good woman for people to follow as well if this is the kind of conversation they want to have, because Sarah has it, and it's very nuanced, and she's a woman living in a larger body who talks about the limitations and the changes that she would need and would like to make and shows the changes that she's making. Sarah is a really good person to follow. And she hasn't backed down, though, which I love about her because I see a lot of people back down. And Sarah is going "No, like, nope, this is not diet culture." And she's very confident about it.

Michelle Phillips

And she's so eloquent with the way she words this. She is amazing. I love her.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, so we'll link her in the show notes.

Annie Brees

And then I mean, it is exhausting. And I, you know, I think that has to come into play for a lot of people to feel like you need to defend your position. And why you have the position you have, like that if you're, assuming you have a large, large platform, or even have a small platform, if you've been even remotely vocal about one side or the other, a shift, even the slightest shift can cause backlash. I mean, we've experienced that. And to feel like you're, like, just putting out fires constantly like conversations here and here and here and here and defending, it's like, it can just get tiring. It just-

Jennifer Campbell

It's exhausting.

Annie Brees

It's a lot of energy. So I don't blame people, if they're like, I don't actually want to have this conversation on social media publicly. Like, I would love it if more

people would, because I think it's an important one. But I also try to form respect if people want to keep that private because it can be an energy suck. Wonderful. Michelle, anything else you want to add? Before we wrap up?

Michelle Phillips

I can't think of anything else. But at the end of the day, just remember that you're the one that has to live in your body. And you need to do what you need to do for yourself.

Annie Brees

I appreciate your sharing your experience and your vulnerability. I remember when you wrote that post, it was probably one of the first like posts that I was like, "Oh my gosh, this woman, this woman is something, like about the roller coaster ride." I can picture the picture even. If they want to follow you can you share your handle your Instagram handle or Facebook handle?

Michelle Phillips

It's Coach Sparkles.

Jennifer Campbell

Just like it's perfect for you.

Michelle Phillips

On Pinterest, Facebook, Instagram. So Coach Sparkles, come find me, come play with me.

Jennifer Campbell

How has your last year gone, Michelle, since you are a year and a half gone since you made that decision. How are you feeling?

Michelle Phillips

I feel much different. So after everything, so it has been about a year and a half, a little less than that. But we had our next family vacation this summer. And when we took that I've been down about 20 pounds actually following our habits and balancing meals. And my plantar fasciitis has lessened quite a bit. I feel energy

again. You guys know that right now we are getting in the process to sell our house. So I've been going, going, going the last week and my habits are sticking.

Jennifer Campbell

Right. Awesome.

Michelle Phillips

Yeah. And so it's just, I feel good. I feel great about where things are going and even better in my body because I can jump a little bit. I can chase my kids a little bit. I was able to wear flip flops this summer, which is huge.

Jennifer Campbell

Right totally for plantar fasciitis sufferers will totally get that. And do you feel that what you're doing is dieting? Or I guess I should rephrase that. Do you feel like it's sustainable? The habits that you've incorporated into your life to lose this 20 pounds? Because ultimately, its weight loss is just a byproduct or an outcome? It's not a driver, right? Yep.

Michelle Phillips

Yes, I do. Because this week, has been the busiest week I've had several months, and I've been able to maintain all of my habits.

Jennifer Campbell

Right. It's not like you fell off the wagon or-

Michelle Phillips

Yep.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah.

Michelle Phillips

We've had a little more frozen pizza.

Jennifer Campbell

Right.

Michelle Phillips

But that's, I'm okay with that.

Jennifer Campbell

It's part of balance. Yeah.

Michelle Phillips

And it is what it is. And we're making it work. We are happy and our whole family is, no one's sitting here crying about what's going on right now. We are making everything work. So it's exciting.

Annie Brees

Awesome. There's no reason to cry over frozen pizza.

Michelle Phillips

I gate it to my kids for breakfast. They were so excited. And I was like, "I can't believe I'm feeding you frozen pizza for breakfast."

Annie Brees

It'll be a fun memory eventually. Like "Remember that time we were moving and mom gave us pizza for breakfast?" Yeah, well thank you so much, Michelle. I appreciate your time and you sharing your story and I hope to talk to you again soon. Okay?

Michelle Phillips

Thank you.

Annie Brees

Thank you.

Jennifer Campbell

Bye.

Annie Brees

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