

Episode 183 Transcript

ANNIE BREES (INTRO)

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

Hi, everyone in here, welcome to a very special episode of Balanced 365 Life Radio. We are coming at you with a topic that's near and dear to our hearts for several reasons. The team of Balance365 has a unique perspective that not many people ever get the chance to see. And that's working with 1000s of women over the years, we've gotten to see some very common trends and patterns. And while we often share what those trends are around nutrition and mindset, today, we're going to share something even bigger, how women are sleeping. They don't know what they want, or why they want it because they are unconsciously going through their lives pursuing what they should be, which often includes putting people's needs ahead of their own. On today's episode, Jen and I share our own experiences with the ways in which we were asleep, how it shows up in women's lives and some steps you can take to support your own awakening. So you can live an intentional, deliberate passionate life. Enjoy.

ANNIE

Good morning, Jen, how are you?

JEN CAMPBELL

Good. How are you?

ANNIE

I'm great. We're talking about a topic that we see come up over and over and over again. But, and I think we've probably talked about some of the ways it shows up in our experiences coaching women, but I would say this is a little bit more feelings based than normal. Would you agree?

JEN

Yeah, for sure.

ANNIE

It's not this like, this is what the research shows. [Laughs]

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE

That we normally discuss on the podcast. But I don't even know where we came up with this term. But we often share stories about how we have been and we see women asleep. Do you know where we came up with that term? Do we, did we borrow that from someone?

JEN

Well, I do know I read a book years ago called the "10 Year Nap." And I can't even remember the author. But it was essentially about a woman who was sort of unconsciously going through her life and doing what she was supposed to do for 10 years. You know, that's kind of where it comes from, for me, like going, thinking about people just being asleep as they go through the motions.

ANNIE

Yeah, and truthfully, that concept of being asleep, writers, therapists, thought leaders have described this experience or that like state over and over and over again, the terminology may vary, though, but at the heart, what it's really describing is what seems to be a loss of self, like a disconnection from who you really are, like a divorce and abandonment of your own needs, wants, desires. Some of the other terms that I've seen used is like self-abandonment, living unconsciously, domesticated or tamed. Like Glennon Doyle describes that as sending in her representative in her book "Love Warrior." I know Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes describes it as domestication or instinct injured in "Women Who Run With the Wolves." I think Dr. Shefali, I can list all these books that I've read about women are sleeping. She describes it more as like being in a fog but really it's this like, who am I? This unconsciousness, right? Like you're almost a passive participant in your life. Yeah, how would you describe it?

JEN

Here but not here. Present like here, but not present.

ANNIE

Yeah, well, I've also heard it described as wearing masks. I'm gonna put on this mask in this context and then be this person. We're shapeshifting right? Glennon Doyle in "Love Warrior." I know everyone loved "Untamed." You loved "Untamed," I loved "Untamed," but I had read love warrior before untamed. So I don't want to be that person. That's like, I liked Glennon Doyle before everyone else liked Glennon Doyle, but...

JEN

I think "Love Warrior" was a pretty big hit. Maybe it wasn't as big as "Untamed."

ANNIE

That one changed my life. And she describes this experience. She's talking about an experience she had in high school. She said, "I had an epiphany. Maybe I've studied schools of fish long

enough to pretend to be one. Maybe the beautiful girls will have me if I just wear the right costume, smile, more laugh right, watch the leader's cues and show no mercy, no vulnerability. Maybe if I pretend to be confident and cool, they'll believe me. So every morning before I walk into high school, I tell myself, just hold your breath until you get home. What I found is a representative of me who's just tough enough and trendy enough to survive high school." I don't know, I felt like that at various times of my life.

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
I'm showing up as who I think they want me to be or who I think I should be.

JEN
Who you need to be in order to feel accepted.

ANNIE
Yeah, cuz you're just trying to survive, right? And other ways that we see it kind of show up is often in behaviors, or a feeling. And this is not all-encompassing. And this list is kind of a culmination of various books that we have read on this kind of topic or experience, but it might feel like a sense of dread, feeling frail, unaroused, stuck, discontent, daydreaming or fantasizing or idolizing about a life that's not your own, self-doubt or self-sabotage, like, purposeless living, purposeless job. It can show up in eating disorders or disordered eating, substance abuse, chronic exhaustion, anger, irritability, compromising on things, you know, you shouldn't struggle to hold good boundaries, you don't ask for what you want, staying quiet and suffering, maybe berating themselves. I don't know a single woman who's listening to this podcast who hasn't engaged in one or all of those at some point, like this is pretty universal.

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
And we tend to get so caught up. And like I said, the behaviors, what we're doing, what we should be doing, what we did do, what we should have done. But we don't stop to question why. Like, what are we feeling? Why am I doing this? Is this in alignment? Is this intentional? Am I living authentically and on purpose? Would you say that's accurate? Is that what you see?

JEN
Yeah, I think how I see it show up, you know, on a day to day basis, as a coach is that, kind of what you mentioned, is that I can have a woman in front of me who, she's not very sure of herself in that. She doesn't know why she wants what she wants. And she doesn't know how to even describe it, or if what she wants has a deeper purpose. And she might struggle to connect with it even having a deeper purpose.

ANNIE

Yeah, if you aren't familiar with our program, a lot of what we do is very values-driven. And when women come to us, and we ask them, like, why does this matter to you? They like, give us like a blank stare.

JEN

But it's supposed to. Yeah.

ANNIE

I just want this.

JEN

So I, yeah, and I guess I can just say it that it comes out, for me, it comes out when I'm doing coaching with somebody who wants weight loss and doesn't know why they want weight loss, doesn't know why it's important to them, has never stopped to think about it. If you haven't stopped to think about that. I'm not saying there isn't a deeper meaning for you because there is in many cases, but I think sometimes women are opting into weight loss because they've been told they should be opting into weight loss.

ANNIE

And to get clear on why it matters to you and what you value and what's important to you can really help dictate or influence the process of weight loss or not pursuing weight loss, whatever you come up with, but when I ask women about like who they are, what they enjoy, "Well I, you know, I've got children and other people call me you know, the PTA mom," or you know, whatever like fill in the blank about what other people think. "And I really love taking care of my kids and I love hosting parties," or whatever it is. Very rarely about them on the first try, to say like, this is who I am outside of other people. This is what I value outside of other people or culture, really seems to be a foreign concept to a lot of women.

JEN

For sure.

ANNIE

And like you might be wondering, like, why are you talking about this? You're a coaching program, like...

BOTH

[Laugh]

ANNIE

And some of the issues and behaviors that I listed off already do absolutely require professional help that's outside of our scope. But time and time again, in coaching, we see that the core, at the core of many members' struggles point back to low self esteem and this disconnection to self. And the struggle and the conflict we see in coaching has to do with mindsets and behaviors

around food and fitness. And the relationship with our bodies. But that's often the symptom, right? We're trying to feel like loved and worthy and enough when we reach a body size, a body weight, and if we can just do all these things, if we can be perfect, then we can avoid the shame or feeling like not good enough. But actually, at the heart of it is just wanting to feel whole, like ourselves.

JEN

Yeah, and I think a lot of people, in my experience, when women have these weight loss goals, they fixate on a number. But what's underneath that is what they actually desire is a feeling. Right? So it's what that number represents for them. So for whatever reason, that number represents happiness, feeling valued, even safety.

ANNIE

Absolutely.

JEN

Right? And so it's, they think they have a goal weight, but actually, they're trying to feel a certain way, they have a goal for how they want to feel.

ANNIE

And that's not to say that losing weight can't help them feel that way. I know when I was in the pursuit of weight loss, it opened up opportunities and experiences for me to show up more fully and participate in my life than ever before. And that can be things, I mean, things that come up on our calls, or like, I want to travel without concern that the seatbelt is gonna fit me, I want to be able to go on rides with my kids, I want to be able to like hike the mountain without getting like absolutely exhausted and holding everyone up, like that's, you know, that's absolutely a valid, can be a valid goal. But just stopping to question why you want what you want can be so powerful to get clear on like, this is actually what's driving this.

JEN

Yeah. And I guess what happens whether you reach that goal weight, or you have that body or whatever it is, and you don't feel the way you've been telling yourself or you've been promised, you don't feel the way you're supposed to feel. Right? And then what's next?

ANNIE

Yeah, I mean, how many times have we seen women reach their thinnest, leanness weight, and they still feel like crap.

JEN

And they think, well, maybe I need to change this.

ANNIE

Yeah, it can be really affirming that it will never be enough, which isn't the case, right? Like, that's definitely a mindset and a self-esteem issue, as we said. And to be clear, the work we do

in coaching often has a beautiful byproduct of self-esteem, right? And reconnecting to yourself. And we do that through core value work and following through with commitments and making decisions that are in alignment with your best self, not this grip that's been handed to you. And that's probably why women who experience Balance365 have this, it's so much more than weight loss sort of feeling, you know, like, it's not uncommon. We've had members on our podcast before talk about how it's changed their sex life, and they're applying for jobs and they're asking for raises, or they're going back to school, or they're quitting their jobs and staying home with their kids. Like, it almost like shines a light on...

JEN

All the ways that you're living in which you are asleep.

ANNIE

Yeah. Have you ever been asleep, Jen?

JEN

Yeah, I think that a lot of this, where we are at today came from my awakening, what I would call my awakening. And I wrote a blog post eight years ago now. And it was titled "To All the Selfish Moms." Remember that?

ANNIE

I do.

JEN

And it went viral. And I mean, millions upon millions of people read it, shared it, resonated with it. I haven't written anything that big sense. But essentially, I was writing about all the ways I had been asleep. And that I was drawing a line in the sand and I was ready to start living differently. And I would be, I am, you know, I declared it. And I wrote it after I came back from a trip. It was, yeah, I had gone on the trip by myself. And it had been something I had done to invest in my career for one, in a direction I wanted to go career-wise. And I had also ended up meeting some people on this trip who were very like minded to me, and that had been so fulfilling for me, because at that time, I didn't have a lot of people in my life who shared my, I guess the space I was in, like, you know, if I were to say to the people I had in my life back then like, "I feel like I'm asleep." Like, you know, they would have been like, "Huh?"

ANNIE

"What? You're tired?"

JEN

[Laughs] Yeah, some of the women I met on that trip were feeling the exact same things. And they were taking steps themselves to wake up to their potential in their life. And so I wrote that blog post, and, you know, it was like kind of tongue in cheek to all the selfish moms, it was basically that there were things that I wanted for my life that I have been taught, probably since I was a little girl, were very selfish pursuits for a woman. And so I think in a lot of my, you know,

from getting married, and having kids, I had really suppressed some of those desires for my life, because I associated them as being what selfish women do. And coming back to myself included, reframing them from not selfish, or, "Hey, I am going to be selfish then. And that's okay. I don't think they're selfish at all. I think that we've been taught that as a way to oppress women's desires or fulfillment, so that we're not too disruptive in this society." So yeah, that's how I got started on a different trajectory. And I want to say that I continue to see these different articles go viral that are, and I'm not the first person to write about something like that, of course. But you know, since I've written that, I've seen lots of different articles. I just saw one the other day, and they're always around. You know, you're in this certain season of life, you're doing things for everybody else, and it's so hard and you're not appreciated. And you know, this, that and that, and all these articles that go viral, because so many women feel that way. But not a lot of women are taking steps to change it. Do you know what I mean? Like they're passively, and that's part of being asleep is like, passively consuming this content that you connect to, but not actually trying to work your way out of that, or not actually realizing that you can be the solution to that.

ANNIE

And we'll talk about like, why we don't do that, why we aren't doing that. And I also want to say like, the point of this episode isn't to even begin to unpack all the reasons why women are asleep. I mean, we're not going to unpack the patriarchy and all these systemic issues in one episode. [Laughs] Right? But just to, like, call out, maybe even universal experience that so many women are having this, "I'm just exhausted, it's never good enough. I'm like, I'm on this hamster wheel and I can't get off." And they are saying things like, "When summer's over, when kids go back to school, in the winter, when my kids grow up, when my kids are older," or just, it's always like after this stage, after the end, then and then and then and then, instead of honoring that voice that's like, "Hey, you need to like come home, you need to reconnect, you need to like regroup," whatever, they just keep going. And they do have this kind of, I don't know, I guess I see this like, fire ignited when they read a book like "Untamed," but then often don't shift their trajectory. And I think, and I think it's clearly universal. I mean, that's why like "Untamed" was such a hit, because it was speaking to what a lot of women were experiencing, right?

JEN

Yeah, I mean, it wasn't a hit with everybody. I just want to -

ANNIE

Well, sure, yeah.

JEN

- say that - yeah. [Laughs] It wasn't a hit with everybody. But sometimes I wonder if there's a reaction to books that are written like "Untamed," because it strikes a nerve, and it strikes a nerve that you have to reject it because it's so hard to face. This is one scenario, it is so hard to face, I suppose that you don't feel fulfilled, even though you might have everything that you were taught happy people have. And so you reject the message because you are, you just can't face that, right? But also, I want to say that this isn't about living a certain way where, okay, so if

you have this, this and this, you will be fulfilled and if you're not fulfilled, you need to go out and get this, this and this, right? So an example for me, it was, I was a stay-at-home mom, my life largely revolved around my husband's career, and my kids. And then what happened during my trajectory shift and my awakening is I went out and started, you know, building a career and some financial autonomy and outsourcing my childcare, you know, and so that's what it looked like for me, but I'm not saying everybody has to do the same thing. I hope when, as we're talking, you're hearing us say living a values-led life, that could be that, I know there are women who are at home today, stay home with their kids, do things that maybe look more like traditional, that they feel a feminist community would look down on. Like, that's there, right? Where there's women who are living a more, I don't know what we're calling it, gender-stereotypical norms, and they're quite happy there. And then they feel like they get looked down on because it's not, they're not looking for a big awakening, and maybe that's why they can't connect with this message. But what I want to say is, if you are living a life that you are contented, like, amazing, that's all I want. I don't care what that looks like, you know, what you choose is not my business. It's why you're choosing it. And that you are happy with who you are. And you know who you are.

ANNIE

Yeah, you're living authentically, whatever that means to you, however that, however that shows up.

JEN

Yeah, and also just acknowledging what a privilege it is, is these words that we use here like choice, you choose to be home, you choose to be at work, you choose this, you choose that, you know, what a privilege, right? Because not everybody has the privilege of being where they want to be in their lives.

ANNIE

Yeah, I don't think I realized how much of my life I spent asleep. Until honestly, just in the last like, I would say, five years it started this unfolding of kind of waking up. like sleep gone from like, dead asleep to groggy to like, "Okay, I'm kind of, I'm kind of getting out of bed here." But my whole life, I feel like I can point back to, just the theme would be that I never ever, ever stopped until recently, stopped to consider, "Why am I doing this? Is this what I want?" And I mean, I can look back to everything from playing sports, going to college, where I went to college, getting married, who I married, and don't get me wrong, I am happy with those choices. Because I am happy with my life. They've all led me to this place now and had anything at any point gone any different, maybe I wouldn't be here on this podcast with you. So, I'm completely okay with it. But when I look back and think like, "Did I want to get married? Right? Did I want to go to college? Did I want to study elementary education?" Like, who knows what would have happened if I would have had some connection to myself? And what I wanted, to say like, "Actually, no, maybe I want to go to school in Montana, for paleontology." I don't know.

BOTH

[Laugh]

ANNIE

I don't think, I don't think that would have been the answer. But I guess it's less about the answer and more about clarity of what I want and why I'm choosing what I'm choosing because I do think that there are times when I haven't made choices that support what I want. But even the clarity of like, I'm choosing to not choose that because I value something else is so much more fulfilling, right? But Brene Brown talks about this kind of anecdotally where women are waking up. And she often describes it in their 30s and 40s, where they've made these the set of decisions to get the house, get the career get, have the kids, like, go to the conferences, to develop skills, to have this like more fulfilling career and have parties and have projects for your kids in the house and all this stuff. And then they wake up one day, and they're like, "Actually, no, this isn't contributing to what I had hoped." And then it's like, "Okay, but now what I'm," which might be a good segue into how women can acknowledge like, oh, they're talking about me. I feel that. I know that feeling. But they don't do anything about it. And I don't want to shame anyone if they don't feel like they're able to start making different choices. Because a lot of times it comes down to fear. And sometimes that fear is valid and legit and a real thing, right? And that could be like fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of being ostracized, fear of loneliness, fear of unworthiness, even fear of emotional or physical abuse, right? Like -

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

- will I be financially safe if I start making different choices? Will my kids be taken care of if I start making different choices? And a lot of times that depends on who you are, where you're at, and what choices we're talking about. Right?

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

But as you noted, Jen, we don't all have the same choices.

JEN

We don't, right.

ANNIE

Yeah. But it takes courage to go against the grain.

JEN

It does. Yeah. And that's why not everybody does it. And even today, I hope we can...So you know, you and I have been talking about this, how I think, how I think that sometimes this sort of awakening or realizing you're not where you want to be in your life or you wish you were somewhere different. Where you are now to where you want to be is...There's such a divide

there, it feels like it's so dramatically different that you, you maybe convince yourself just to stay on course and hope someday you will feel happy, or as you said, someday you'll pursue it. But I hope that sharing, you know, our personal stories and different steps we'll talk about in this episode, that it's not about, you're not going to get there overnight. Right? Like, it's okay to break this down into small steps as we do most things.

ANNIE

Which I think, the first step is just awareness to the ways in which you are maybe living a life less intentional than, or less authentic or true to yourself or connected to yourself than you would like to be, and that could, that might be like context specific. Maybe you are completely fulfilled in your home, or your personal life and your professional life is just lackluster. Right? Or, it might be across the board. Like, this is not at all the life I wanted. But oftentimes, I think again, just my own observations, when women have this awareness to the ways in which they maybe haven't been living authentically and intentionally and on purpose is when we see that rebellion show up. It's like when you start realizing all the ways in which you've been maybe, I don't I want to say a victim but like, maybe even contributed to your own sense of being powerless. Your own oppression, like, or cultural oppression, you can get, that's where we start seeing this like going from dieting to eating all the foods. It's like this freedom. It's like, "Oh my gosh, let's go burn our bras in the street." Like all the foods, you go from all the boundaries to no boundaries. Like, I don't know, what else, what other ways do you see rebellion show up?

JEN

Well, I see rebellion showing up in, like hoarding, like hoarding time.

ANNIE

Oh.

JEN

Staying up late, resistance to, actually to be honest, developing a lot of unhelpful habits. Like numbing habits, drinking wine.

ANNIE

Yep.

JEN

You know, "I deserve this." Yeah, I used to say, I used to have this period of the evening after I put my kids to bed where I ate and ate and ate and watched TV, and just totally numbed. And I call that, I would tell myself, "This is all I have at the end of the day that's just for me." And if my kids needed me in that time or the phone rang or anything, I was so resentful. And I would just feel a rage coming up inside of me.

ANNIE

Yeah. [Laughs] What was that rage?

JEN

Just like, "How dare you? Like this is all I have that's just for me," or if you know, anyone were to suggest to me that maybe these evening eating habits weren't so healthy, and then later on it became drinking wine, I would just feel this rage like, that, "You don't know my life, like, you don't, like, this is my life, this is what I have. And this is what I'm doing. And don't you tell me to do anything different."

ANNIE

I think you might be sick of me talking about "Women Who Run With the Wolves."

BOTH

[Laugh]

ANNIE

But I'm not. It took me years to read that book. And I can be kind of, I guess maybe, like heart driven, versus like head driven at times. And I think there is a reason why it took me so long to read that book. And it's because I wasn't ready. Like, the universe was just like, "She's not ready to, like, consume these words yet." But speaking to, and I could honestly quote this book all day, but she has, she talks about the loss of the wild woman archetype in women, which is a lot of what we're talking about, right? And she describes that like, the returning to home includes this, like, she always draws these parallels to wolves that like, there's this like, feral woman, right? And that's kind of what I see you as describing as your like, your wine time, your sweet time, like, you like show your fangs. You're like, "Don't touch my sweet treats." [Laughs] "This is mine." And you will like guard it fiercely.

JEN

Yeah, I mean, think about it, though. So when I came online, this is still my Instagram handle my blog, I started blogging and writing and it was Mama Lion Strong. And I was ferocious back then. Yeah, I'm less ferocious now. Which I can talk about why, a little bit later on, but I was very ferocious back then.

ANNIE

Yeah, because, I'm not gonna say this distinctly, but I think you'll understand, but like this sense of fearfulness or rebellion isn't actually in control, either. It's...

JEN

Yes. That's exactly it, it was a, it was a pendulum swing from me from being basically docile to ferocious and not even like, sometimes all in the same day.

ANNIE

Yes.

JEN

It wasn't like I just went from, drew a line in the sand and became a ferocious lion overnight. It was that was happening all in the same day. And essentially, I went from having no boundaries to having all the boundaries. And it was like I was, every single day I woke up and I felt like I was a pressure cooker, just slowly building all day long until it would just blow.

ANNIE

Yeah, absolutely. So awareness to the ways in which you may be asleep, living unconsciously, unintentionally. And then the second part of that is, I don't know if you would call it this, like kind of the awakening, I don't want to say it's not enough. But like we need, I would encourage women to take it a step further to notice the ways in which you're asleep and then start reconnecting to yourself by like, dreaming, ideating, visioning who you want to be. And we have this saying, I heard it in a business podcast, and I think it's the title of a book actually, focus on who not how. They were describing, like, your business team, who you needed on your business team. Of course, I heard it and I was like, "This is what women need to hear." And what happens is when women start to dream in the, we're kind of talking about this, Jen, when they start visioning like "Who am I? What do I really want? What's important to me?" They get so overwhelmed with how they're going to make it happen or how they need to get there, that they just shut it down. They they struggle to let themselves dream and ideate and goal set and like fantasize about clear blue sky because it's like so far from where they are that it's like, no, I can't. And so I always encourage women in our vision workshops to focus on who they want to be. The how, we can get there, like we can figure that out. But think about who you want to be, not how you're going to do it.

JEN

Yeah, the how is what stops people in their tracks, and just like, you know, they're like a turtle and they just pop back in their shell.

ANNIE

Yeah, like, no, this is overwhelming, shut down.

JEN

It's too much. Yeah. And so when you think about the who, I also want people to understand, like, we're going way back, right? Like, you didn't just take a sharp turn a year ago, and get to a place that you're not happy. And, you know, if I really think about it, I was probably five years old when I started taking steps off the path of who I really was and my potential, right? And then maybe again at seven, and then 13, and then High School, you know, like all of us. And it's like, yeah, like, this is not an overnight fix, you know, like, this isn't, just snap your fingers. This is like, most women, it's the way we're, you know, socialized and conditioned, it is...Most little girls are taught to prioritize other people's comfort over their own, over their own fulfillment, or even to prioritize other people's fulfillment over their own. Right? It's that whole partner and kids, like, you're there, you are in service, like that is what you're there for. And some people may feel very fulfilled being more in service to their partner and kids, because that is a value of theirs. So that's kind of not what I'm saying here. But I can just share in my personal experience, I felt like that's what I should be doing. Right? But in the end, that didn't feel very good for me.

ANNIE

Yeah, my ex-husband is a wonderful man. He is responsible, he's smart, he's trustworthy. He's a great dad, he was a good husband. He meant no harm, or had ill will. But I vividly remember in college having a conversation about his desire for a wife to stay at home. And I actually don't know if that's how he would prefer it today. So he might have evolved in his values and ideals as well. But I remember thinking to myself, "Okay, that's it, I'll stay at home." And it was, it was seconds, it was just a matter of seconds that I just let all of it go in favor of whatever he wanted. And it was great. Like, don't get me wrong. It was. It brought a lot of joy, I spent a lot of time with my kids, we had three beautiful kids. So there was a lot of good that came of it. But the just, complete fast abandonment of my own or even lack of consideration of my own desires in that decision process.

JEN

Like, "Is that going to work for me?" Yeah.

ANNIE

It wasn't even a question on my radar. It was not even on the horizon. Like it was just like, "Okay, sure. I'll do it." And I'm, again, I just, don't want you to think that these are my words or my ideas or my concepts or analogies, in "Women Who Run With Wolves," Dr. Clarissa says, when women turn inward, and ask like, "What am I hungry for?" Versus looking at a buffet table and seeing a ham sandwich and think, "Okay, ham sandwich sounds good," right? It's like, what did you want before you even saw that ham sandwich?

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Like, get rid of the script, get rid of the menu. What do you really want? Then you can worry about, is that on the menu or not? Like, you know, maybe what you truly need is, you know, pineapple pizza, I don't know.

JEN

[Laughs]

ANNIE

But like, to challenge like, why am I taking what I'm taking? Because it's in front of me. And it's available, and it's what I've been told I should eat? Versus what I truly want and need.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

And that's a process, and that's an ongoing process. Right?

JEN
Right.

ANNIE

That's an evolution to stay present with yourself, to continuously evaluate, "Am I on the trajectory I want to be on? Do I...Is this what I want to do? Who am I?" You've evolved, I've evolved in the six plus years I've known you, right? Like, it changes.

JEN

Yeah, we've gone through some really hard sh** together in the last six years.

ANNIE

And sometimes I see women getting so attached to an identity, like who they are, that there's no room for an unfolding or an evolution. Like, "I can't do this because that's not who I am." And it's like, well, actually, you can be whoever you want to be. [Laughs] Sounds like a cheesy success story.

JEN

Dr. Susan David, she talks about this in her book, "Emotional Agility," and she just posted about it actually, is that identities can be freeing on one hand, and they can imprison you in another. Identities can help you understand your experiences and your responses to experiences. But they can also imprison you by defining you and perpetuating a view that you are things are the way they are. Like, this is what it is.

ANNIE

Yeah, this is who I am. I don't do this.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Okay, so, you realize, you're like, not living a life authentic to you, you start ideating on what an authentic life does look like for you. And then what?

JEN

And then you can start building a bridge towards where you want to be. Understanding that life is a journey. And just like you might have taken one step off the path, maybe at five years old, you can start by taking one step back towards that path. Right? You don't have to get overwhelmed with the steps in the house. I started with, I was at home with my kids, my husband was in grad school. And I signed up for a creative writing class. One evening a week for, it was a 12-week block. And I started going to that, and it was such a small step. But that was my first step to where I am today. And that was eight years ago.

ANNIE

Yeah. I think mine was honestly lifting weights.

JEN

Ah, that's awesome. I love that one.

ANNIE

That was like my gateway into living a more authentic life. Because for so long it was exercise, up until that point, had been a means to achieve a look that I thought I should have. And lifting weights, as you know, if you've listened to the podcast before was part of my like, acceptance to like working with who I really am.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

But it also like some stuff came up this weekend that I was like, "I don't even care if I should or shouldn't be doing this." I wore a bodysuit without a bra this weekend.

JEN

[Laughs]

ANNIE

And that felt revolutionary. I did have pasties on though. I don't know if I'm ready to like, go like full nipples.

BOTH

[Laugh]

ANNIE

But honestly, like, that felt, I mean, it can be anything. It could be like wearing a swimsuit, it could be taking a class, it could be eating a food that's been off-limits. It doesn't have to be this big, like, "I'm switching careers. I'm quitting. I'm like, giving my boss the double bird and storming out of the office on a Monday afternoon." Like -

JEN

I want to be clear that even when I decided, you know, like I grew up wanting a career, right? Like I grew up with a single mom who always instilled the importance of - and my dad, my dad did too, but the importance of education. And my mom really, you know, being a divorced woman, as any woman who has gotten a divorce and maybe been blindsided by the financial side, she had always, she'd always instilled the importance of financial autonomy. And so for her that, you know, I guess, you know, again, I don't, it doesn't have to be important for everybody. But my mom felt that was very important. And it was something she wanted for her daughters. Because she had been blindsided, what life would be like without it. And essentially, my parents

got a divorce. And my mom went straight into poverty, and, which is the case for millions upon millions of women who seek out a divorce. And so I had always, it just, so again, as far as just absorbing the beliefs of what's around you, I had just absorbed that belief, honestly, without stopping to ask myself if that was also important to me. It was important to my mom, but was that important to me? But, you know, after I got married, and after, you know, I had my awakening and realizing it was important to me, and having a career was important to me. Again, my first step wasn't like - and if you have the ability to rip off the band-aid and go for it, do it, I did not. So my step one towards having a career and financial autonomy was going to that writing class. And it was years in the making. Right? So we really are talking about the steps, and I didn't go, "I'm going to start this writing class as step one towards having financial autonomy in my career," it was a very feelings-based, very heart-driven decision that I knew that was calling me.

ANNIE

Yeah, I mean, same. I started living weights on my own accord, not for athletics, 10 years ago, and I, before we started recording this podcast - why are you laughing at me? [Laughs]

JEN

I'm just thinking about like that whole, it being a heart-based decision and feeling drawn to it not knowing it would ultimately lead you to starting a company and getting a divorce, like -

ANNIE

[Laughs]

JEN

- you didn't start lifting weights going, "This is the first step in seeking out a divorce in 10 years from now." [Laughs]

ANNIE

And again, like, I feel like so many disclaimers in here, please don't draw conclusions that like your path to awakening, or your path, like, lifting weights is going to ultimately end up in divorce for you. Like, that's not, that's not it. You know? I mean, if that is we can talk about that too. But -

JEN

We need a whole other podcast on Annie's divorce. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Just because that was my path does not have to mean it's your path. But,, even like, it was it's just been this kind of unfolding over the years. And I don't, I don't anticipate ever stopping that unfolding. It's always like, connecting with myself, either reconnecting or connecting on a different layer. And, all these opportunities that I have in my life now seem to present experiences where I can reconnect to myself over and over and over again. And I don't think I realized how far gone I was until I started therapy about three years ago. And she would ask me questions like, "Well, what was your experience? What did you think?" And I could not answer

that question without saying things like, "Well, they thought it was really good. Jen liked it. I got a lot of likes on social media. Everyone enjoyed the class."

JEN

Ouch. That's, I guess. Yeah. Ugh. Owie. Yeah.

ANNIE

I had no, I couldn't even answer what I thought or how I felt about my own life. It was so based and rooted in others perceptions, like even sex. Like, are they having fun? Does that feel good to them? Did they have an orgasm? Who cares about what like, what was going on for me, not even on the radar.

JEN

Yeah. And I do even find after you, you know, you have this awakening, you start taking these steps, it's more like it happens step by step by step and each layer you either unpeel or every time you take an opportunity to deepen your relationship with yourself, it leads you to the next step, right? Like the way isn't always clear, what you can be very clear about is that you will not betray yourself again. But you might mess it up. So I have to say, it was three years ago, I was asked to join the PAC, which is the Canadian version of the PTA. And I just knew, I knew in that moment, it was not a choice aligned with what was going to work for my life. But I said yes, because I felt a lot of pressure, I felt a lot of...And guess what it was, it was a hot mess.

ANNIE

[Laughs]

JEN

I lasted one year, so you will still last less than a year, you will still be faced with those choices. And you may, you know, you may not choose to take the right step in every situation after you have this awakening. But sometimes we have to blow past our boundaries, the new boundaries we set for ourselves, we have to blow past them in order to remember why they were there. And then I can look back on that experience and say, "Hey, I forgot to check in with myself," right?

ANNIE

Or, did you ever watch "Stranger Things?"

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

You know how she goes into the like, the other world and she's like in this dark, like, watery, and it feels as if any minute, she could just walk off the ledge. That's oftentimes how I felt in the past. Like, I don't know where my boundaries are. And I only know where my boundaries are until after I've like, gotten past them. And then I'm like, "Oh, yeah, there, it was a few miles back. I just missed it and I ignored it, or I silenced it. And now I know, I compromised or I abandoned

myself or I didn't honor what I needed and wanted and I can make different choices next time." So anyways, the point here, I think we got on a little bit of a tangent is, once you've started to identify what you truly want and need and desire for yourself, you can start taking small steps. It doesn't have to be overhauling your life overnight. It can be as simple as wearing a bodysuit, or taking a class, reading a different kind of book.

JEN

Yeah, I also think after you know, we talk about the pendulum swing of behavior change with human beings. I think that, you know, in my example of having no boundaries to having, to having all the boundaries and sort of pendulum swinging back and forth from being docile to ferocious, I also think that sometimes when we ideate on who we want to be, and we're not sure how to get there, sometimes when we start taking the steps towards that, we find that we are part of the way there and we're good. As far as I think for me, I had pendulum swung into who I thought I needed to be to kind of heal what I had been through, and starting to take steps towards it, the healing took place in the process, and I didn't actually need to reach any point, like there was no end. Do you know what I'm saying? Does that make sense?

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

But on the flip side, you take those steps towards who you want to be. Don't just give yourself good enough. Right? So sometimes, we talk about women giving themselves just enough to survive, rather than enough to thrive.

ANNIE

Mm-hmm.

JEN

[Laughs] I'm giving you a very obscure, abstract thing to chew on here.

ANNIE

Well, but I think, if I understand what you're saying, that's why it's so important to stay like ever present. Because when you reach that point, if you are like being mindful and intentional, you'll know. "I'm good. I'm okay."

JEN

Yeah. I also, back to my pendulum swinging days, I felt like I was, it was gonna be a sprint to get there. Rather than knowing that I could enjoy the journey, even the unpacking, you know, and the unraveling of who I was, I could enjoy that even though it was painful. There was a purpose there. And I can look back and say it was painful. But I enjoyed learning why I chose what I chose and why I did what I did.

ANNIE

Yeah. And you know that the truth is, your return to home might upset some people.

JEN

Oh, yeah, I have a different...Yeah, do I have a different marriage, I have different friendships. Some are the same, right? I didn't just, you know, but I guess it's understanding that when you grow or evolve, not everybody grows and evolves at the same rate. I said, I have a different marriage, I'm with the same person in a totally different marriage. We call this our second marriage. Because who I was when I married him, is not who I am today. So the marriage had to evolve, or it wasn't going to work. I have a different relationship with my kids, different boundaries. I'm a different woman than who I would have been had I stayed the course. I have different friendships, like those who are really close and kind of in my inner circle, which I keep my inner circle pretty small. So they're, different people are in that inner circle, and I had 15 years ago. Yeah.

ANNIE

It's not, it's not easy growth. And evolution is not easy. Whether we're talking, you know, something as big and broad as like who you are, or even just changing a career or, you know, it can be pretty micro or macro. But it's not like everyone's going to be necessarily going to be clapping for you, and cheering for you and applauding you and supporting you.

JEN

Yeah. And you know, what really helped me during those times was when, first of all, telling myself over and over that not everybody has to understand what I'm doing here, as long as I understand it. And second, there's a quote by Brene Brown that says, something around, those who are upset by your boundaries probably benefited from you not having any. And so I mean, for me, the biggest disruption for me during this awakening was in my home life, the people closest to me, my partner and kids. And the truth is that they all benefited from me not having any boundaries. They all did. That was the most difficult part of my journey, I would say, hence, the second marriage. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yeah, but do you think... Now I'm throwing you a curveball. Do you think now that your reconnection to yourself has maybe caused, yes, temporary discomfort, but in the long term benefited all of you so much more than had you just stayed silent?

JEN

Yes, I think it forced everybody to have to grow. Everybody, all of us and as a family create better boundaries with our extended family. You know how we talk about making value-based decisions as an individual, but also looking at what are our values as a family? And how are we living our life as a family as opposed to creating a family and creating a life that our extended families wanted to see us living? Do you know what I mean? Like it just it was layer after layer after layer and it's been full of hard conversations. Lots of, you know, "this is it" conversations as in, here's where we're headed. We're going here. But nothing is more important than us, you know, me and my partner of like, I don't like using the word happy like that. We're both happy,

because that's not what I think life is about. But like, that our, both of our growth has to be honored. And that's the most important thing, right? And it's okay, you know, sometimes life is full of rotating priorities. But what happened to me is, after we had kids and my husband decided to go back to school, we rotated the priority to my husband, and it was not rotating back. Like it was, that was it, right? So it's like, I get that some days we're prioritizing our kids. Sometimes we're prioritizing my husband, but like, it's got to come back to me during different points. And sometimes we can't equally honor what everybody needs in every moment. And I am willing to step back in different times and honor what everybody else needs. But I gotta be able to step forward at some point. And I just won't do that anymore. I won't be the woman behind the man, the woman behind the kids, that is just personally not fulfilling for me. Like I'm not able to live my greatest life when, for me personally, again, could be someone else's choice, but it just wasn't working for me. And I had a deep, deep, all the symptoms that we've talked about in here of how to know when you're asleep. I had them all. Overeating, over drinking, over consuming Netflix. Rage, like rage, rage, resentment and rage.

ANNIE

Yeah, I was caught, I felt constantly like, I was just gonna explode at any moment. Just like, just like, my jaw was just like, tight. [Laughs]

JEN

Fantasizing about when my kids were grown up and gone. You know? And then realizing like, I don't want to start living when my kids are 18. Like, I want them to see me living now.

ANNIE

Yeah. I think I started that as a segue into our final point about finding a community. [Laughs]

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Because going against the grain, maybe challenging the script, the trajectory, you're on, whatever language you want to put to it, can cause some ripples. Having a supportive community can be really, really valuable. And I read this, I could do this all day. If you have read "Women Who Run With the Wolves," please send me a DM and we can discuss. [Laughs]

JEN

You know what? I'm reading it right now. And I have to say, it is a hard read. So I have attention deficit disorder. And things have to be pretty riveting for me to get through them. And I have my highlighter out when I am reading it. And I'm highlighting different lines. And there's so much, so many, so much in there that packs a punch. But if you've tried to read it and you're having trouble, I just want to validate that I'm personally finding it a slog.

ANNIE

Yeah, it took me four years. I think that's why I'm like, I'm so proud that I finished it. But I sent this quote to you when I was reading it, on how's this for living authentically? I sent this quote in a text to Jen while I was on vacation with my ex-husband [laughs] and my kids. We get to describe, we get to design our own conditions. But she says she's describing women returning to themselves. And she says if she cannot find the culture that encourages her, then she usually decides to construct it herself. And that is good for if she builds it. Others who have been looking for a long time will mysteriously arrive one day, enthusiastically proclaiming they have been looking for this all along. And I'm like, that's our community.

JEN

When I started blogging at Mama Lion Strong and putting my thoughts out there on Facebook a few years later, my aunt told me that when I first started, her and my uncle were going, "What's she doing this for? Like, what's this about?" And my aunt told my uncle, "She's lonely. She's lonely." And I look back and think I really was, like I was, I had, there was a lot of bodies in my life, but not a lot of depth. And I was hungry for more. And when I think about starting all that, it really was my search for community, the women who were thinking a bit more like me.

ANNIE

Yeah, and that can be a neighbor, that can be a friend, a sister, it could be a stranger on the internet, it could be 1000s of people in you know, the Balance365 community, you can decide what support looks like for you, but just to acknowledge that you don't have to start this maybe awakening process on your own.

JEN

Right. Yeah.

ANNIE

Okay, Jen. That was a, that was a beefy, meaty topic for us.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

ANNIE

With a lot of feelings, and stories,. Stories are the evidence in this podcast. [Laughs] Anything to add before we wrap up?

JEN

No, thanks for, you were kind of the driver of this episode and this topic. So thank you.

ANNIE

Thanks for indulging me.

JEN

It was awesome to talk about.

ANNIE

Okay, thanks, friends. Talk soon.

JEN

Bye 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