

Balance365 Episode 185 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 co founder Jennifer Campbell. Together we have a team of personal trainers and nutritionists who coach 1000s of women daily and are on a mission to help women feel happy, healthy, 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.

ANNIE

Hello, everyone. Today we're back with part two of our series, The Truth About Sugar. If you haven't listened to part one, please go back to last week's episode and listen to it first. We're doing a deep dive into what sugar is how our bodies use it. And then separating fact from fiction. Does sugar cause obesity, diabetes? What about hyperactivity in children? It's all here. When you're finished with these two episodes, we hope you feel like an informed, empowered woman who cannot just make great decisions for herself regarding her sugar intake, but also join us in becoming a science based nutrition advocate. Because we think all people deserve to know the truth about sugar. Don't forget to grab our free guide, "Five Reasons You're Craving Sugar and What to Do About It." You can grab that in the show notes of this episode. Enjoy.

ANNIE

We are back with part two, about sugar, or sugars as we identified in part one. Today, we're talking a little bit more about guidelines and suggestions. Less nutritional science, right?

JEN CAMPBELL

Yes.

ANNIE

So are you ready to dive right into how much sugar is too much sugar?

JEN

Yeah, I am. And to answer this question, we looked at the World Health Organization whose recommendations, they are sound. And I call the World Health Organization the fun police, because sometimes it sucks to hear these things. And we actually covered this in our alcohol podcast, we recently recorded an alcohol podcast called "Some Real Talk About Your Alcohol Consumption." And we covered what moderation actually is with alcohol. And that actually had a huge impact. We got a ton of feedback from that episode. And I hope you know, if you've been listening for any amount of time, Annie and I deliver this information factually and compassionately. We're all living in the same culture. We don't all have the same experiences in this culture, but a lot of us have similar beliefs around our bodies around, just like lot of

judgment for even the way we eat, we develop similar habits, we struggle with similar habits. So we get it.

ANNIE

And I think it is good from time to time to cross-check your version of moderation with evidence-based organizations like the World Health Organization, because sometimes, as I noted in our alcohol podcast, my version of moderation or a serving size, my version of a serving size isn't actually in alignment with the World Health Organization. So -

JEN

Yeah, and getting just, you know, digging into your most grown ass woman self to say, "Okay, I am above, or well above," right? And making an intentional decision to change or not change that, whether you aren't interested in making the change, or it's not the time, because sometimes it's just not the time. So we'll go through the sugar recommendations, and I'll talk a bit about my journey with sugar. Annie will talk about hers a little bit with sugar. And you'll see that it's also been a journey for us. So how much sugar is too much sugar? It's recommended that you keep added sugars to 10% or less of your total energy intake. So to figure that out, you need to know what your total energy output is right? So that's called your TDE, and my total daily energy expenditure, my TDE, is roughly around 2000 calories per day, which means I should be keeping my added sugar in my diet to 200 calories per day. And that's about 50 grams of sugar, added sugar in a day. And hopefully, if you are listening to this, you have listened to part one, right? Because if you haven't listened to part one, this might not make the most sense. But we established a lot of the, I guess the ground rules in part one, or established some of the foundational stuff you need to know. So. But I want to say that the World Health Organization also states that there are additional health benefits to reducing that number to 5%. So for me, that would be around 100 calories of added sugar a day, or 25 grams of sugar. And being totally honest here, that would be, like that would be that would take some effort on my part to get that down.

ANNIE

There's a distinction here about added sugar, because there's a little, like kind of asterisk about that, right?

JEN

Yeah, so added sugars are also called free sugars. The World Health Organization calls them free sugars. I think in North America, we say added sugars. And that is sugar added to your food, whether that is done by food companies in the manufacturing process, or by us while we're cooking. Nobody needs to be alarmed about their sugar intake from, like whole food sources. So you don't need to worry about the sugar you're getting in milk. You don't need to worry about the naturally occurring sugar in fruits or vegetables. It is more the sugar added maybe to jams, or what else? [Laughs] What else do I eat? There's added sugar in some milk. Like if you're drinking chocolate milk, which our family loves. Apple sauces, granola bars -

ANNIE

Juices.

JEN

- juice, that kind of thing. Soda, if you drink soda, those are foods that have added sugars. So added sugars are typically what we talked about in part one, are the monosaccharides or disaccharides. Add glucose, fructose, or sucrose commonly found as added sugars, which is table sugar. And yep, just in your food and in your drinks.

ANNIE

But again, you don't need to worry, per their guidelines, about sugars naturally present in fruit and veggies.

JEN

Yeah, but the other ones that you do want to pay attention to are like honey, and syrups. Right? So those are, have monosaccharide sugars, simple sugars in them. And although honey is naturally occurring, maple syrup might be naturally occurring, those are just very quickly digested sugars, right? And all of that will make sense if you listen to part one.

ANNIE

Absolutely. Okay.

JEN

And so population studies do show that, I guess we could say, more industrialized nations, which actually isn't always the case. But generally industrialized nations are consuming more than the recommended daily intake. So in the United States, added sugars were estimated to be between 13 to 17.5 percent of people's total daily energy intake for children, and 11 to 14.5 percent of total energy intake among adults.

ANNIE

Okay.

JEN

So a little too high in the United States. I couldn't find any data for Canada, which is where I am. But I did see in, I think it was Norway, one of those Nordic countries, they have very low added sugar intake. So I think Norway was around like 6%, they were low. So I found that very interesting, because, you know, Norway would be considered an industrialized country, modern country. And they have a very low sugar intake. So it does differ country to country.

ANNIE

Fascinating.

JEN

Very fascinating. I would guess that Canada would be similar to the United States, we have pretty similar societies. But also, again, just a reminder that these are population studies, and

we have to look at the individual. So this may reflect what you see in your personal life, or it may not.

ANNIE

Right, it could be more, could be less. So do we want to talk about how restrictive dieting can actually drive sugar consumption?

JEN

Yeah, so we want to now start unpacking the reasons people may be consuming above the recommended amount as we did in the alcohol podcast, why that's happening and how we can address it without getting all restrictive and diety about it right? So dieters, we've covered a lot of behaviors of dieters throughout the course of this podcast. But number one, I want to talk about reactive overeating. So, reactive overeating happens after you have starved yourself. You will crave sugary foods. And that's just a very normal and natural response to deprivation. And that is essentially the binge and restrict cycle, right? So even when you are, you know, on this, you know, people just put themselves on these crazy restrictive low-calorie diets and our bodies have systems in place to make sure we don't starve, and your body doesn't care if you want to lose weight or not. Your body, those systems, are activated. And you will start craving very calorie dense foods so that you can fill that calorie gap fast. So I had a situation actually where it was two summers ago where I was, you know, not dieting, but I was gardening and I was very distracted, and it was hot out and way too much time passed for me between meals. And I stood up from gardening, and I just was like, whoa, I had, like, I had to have sugar right now. And I went in my house and ate like three chocolate chip granola bars in a row. Like, I like blacked out and ate them. [Laughs]

ANNIE

[Laughs] Woke up with a bunch of wrappers. "What happened?"

JEN

And that was probably the healthiest choice for my body at that time, I needed fast energy. So I needed simple sugars that my body could digest and break down very quickly to provide myself with energy, so, normal that I would crave those foods, that my brain would take me to the foods that I needed in that moment. But the same thing can happen to dieters, right? Or just people that aren't mindful with their nutrition. I know we have just a lot of busy women listening who are also distracted throughout their day, whether they're working a high pressure job, or they are taking care of kids all day. They just, they're not feeding themselves properly and three o'clock hits or after dinner hits, and they have these cravings that they feel are uncontrollable. Right? But that's kind of that similar cycle going on, that is reactive overeating.

ANNIE

Yep. And it's not uncommon to moralize that behavior as bad or problematic when really, it's like, what is leading you to that behavior in the first place, that would be more worth your time and attention.

JEN

It's not problematic. It is survival. It's your body taking care of you. And then also restrictive eating. So you may not even be in a calorie, big calorie deficit here, but you have cut out, say carbohydrates. And we know this happens because there are plenty of studies to support this, that when you cut out a certain food, you end up thinking about it more. Or if you cut out a carbohydrate source to your body, your body will ramp up cravings for carbohydrates. And so you may also feel yourself having uncontrollable carb cravings when you're trying not to eat carbs,

ANNIE

Mm-hm. Which is often relating it back to what we talked about in part one, was often pulled out the lab rat experiment when they restrict the sugar, the rats crave the sugar, or eat more sugar.

JEN

Right.

ANNIE

And we were saying like we see this in dieters.

JEN

Yes, for sure.

ANNIE

Same explanation.

JEN

Yeah. And we recently had a member who, she was really trying to get a hold of this habit she had in the afternoon, she was having a sweet bubble tea. And she said it was probably around 450 calories, this tea. And she was having it every day. And I mean, that for her, that was like a meal and even like weight stuff aside, it was just an enormous consumption of sugar, simple sugar in one sitting. So she, when I'm coaching her, you know, we're zooming out, or we're looking at her whole life, right? Like we can't just look at the situation and be trying to get people to willpower their way through it. Like, what is your whole nutritional profile look like? So anyways, what came out from her is she just had a lot of low carb tendencies back leftover from her dieting days, and she was sort of unconsciously, unintentionally restricting carbs throughout the day. So she wasn't really having any carbs at breakfast, and she wasn't having any at lunch and at 3pm, all she could think about was a bubble tea.

ANNIE

Which makes sense, when you do math.

JEN

It makes total sense. And once she started adding an appropriate portion of carbs for her, to her breakfast and to her lunch, her craving for the bubble tea just disappeared. Yeah, so it was amazing.

ANNIE

Yeah. Talk to me about the dieter mindset. We've talked about that a number of times on this podcast before, I'm sure if you've listened to every episode, you're probably like, "Again?" [Laughs] But -

JEN

Yeah, it's not going to be hard to understand this, that there's a way that dieters think, okay? And this is taught by diets, and it's taught by our culture at large, really, but the dieter mindset would say things like, "This is so bad," or, "I ruined my day, I have to start again tomorrow." Or, "I'm off the wagon," right? Like, "F it, off the wagon, just gonna go buck wild the rest of the day." They also, dieters might also be telling themselves, "I have no control around food." And so just those thoughts, or that belief system, is really going to be driving cravings, and even like an urgency for sugar, or, again, back to the rats. And then when you get access to it, and you have a little, you have to have a lot.

ANNIE

Yeah, I mean, we've talked about that before, podcast, "Why Can't I Eat Just One" comes to mind, we often hear that as it relates to sweet treats, you know?

JEN

Yes, for sure.

ANNIE

I have one cookie, and suddenly I've had four.

JEN

So all of this to say is, what I want to share with people is that restrictive dieter mindset, or that restrictive, the restrictive dieter actions, your intent is to, I guess, reduce the non-nutritious habits you have, but actually the impact of that, not just the diet, but the mindset you develop, actually leads to an increase in sugar consumption. And you're essentially restricting it and then you're bingeing it. And your overall, the amount of sugar you are consuming on a week to week, month to month basis ends up being higher than if you just were eating sugar in moderate amounts. So what does mindful sugar consumption look like? I want to talk about that because now we've talked grams and calories and everything, but they're, you don't have to obsess over anything. Right? You can, you don't have to start tracking your macros or anything like that. We can just talk about mindful sugar consumption. And Annie and I are pretty partial to what we call the core four. Do you want to talk about the core four a little bit, Annie?

ANNIE

Yeah, if you're new here, the core four is our set of like foundational habits that we teach inside of Balance365 that, when done in conjunction with one another, or sometimes even just one or two, can have a really big impact on women's ability to lose weight, manage their weight, improve their health, these are what we think are the big rocks of health and nutrition, that when you spend your time on these, you have a big return on investment. And they all are important to stand alone. But when you combine them together, they can be pretty darn powerful.

JEN

They're like rocket fuel. Yeah.

ANNIE

Yes. And what's beautiful is that, like Jen said, you can get results without looking at labels, counting calories, counting macros, those are tools that sometimes we do utilize from time to time, but they're not long-term strategies, right? These are, the core four is the intent that you can utilize these throughout your life and definitely they just are integrated in your day.

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

So they are sleep, internal cues, like your hunger and satiety, your hunger and fullness, balanced meals, making sure we've got the components of a balanced meal, protein, carbs, fat, fruits and veggies, and then movement. And what that looks like to each of our members is highly individual, right?

JEN

Yeah. And it's actually really shifting people as they're on any health or weight loss journey from, "Tell me what to do," or, "Tell me what to eat," or, "Tell me tell me how I should be exercising," to developing skills and habits to become confident, competent, eaters, movers, livers. [Laughs] People who live. [Laughs] And weight loss or improved health can become a byproduct of integrating these habits. So instead of the mindset shift, I think really just an example or an analogy would be, you become a person who used to show up at soccer practice with a coach who told you exactly what to do. You didn't even have to think too much about it, to somebody who shows up at soccer practice and learns how to play the game.

ANNIE

Which is, takes a little bit more maybe effort on the front end, right?

JEN

Yeah, yeah.

ANNIE

But big payoff in the long term.

JEN

Yeah. And understanding that each of these components of the core four impact your sugar consumption, because sleep-deprived people crave sugar, they just do, right? It's, your body is exhausted, you're not giving it sleep. It's searching for other energy sources. When you are sleep deprived, you are more emotionally dysregulated. Right? It's very hard to manage your own thoughts and to be self aware, to manage your feelings, to cope with your feelings in a healthy way when you are sleep-deprived. Just look at your kids. [Laughs]

ANNIE

I was just gonna say, I'm like toddlers, like, think about how likely you are to say no to anything when you're tired. You're crabby, it's 3pm. You know, how often do we say like, women are not overeating before 3pm. Most of us know like, it's like 3pm. Because we're tired, the day has worn on us and we're just like, ready to tap out.

JEN

You're done by 3pm. Yeah. And then, internal cues is knowing when your body is hungry and needs to eat and knowing when your body is satisfied and you can stop. And that sounds easy. And it is simple. But it is not easy. And that is honestly a skill that a lot of people struggle with. But as we say often is, people aren't really struggling with what to eat, or, a lot of our struggles are in how we eat. And we just don't have very good eating skills. But you can develop those.

ANNIE

Yeah, and this skill in particular, really asks you to look inward to how you're feeling and build connection with your body versus what a lot of us as former dieters are familiar with, using outside influences to regulate how much we're eating.

JEN

Yeah, balanced meals, you are more likely to feel nourished and sustained when you are eating in a way that is physically satisfying, right? And I don't, I would also say psychologically satisfying. So you're also including foods that you love. But your meals are balanced. They're full, balanced meals, and you're not struggling with hunger and cravings between meals.

ANNIE

Right. So what I love about this is that when we look at balanced meals, and you take the morality out of food, your breakfast from time to time might be like a doughnut for your carbs with a protein shake, and you know, some fruit or whatnot, that you can include some simple sugar.

JEN

Yeah, there's just a lot of flexibility that you can include. And then movement is very interesting. I don't ever say that movement has an impact on people's body fat percentage, or their weight loss journey. And it's just not really a reliable habit to apply towards weight loss. But of course, it is probably the healthiest habit you can adopt as a human. It doesn't matter what you weigh or what you eat, or, you know, etc., how you live. If you are somebody who exercises regularly,

doesn't have to be intense, could be walking, whatever it is. You will see health benefits from that.

ANNIE

Yeah, even if you aren't interested in addressing your nutrition, there's -

JEN

Yeah, totally.

ANNIE

- still benefits beyond it.

JEN

But I also think what happens with movement is, it's like a real mindset habit. So a lot of women in our community describe it as a foundational habit, or like the start of set of dominoes. Once they have exercise, they're more likely to make better nutritional decisions.

ANNIE

Yeah, and it also can support sleep, stress management, which can help emotional regulation, and there is carryover.

JEN

Yeah, for sure. So one thing I would like people to think about, if you think you have a high sugar consumption, because of course not everybody listening has high added sugar consumption, is to think reduce, not restrict, and so we have to be honest about, we have to be honest about what we are eating now. And what our ability to change is and what would even be sustainable. And when I was caught up in dieting, caught up in the perfectionist stuff, I of course was bingeing and restricting like most people are, and I was moralizing food and you know, I did all the typical things that dieters do, and I have the typical results of a dieter right? Yo-yo dieting, yo-yoing weight, yo-yoing health, lots of stress, anxiety, disordered eating, going on disordered thinking. But that's what restriction gets you right? So if you can think reduced, not restrict, and I've just really owned, or I've been able to own as someone who doesn't diet anymore and doesn't have the dieter a mindset that like, I like ice cream. What do you like, Annie?

ANNIE

When it comes to sugar, I would say, I really do love, if you go out to eat with me, I will nine times out of 10 get dessert. But it's got to be good dessert, which I can talk about a little bit later. But...

JEN

Yeah. So here's a process. If anyone's taking notes, this is when you could get out your notepad. But here's a process you can go through to start identifying and potentially reducing your sugar consumption. So number one is to identify without judgment, where your primary sources of added sugar are, or free sugars as the World Health Organization calls it. And if

you're okay with that, so, food journaling could be a really good tool to figure this out. And not just food journaling on your best days. But food journaling through the weekend and in your evenings. And the key piece here that I said is without judgment. And that is, I know that that can be very hard for people to do because they have so much perfectionism. They're caught up in, you know, food morality, perfectionism, judging themselves. But if you can get through that, if you can change your mindset about why you're food journaling, you're not using it to judge yourself, you're using it to make informed decisions. That can be a great way to look at where the added sugar is in your diet. And if it's too much.

ANNIE

Yeah, I love food journaling for so many reasons. But I think my favorite reason is that more often than not, women catastrophize their day.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

And they think, "I eat sugar all day, every day. I need to just cut it out," when after some mindful journaling, they see, "Okay, really, it's just that 3pm on that I overconsuming, or it's the weekends or it's..."

JEN

Yeah, to be honest, I think food journaling is, it's like what people think they're going to find when they food journal. Like, again, they catastrophize it and they think they have terrible eating habits, it actually can have the opposite effect. They have a lot of really great habits. And sometimes they are actually more consistent than they think they are.

ANNIE

Absolutely.

JEN

I'll just run through, we can run through what Annie and I might find, but I know there was a time in my life, it was almost eight years ago now, when I kind of started this journey. I took a little look at my sugar consumption. And I've shared this on past podcasts, that I'm fully aware of why I had issues with sugar. It was sort of like the perfect storm. I was, had just had my third child, I wasn't sleeping well. And I had a very long history of low carb and keto dieting, which meant I had an extremely unhealthy relationship with sugar and carbs in general. So even when I thought I wasn't restricting, I was still restricting, which would lead to these wild sugar binges. But also, I was exhausted. And so at that time, I remember kind of, just getting very real around how much sugar I was drinking in my coffee because I did not, my coffees look very different today, but I was probably having eight tablespoons of sugar a day just in my coffee. Yeah. Other places for me, ice cream, which I mentioned I love ice cream. We buy a sweetened yogurt so there is sugar added to the yogurt. We buy chocolate, I like myself some chocolate muffins, like we do baking around here. I like banana muffins. They're my favorite. What else? Cereal, we

eat cereal too around here. So that would have added sugar. How about you, Annie? Where do you see that sugar in your life?

ANNIE

You know, every day after lunch, I usually have a sweet treat. And sometimes that's, I hope I'm pronouncing this right, those mochis, I don't know if that's the brand or if it's the type of ice cream, but it's like Japanese ice cream. I think it's like a pastry meets ice cream. I really love the texture. Anyways, I usually have one of those or like a cookie, a store-bought cookie of sorts. I do enjoy yogurt as well sometimes. Like midday snack, like some Greek yogurt, sweetened Greek yogurt with granola, which also probably has, I haven't looked, but I'm sure has some sugar in the form of, you know, honey or some sort of sweetener to it. And then I would also say there's probably some alcoholic drinks that I have, from time to time, like that contains some sugar as well. But I would say I don't have a huge sweet tooth, which is surprising to me. Because for the longest time, I thought I did. Or, it seemed to be problematic to me. But once I realized, or at least had the mindfulness to stop and question, "Do I actually like enjoy the taste of what I'm eating?. Am I hungry? Do I really want this?" The results were like, no, actually.

JEN

Yeah. And so once you identify, so Annie would go through and identify, I would go through and identify. You don't immediately have to change anything. And I think that's important, right? We often have these knee-jerk reactions to change all the things. I would just sit with it and look at that list and think about what is first, what can you control and not control? Number one. And number two, what is negotiable and non-negotiable for you? That means what would you actually be willing to change, what is negotiable? But then there's non-negotiables, where if you're able to be honest with yourself, you can say no, I'm not changing that. So for me, I decided at one point 8 years ago, that the sugar in my coffee was negotiable, that it was actually a pretty big source of the added sugar in my diet. And I would be willing to try out what it looked like for me to cut back on sugar, whether I - and I did try some different things before I figured out my exact perfect coffee. I did try sugar substitutes, but I just wasn't digging the flavor of that. And then what ended up working for me is weaning back on sugar, and also buying higher quality coffee. So I didn't need as much sugar. And then I reached a point where I was having coffee with cream. And this is for a different podcast. But then at one point I was looking at my fat intake, which also is a result of being keto for so long. You also have a very skewed perception and even like palate for fat. And so I ended up pulling back on my fat in my coffee too. But that just happened over time. I did that over time.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

So that ended up being negotiable for me. I would say that baked goods were also negotiable for me. So when I bake at home, which not everybody does, and that's okay, but we like baking now and then here, I do less sugar than the recipe calls for, so sometimes I half it and sometimes it's two-thirds. If you pull back too much then it just doesn't taste good anymore. So

you can't do that. But I have found that I don't have to change the recipe at all, like I just can pull back on the sugar and the cookies or the muffins turn out fine. Another one is that was negotiable, it was kind of on the line of negotiable/non-negotiable for me, was the yogurt we were eating. So I love lemon yogurt, like lemon Greek yogurt is my favorite. It is like a dessert for me. And in the summertime I almost have it every day for breakfast, but what I am willing to do is when I dish up the yogurt I'm going to have, which is the protein in my breakfast, I will do half lemon and half plain. So I'm, it's kind of like a watering down. It's kind of like when you are giving a kid a little kid juice and you do half water and half juice. I do half Greek yogurt like plain Greek yogurt and half lemon. And non-negotiable for me was chocolate, like I just don't care for dark chocolate or the more bitter chocolates. Don't care for them. If I'm going to have chocolate, I'm going to have good chocolate and it has a lot of sugar in it. I also, this might seem strange, but a non-negotiable for me is cereal. I wouldn't say me. Our household. But I guess what's negotiable is the type I choose. So, but we do we buy commercial cereals. And our kids eat them. And there is sugar added to them.

ANNIE

Yeah, I have found like you with yogurt, I can do plain Greek yogurt if it's like a higher quality, I'm kind of, I guess maybe a little bit of a yogurt snob in that way, like I really, like I really like Fage but like not Chobani. And. But if I pair that with fresh fruit, I'm fine.

JEN

Yeah, that makes total sense. Yeah. So then you're getting the benefits, right? Love it.

ANNIE

And still a little sweetness.

JEN

Yeah, for sure. That makes total sense. I also, I should add, when I have my Greek yogurt, I also have like a bunch of fruit in there, too. Whether it's blueberries or whatever is in season.

ANNIE

Yeah. And also, I have given up my coffee creamer.

JEN

Oh, that's big Annie.

ANNIE

I know. It wasn't intentional. One day I woke up and I didn't have any coffee creamer. And I was like, "Oh, I can't not have coffee. Like, how do you survive without coffee?" So I just had it black. And I was like, "Okay, I didn't die." [Laughs]

JEN

That is so funny. It's funny what we learn about what's negotiable and non-negotiable, when we don't have access to our usual habit. I've had a few situations like that, where I have told myself

that a certain habit I have, you know, an undesirable habit is non-negotiable to me, and I'm keeping it and then been in a situation where I didn't have access to it and gone, "Oh, I lived. I'm fine. I don't have to have that."

ANNIE

Yeah. And so now I actually, I do sometimes put a little bit of cinnamon in my coffee.

JEN

Yum.

ANNIE

But for the most part, I drink it black, and I'm okay.

JEN

That feels non-negotiable for me, but. [Laughs] For now.

ANNIE

To each their own right? Which is, which is the point right? You get to discern what's non-negotiable.

JEN

Yeah. And the point here is when you're looking at non-negotiable, you can look at a couple different things, you can look at what you are willing to change and what you are not willing to change right now? Because negotiables and non-negotiables change over the course of your life, right? There was maybe a time when sugar and coffee would have been non-negotiable for me, like too bad. Forget it. I'm not changing that right now. And a year passes and it becomes negotiable, right? Kind of like your coffee creamer. So those things ebb and flow. But just be very real about where you're at right now. Right? That's where most people's success lies, is meeting themselves where they're at. So another non-negotiable for me, I would say, was like alternative ice creams, like ice creams that are low in sugar, or have a sweetener added a sugar substitute added. I am, there's like a protein ice cream brand. I can't think of it right now. And I just can't do it. I'm like, no, I'd rather just not have ice cream.

ANNIE

I completely agree. I would rather have a smaller cup or portion of the full fat real deal than a whole pint or whatever it is of these protein ice creams or lower fat or lower sugar. They just don't do it for me.

JEN

And that's part of the decision-making, right? And that's part of the mindful part of this is like, okay, ice cream is non-negotiable, you're eating it. Are you willing to have a little bit less? Like there's kind of, there's options everywhere when you start looking at it without judgment and without panic attached.

ANNIE

Absolutely. And from a place of autonomy that you are choosing, you have agency, you have choice, versus the dieter mindset where it's someone else telling me what I can have and how much and when and yeah.

JEN

Yeah, for sure. So next, another thing you can consider is swaps. So we kind of just touched on that with the ice cream and the Greek yogurt and even sugar substitutes, right? Like if someone is perhaps diagnosed with diabetes and has to reduce their added sugar intake, they might not have any choice but to start using Splenda or other sugar substitutes. And that can work for some people, it personally, I have never taken to that, using Splenda in baking or anything. It's just not, I just for now, it's not, doesn't work for me. But just looking at different swaps or ways that you can reduce, right? Like, you might find swapping out your evening chocolate bar for an apple is like, no, this is not, never going to happen. Or you might go, "Wow, that was actually very satisfying. And I could do that."

ANNIE

Right. I used to be a full sugar, or regular, I guess it was called a soda drinker. And I have switched to diet soda. But to get from point A to point B, I actually did like half and half something.

JEN

Wow, that's interesting.

ANNIE

Yeah. Especially like fountain, I love a good fountain soda. So I would do like half Diet Coke, half regular Coke. And then eventually, it was like three quarters Diet Coke. A quarter.

JEN

Yeah, because sometimes just the subtle difference in taste can just be a little too jarring, right? So if you can, which is what I did with coffee, I just kind of added less sugar, and then a little bit less sugar, and then a little bit and then I would adjust and add less. So yeah, if you can work towards bridging those behaviors.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

Then that's about slowly reducing right? Rather than that knee jerk like dieter reaction of just removing, cutting out -

ANNIE

Cold turkey.

JEN

All of that.

ANNIE

Gotta go. Yes.

JEN

Yeah. And the last thing I want to mention is redefining self-care, or redefining what you consider a treat. And so we can talk about places you see added sugar in your diet all day long. And what I want to say is, some of that might not be the problem. So if I were to objectively assess my nutrition, even right now, I'm probably pretty close to the high range of getting 50 grams of added sugar a day. I should look, now I'm curious. But that's my best guess, is that I'm not over. But I'm probably not under. And I'm also not, I'm not interested in change at this moment. What I would say is, when I am actually going up, it's not happening on like a slow day to day basis, it's happening in spurts. AKA, if I'm doing any emotional eating, which I actually used to do a lot, and I don't do so much anymore. But I'm sure if you've listened to this podcast, any amount of time, you know, I went through a period of life where I would tell myself that food is all I had, at the end of the day, that's just for me. And so actually, my habits during the day, besides that big coffee, they weren't high in added sugar, until I sat down on the couch at 8:30. After I had the kids in bed, that's when it was all coming in. And so that's why we have to mention emotional eating here. And emotional eating is not a simple or easy unpack. Right? It requires developing a new definition of self-care, I think, what do you think, Annie?

ANNIE

Yeah, usually when I hear about women emotionally eating, it's 99.9% of the time it is carbs and alcohol, right? That they're consuming. And often it is this reward, this treat, like you survived another day. You deserve this. Like, you earned it. It might be a way to manage stress from the day or feelings from you know, work tension, family tension, parenting, you know, trying to keep your cool around kids. And suddenly when you have a minute to yourself, you're like in the cookie jar, right? But oftentimes what we would talk about in coaching, if someone were to come on with an emotional eating concern as it related to sugar sweet treats, is obviously we would address them like foundational issues, like, how's your sleep? How's your stress management? Are you hungry? What's your nutrition looking like leading up to that? But then also identifying the need behind the emotional eating. And it often is, I need relaxation, I need comfort, I need soothing. I want to celebrate surviving another day.

JEN

I need company, like, I often felt lonely when I was emotionally eating.

ANNIE

Yeah, and what are some other ways outside of food that we can meet that need? So it's not to just disregard that need, because that's usually what happens, women are like, "I'm going to take this, I'm not eating after 8pm," but that need is still there and they don't have any, they

haven't explored any other ways to manage or meet that need or manage those emotions and then they're left feeling kind of crummy. Like, it's still there.

JEN

And then it just goes out sideways, right? Then you're eating, then you just eat anyways.

ANNIE

Yeah, so honoring how you're feeling, what you need, and then finding ways to meet it in addition to food, knowing that again, autonomy and agency, the food's still there. You can still eat the sweet treat or not, or whatever it is that's on the table. What else can you do? What other tools can you add to the toolbox?

JEN

Yeah, like often it's just a habit. And it's where our brains go, because it's our most well developed habit for coping with our feelings by night or, you know, afternoon, so you just might need to practice other skills for managing your emotions, before those feel just as soothing.

ANNIE

Yeah, I coached a woman last week who had a nightly ice cream habit that she wanted to reduce. And she acknowledged that she was often eating because she was bored and lonely. And we explored some other things that she could do instead of eating. And it ended up that collaging was like, it was a habit that she had, like, long before kids, something she wanted to explore, like getting ways to get creative again, and to tap into that part of her. And I was like, this could be it. And she's been collaging ever since. And she's like, this is great.

JEN

Oh, that's awesome.

ANNIE

And I don't want to, like it's not all rainbows and unicorns. It's not always that cut and dry and simple. But yeah, that can be a really powerful strategy.

JEN

Yeah, I mean, I started crying. That's what I started doing. [Laughs]

ANNIE

You mean feeling your feelings?

JEN

I actually decided I was going to feel my feelings instead of numbing them with food. And then by Thursday, or Friday, in came the alcohol as well. So I actually started feeling. And I would just, I just started crying all the time. It was great. And it was such a better release for me.

ANNIE

I love it.

JEN

Yeah, yeah.

ANNIE

Yeah, that's great. Okay, so there are some tips to reduce your sugar consumption. But I know we also want to touch on the advice, "just eat less sugar."

JEN

Yeah, and I want to go through this, we'll go through quick because I don't want to keep people here forever. But just eat less sugar is not helpful for a lot of people. And number one is because of habits, because we all have lifestyle habits. And the tough reality or the tough thing to accept, I think for a lot of people, especially those who have engaged in multiple different diets is that habits take time to change. And likely they take maybe a little more time than you have been accustomed to if you have been engaging in 21 or 30 day programs, right? The reality is different habits will take different amounts of time to change depending on what it is, what you're currently doing, what you're working towards, etc. But I think there's studies that show, Annie, that habits take an average of like 200 days to change? Or what -

ANNIE

I think the last study I read, there was quite the range. And it was anything from like, 16 to like 400 and some, and I think the average was around 200.

JEN

It's so variable that you can't, we shouldn't even slap any number on it, which I don't think anyone listening should slap any kind of number or timeline on their change, right? Like, this is just a journey. And the journey is called life and you are going to ebb and flow with life and your habits are going to ebb and flow. And we're always just, we can visit them and just be tweaking them. But so, that's a consideration of why just eat less sugar might not be helpful because we have deeply ingrained habits. And just eat less sugar doesn't exactly take us through the process of how to change a habit.

ANNIE

Right, and oftentimes our habits are rooted in beliefs about ourselves or who we are, what we do, how we should be living, and part of, as crazy as it sounds, part of your relationship with sugar might be ingrained in some of those beliefs and, unpacking, unlearning, and rebuilding beliefs is also like a whole new skill that takes time.

JEN

Whole new skill. Yeah. The second thing I want to touch on is access to minimally processed foods. So if you right now have a diet that has maybe more simple or refined carbs than what would be considered ideal, and you may not be able to make changes because of things beyond your control, and that's okay, I just want to say that's okay. So maybe the location you

are in the world, right? Impacts your access, and maybe what season it is right? If you live in a northern area, and wintertime and your access to like fruits and vegetables isn't great. Maybe the season of life you're in, maybe you have access, but it really just is not the time, right? Like, I've been in different seasons of life. And I've allowed myself to ebb and flow with different seasons where my sugar consumption might be higher, and then it could, you know, be lower when I enter a different season. But sometimes it's just not the time. And then also, I have to mention, socio-economic disparities can be a barrier to changing these habits. And we know that, you know, there's been studies done and we know that those who are in lower socio-economic situations, eat more calorie-dense diets. And that is because refined carbohydrates or foods with added sugars, foods that are more highly-processed are often less expensive. Or shelf-stable, right? And maybe that's what people can access at the food bank.

ANNIE

Yeah. Or there's, you know, they live in a food desert.

JEN

Yes, absolutely. Yeah. And do you want to go over the last point?

ANNIE

Yeah, which I think we've kind of been talking about, this entire podcast, but, the guidelines to eat less sugar don't consider your relationship with food. And depending on your current relationship with your food, what's healthy for me and Jen might not be healthy for someone else, and vice versa. And strict nutritional guidelines can send people with eating disorders, or even disordered eating beliefs into a tailspin. And looking at the individual and assessing as we said, time and time and time again on this podcast, and really evaluating what they need. And people need to start realizing that when they are reading guidelines based on population studies, versus looking at an individual, that can be really problematic to that individual pending who they are and what their past experiences are and what their beliefs are.

JEN

Yes, exactly, I would say, for everyone listening, that the aspect of my health that has had the biggest impact on my sugar consumption and reducing it to healthier levels has been improving my relationship with food. But that taking those steps actually led to initially more sugar consumption before it was less. So I've shared on this podcast before that when I was really ready to dig in on my disordered dieting behaviors. I started eating ice cream every single day, multiple times a day. So sugar consumption up. And then as my mindset started to change, as my belief started to change about food, my body, my worth, that urgency and that scarcity that I had, you know, behind ice cream or other super sweet foods started to lessen and my desire for them went down.

ANNIE

Yeah, I mean, we've talked about it so many times that whether we're talking about food or freedom, or maybe a strict budget, like the minute you sense that freedom, get a taste of that freedom, it's normal to kind of go over, right? It's this like, gotta get going while the going's good

sort of [laughs] mindset. And eventually, as we've talked about, on like, rebellious eating podcasts, that will come back to center, it will calm down.

JEN

It will. Also talking to my husband last night about all of this, I was telling him how my relationship with food and my body is in such a good place now than it was say a decade ago that I am able to honestly assess when I'm eating too much sugar. And it doesn't cause any, like, reactive thoughts or reactive behaviors in me or bingeing. It's like, no, I am eating too much sugar right now.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

And I can just objectively, calmly, no judgment, nudge the wheel a little bit to change my trajectory and reduce it where I can through the process that we shared here.

ANNIE

And it's not a reflection of your worth your loveability. If you're good or bad. It's like, "Oh, this is just information."

JEN

This is just information. Like, I'll walk it back.

ANNIE

Yeah, exactly. Which is a great place to be.

JEN

It is.

ANNIE

And I want to just again echo that that was when you improved your relationship with food as a whole, not set up as an intention to like heal your relationship with sugar.

JEN

Yeah, it was food, period. But myself, which I think when we talk about food freedom and healing our relationship with food, I actually think that the deeper thing is, the deeper issue there, is the relationship we have with ourselves and how we outsource literally everything, every decision about our bodies, our lives, ourselves, to other sources. So for me, it was really about coming home to myself.

ANNIE

Yeah, that's beautiful.

JEN

Thank you.

ANNIE

Kind of gave me chills, Jen.

JEN

[Laughs]

ANNIE

So, that wraps up our two-part sugar podcast.

JEN

If you need help, have questions, need to unpack anything, if you're a member, jump on a coaching call. Let's talk about it. If you are not a member, maybe you're in our free community Weight Loss Without Restriction. We do a live Q&A every Thursday. You can jump on that thread, ask us a question. And we'll help you troubleshoot your sugar consumption.

ANNIE

Yeah, and as I mentioned at the beginning of this episode, we do have our free guide, "Five Reasons You're Craving Sugar and What To Do About It."

JEN

We do.

ANNIE

And you can grab that, that link is in our show notes. So. Thank you, Jen.

JEN

Thank you.

ANNIE

Thank you for listening, everyone and we will talk soon. Bye-bye.

ANNIE

Bye.

ANNIE (OUTRO)

Hey everyone, if your mind has been blown while listening to this podcast, just wait until you work with us. Let us help you level up your health and wellness habits and your life inside Balance365 coaching. Head on over to balance365.co to join coaching.