

Balance365 Episode 225 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 thousands 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 wellbeing with amazing guests. Enjoy.

Hello everyone, back in early 2020, way back then, remember those times or does all of the last couple years just seem to run together? Either way, we released a pretty powerful episode asking the question, can you call yourself a feminist and still want weight loss? To help answer that question, we invited Grace Club founder Maggie Anderson for an exploration of feminism, weight loss, body autonomy, and how to create more compassion for yourself and others. Maggie is an avid learner and unlearner, a collaborator, community cultivator, yoga teacher, partner, and mother of two daughters. And in this episode, you will find a spirited discussion that will challenge you to examine your beliefs, think critically about the messages you are receiving, and really unpack what your relationship with your body means to you. Where do you stand in the pendulum swing of diet, culture, body positivity, and body neutrality? Get ready to dig deep with us. But before you go and listen, I'd like to read a review from one listener. That really stuck out to me from blubirdmama76. I love it. She says, "This podcast has been life-changing for me. I've probably listened to every episode at this point. And it has been the key to reprogramming myself from diet culture. A key aspect that I appreciate is that Balance365 offers an alternative. It doesn't just say F diet culture. It also says here's how to figure out what's actually healthy for you. As someone who has struggled with moderation in the past and tends to be very perfectionist and strict with myself, exploring what sane healthy habits look like, what actually listening to your body looks like, and what slow moderate change actually looks like has been so helpful." Thank you so much blubirdmama76. We love hearing reviews like thi. If you would like to show the podcast some love on iTunes, we always appreciate it. And now on to this episode. Enjoy.

ANNIE

Jen, we have Maggie from Grace Club here today on the podcast. Are you so excited?

Jennifer Campbell

I am so excited she is, I want to call her my bestie which would be kind of a lie but in my head "There's my Instagram bestie!"

Annie Brees

She has one of my most favorite Instagram accounts which I know that, Maggie, we're talking about you like you're not here-

Maggie Anderson

I love it. I'll just hang out here.

Annie Brees

I know you're so much more than an Instagram account but even the one you posted of the Senator with his like reusable shopper showing up for court this morning. You find some gems.

Maggie Anderson

I have a lot of friends who get really excited about handbags and who make fun of me because I almost always have a reusable shopping bag to carry my stuff and I think why not? And then there's this guy in, like, one of the most highly publicized situations and he's got a little shopping bag that he's unloading his files from and I was like, "You've got my style."

Annie Brees

Who needs a briefcase when you can have a reusable shopper?

Maggie Anderson

Exactly. I felt so seen.

Jennifer Campbell

Also, her Instagram handle is Graceclub. Like, who doesn't want to, like, join that team?

Annie Brees

I want to be in that club.

Maggie Anderson

Do you know why we are called Grace Club YVR?

Jennifer Campbell

No. Well, YVR for Vancouver.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah, there you go. So, but I often get asked if we are a religious group just based on the name, and to be honest, it really didn't occur to me because I hadn't identified grace with theology at all. But there is a beautiful definition. You know, when you grace someone with your presence, which I really liked, and was the initial attraction to the word but then this beautiful definition that I found on the old internet machine that had something to do with when everything is falling apart and at the very end, you find yourself with an unexpected kindness that is grace. And that to me was like, that's what we stand for. Kind of like being in the mess together and really modeling vulnerability and the strength in that and just that we're not trying to be perfect. Like, we're trying to actually bust those myths down together.

Jennifer Campbell

Mhmm.

Annie Brees

I like that.

Jennifer Campbell

I love it.

Annie Brees

That's beautiful.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah.

Annie Brees

Well, we wanted to have you on the show today because I think it was you, Jen, that got into a little bit of a debate, shocker, on Instagram, about weight loss being anti-feminist. Right. Was that you? Is that how this idea for this podcast originated?

Jennifer Campbell

I identify as a feminist but in progress as far as like I'm not a perfect feminist. I'm always trying to learn more and be a better one and examining my own beliefs, etc. I feel like

I'm a sucky feminist sometimes because I, there's, like, no end to what you can learn and do and be. So it was just a little debate I had on social media around, you know, weight loss as a topic and then I had another woman tell me that she can't believe I can identify as a feminist when I also talk about weight loss.

And I was devastated. Number one, because my greatest insecurity is when people don't like me. And so, you know, there was just a lot to unpack there. So, yeah, it was just a tough one for me. And I thought, let's talk about it. What better person to have on to discuss her own journey, then the co-founder of Grace Club Vancouver, who has had her own journey with feminism, one, to the point where you are now, you know, you're part of this, you're leading this whole movement and your own journey with weight loss and changing your body, I guess.

Maggie Anderson
Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

We get into that. And then number three, a woman who's been a part of Balance365, who's just really rad and, you know, kind of understands what we're doing here.

Maggie Anderson
Sure.

Annie Brees

Well, and what I appreciate about you, Maggie, is that I don't feel like I'm walking on eggshells when we're talking about this, like, I feel a lot of compassion for I don't even know you that well, but just from following you online. That, like, I am, like, as Jen kind of said, like in the process of learning and relearning mean what it means to me to be a feminist. And I just get this very, like compassionate sense of like, "Hey, we're exploring here. Some of us are at different stages of that journey. And that's okay. You're welcome here."

Maggie Anderson

Yeah, well, that is, for one, that's intentional, because it's the approach that I think is most inclusive and the warmest and that's how I like to move through life. But also it's authentic to me because I'm not a perfect feminist. I don't know if one exists, but I'm sure more educated ones do. But my journey embracing will find finding feminism as a movement and embracing it was really rooted in body autonomy, because I didn't feel like my body was mine until I embraced this kind of radical belief.

And when I say radical it's because it felt radical to me at the time, and started to kind of dig into it a little bit more and realize that there are structures in place, like social and political structures in place that do oppress women. And that we can't stop there because, I mean, as far as I'm concerned, I'm a white cisgendered which just means for those people who don't know that term just means identify with the gender I was given and assigned at birth. I'm also heteronormative and I'm able-bodied and because of all those things, I have a ton of privilege that I moved through the world with.

And so if I'm advocating for women's rights and equality of women, which really just is what the basic kind of belief system or theory of feminism is, I also need to be advocating for other intersections that are oppressed. And that doesn't mean we're oppressed in our necessarily in our direct corner of the world. But if no one is free, you know, I'm not free either, because I feel that connection with others. And so we're really trying to, with feminism, trying to uplift voices that aren't heard, and bring awareness to things that maybe we just accepted without really thinking too much about them.

And for me, diet culture was just, I was steeped in it from when I was a really young child. And that was just because my mom was steeped in it. And she was my model. And so I just grew up thinking that, as women, our job is to be small and to be likable, Jen, to speak to that thing inside of us that doesn't just desperately doesn't want to be liked. That's conditioned in us. My husband doesn't have that thing. He really doesn't.

Jennifer Campbell

Neither does my husband. He can make decisions like that-

Maggie Anderson

Right? And how liberating!

Jennifer Campbell

He's just like, this is what's best for me and our family. And I'm like-

Maggie Anderson

And how direct you can be with others when you aren't worried about likability.

Jennifer Campbell

Setting boundaries and yeah.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah. And I was also, my thoughts are I mistook my worth for how cute I was. And so my life's goal was to maintain that cuteness, right? Or prettiness or whatever,

desirability, I guess is another way to look at it. And so when I started to hear rumblings about feminism, I approached it selfishly from a place of like, "There's this movement that's saying we don't have to be these things that I just assumed that was part of being a girl in the world. We don't have to accept sexual advances that aren't wanted. And we don't have to accept whole ideas," which is where the diet culture piece for me really became a powerful thing. And to be clear, as a feminist, I am staunchly against diet culture. I'm against ideas that say women or anyone has to be a certain way or should be a certain way. I'm really against people telling people how to be.

Jennifer Campbell

I think we have to pause and define diet culture before we go any further just for everyone listening, which is living in a society that prioritizes thinness over health.

Maggie Anderson

Exactly. And that's where it differs for me in that I want a better world for my daughters, for everyone, boys, girls, everybody. I want this not to be an issue anymore. I'll fight really hard for that. And at the same time, I really don't think we can tell anyone how to be in their body. And the most liberating thing in the world is when someone says, "You're a person, you have choice."

And so we aren't there to judge anyone's choices. We aren't here to tell anyone what they should or shouldn't be doing. I get that patriarchal power structures, okay, power structures that are older than time with men having control and power and telling us, setting up systems for us and white men specifically, I get that they are really limiting and oppressive. And when it comes to body stuff, for sure.

And I also think that personal choice is really important. If I'm uncomfortable in my body, I have the choice to take whatever means feels right for us. What I'm really advocating for is for a healthy, informed, supportive, positive way to make lifestyle changes, which is why Balance really worked for me. And I'm really excited about doing things in community where we're uplifting instead of tearing each other down, which is what you all stand for.

I think that is a really healthy way to approach anything. And especially something that has been typically something that we do alone in a shameful way, and an obsessive way that makes us feel disconnected from our body and disconnected from our desires. restricting, bingeing, dieting, guilt, all that stuff. It's a really healthy thing to do it in a community that is guided by real information, real scientific studies, which are really helpful and support and like, emotional support to write. And if that is what helps

someone be comfortable in their body, like physically comfortable embodying who they are, I think we should all be there for it.

Annie Brees

We agree, naturally.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah. And I get that it's not, I get that it is polarizing. And I think we have to come back to this idea that when I first started looking into feminism, I thought, "Well, I'm not a feminist." And the reason I didn't feel like I was a feminist is because I like to get pedicures and I am married to a man and I was the primary caregiver for my kids. And I didn't think that that that was feminism because I thought, "Oh, you've subscribed all these roles," right, beauty roles and I color my hair. I've had cosmetic surgery. And again, I paint my toenails like that was this thing that I, you know, shave my legs. So if we're going to be accepting of those things, then why can't we be accepting of different ways for women to modify themselves? Should they be comfortable with that? What I'm going for is health, a healthy way to do that, but it's a personal choice.

Annie Brees

Like you said, body autonomy, body positivity, self-love... Those are all movements that seem to be easily accepted by the feminist community, but weight loss in particular, it seems to get a little dicey. What do you think of that? What do you make of that?

Maggie Anderson

I think it's a reaction to being told that that's the ideal way to be a woman is to be small and that in reality, so very few of us naturally fall into a small body type, a thin, or athletic, whatever you want to call it body type and so that means that if we're subscribing to those societal pressures then a whole bunch of us are just going to live our entire lives battling with the package that we come in. And it's a really oppressive way to go through life and so I get why there's pushback. I get why women are saying "Enough of this, no more of this radically just be in the body that you were given." And that works really well. It worked really well for me. It was really liberating.

I stopped giving a shit about food. I started to really enjoy myself around food and that was the first time for me, you know, since I was really, really young, and also because it's never but, it's always and, there are women who aren't comfortable in their bodies, but be it because they're physically uncomfortable. You know, on Balance365 you hear there are a lot of posts about like chasing inner thighs in the summer and the weight of our breasts like and the bras that we need to hold these babies up, you know, and I totally relate to all those things.

And I get why somebody wants to be able to move with more freedom and lightness and ease if they're having a hard time with that and because of body autonomy and because of not supporting one idea about how women should be, I also embrace and applaud and celebrate people who say, "You know what, this is my body. I'm going to celebrate this and I'm going to be her. And I'm going to stop trying to conform to some ideal." That's really freeing too.

Jennifer Campbell

Mhmm, you know, I find that my story is very accepted in feminist circles as far as being you know, 30 pounds heavier than my leanest weight. And that's applauded and embraced and accepted. But the opposite is just not and-

Maggie Anderson

You mean being underweight?

Jennifer Campbell

No, being, losing. So say somebody who had lost 30 pounds

Maggie Anderson

Got it!

Jennifer Campbell

It's like that has become a point of, not shame for some women, but a point of something they have to explain.

Annie Brees

It can be because it does just seem like there's a shift instead of, I don't want to put words in anyone's mouth, but there's, personally, I felt this at times instead of feeling shame about feeling fat, feeling shame about wanting to lose fat. And it's like, it's still shame. It's just like it's transformed or manifested into a different way. And I also wonder if people that have a hard time accepting weight loss make the assumption that it's because of a cultural standard. That's the only reason that someone could want to lose weight is because of a cultural standard or, you know, the patriarchy has, like, placed these, like, ideas in our head. And that is the only reason but what I hear you saying, Maggie, is that autonomy kind of trumps that.

Maggie Anderson

Absolutely. And also, I want to be clear on this, like the revolt, if you want to call it that, against diet culture is a rebellion. So it is, I understand why there is this reaction around

it. It's because it's a rebellion to this idea that we've been handed down as just like this is part of the female experience. You have to want this, you have to do whatever you can to get this regardless of health, regardless of enjoyment. And so when you're rebelling against that, it feels like "Come on, like get on this train. Let's all do this together. And if we all do it together, it won't be a thing anymore."

What that negates, though, is that there always needs to be room for personal choice and so if we're looking at things with a pendulum, right, and it was over here, and now there's no like, w w or whatever, for instance, like, that was just the norm. I grew up with, like everybody who was struggling with their weight, ie everyone was, you know, larger than a certain size that was acceptable in my family was on Weight Watchers, and that was just part of the experience of being in a bigger body. And then now it's controversial, it gets people really triggered and I think that's a step in the right direction. However, that's a pendulum swing.

And I love that that's where we're at. And also I think at some point we're going to come back to the middle ground and realize that we can't ascribe one experience to every person and you're right, Annie, like experience biases everything. If I've struggled with my body image my whole life and I'm not in a bigger body necessarily. I'm like a an eight to ten and that's been my experience, I will now assume that every woman has body image issues because that's my experience.

And when I do that I'm putting my experience on people who might not have that, might feel really empowered by their bodies and the way they move and the way they look. And so we have to be careful when we're saying, "This isn't healthy for you. You should just love your body." That it's, okay. So if that works for you, that's great. And also we're not trying to oppress women by telling them how to be in their body in any way. Whether we see it as positive or negative.

Jennifer Campbell

I felt that way. My mom was identified as a feminist and she had strong ideas based on her experience of the way a woman should do life, which she put on me and my sister. So I feel like when I wanted to stay home with my kids for a couple of years. I felt, I don't know if shame is the right word, but it's like, "I am just not living up to the standards of the women I have come to admire." And so I have felt that in a lot of different areas of my life, and then it becomes, you know, instead of pursuing beauty ideals I felt at a time I was trying to pursue feminist ideals.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

And it's that whole innate thing that women seem to have to try to belong or not belong, I guess it's trying to try to fit in. So it's that whole like, I want to fit in. I wanted to be acknowledged by feminists. I wanted to be, you know, I went to business school and there was tons of young women feminists in business school and it was all about breaking glass ceilings. I'm like, "What if I don't want to break like," and it's not that I don't want to see other women break glass ceilings, but like, what if I don't want to be the person who spends her life, you know, breaking glass ceilings, like what if I just want to be, like, what if I just want to be a stay at mom, like what if I, I don't know, when you start identifying, I'm identifying as being a feminist and then and I would identify as that and then and then all of a sudden I felt trapped by it.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah, well that's, I think, it's just our own limiting beliefs around feminism. So, I mean, if you believe in equality of sexes, then you're a feminist. If you believe in equality of races, sexes, sexualities, gender identities, body abilities, like all those things, you're a feminist and you're an activist, just by that belief, and then we have to be careful that then we don't try to define feminism based on either a radical feminist approach or a really limiting feminist approach. We have to keep going back to that definition.

So as an equal member of society, you should be able to choose whether you stay home to nurture your children, or whether you go out and you get that badass job, or whether you try your damndest to do both. All right, you know, and that, again, is because we're saying, "Hey, women haven't been given the choice until very recently, and you know, last 40 years maybe, and still in many parts of the world, not at all. And so now we've got the choice. We're giving people the choice."

So be careful when you start telling people what their choices are. Because choice means that it's up to us. And so when you're saying I'm giving you the choice to live in a bigger body, you're welcome. Well, that's not that wasn't what body autonomy was you're giving people the choice to decide how they want to live in their body.

Annie Brees

Maggie, if I can play devil's advocate, or I don't even know if that's the right term, but just the other side of the debate might argue that women have more important things to do with their time-

Yeah, I hear that a lot.

than to try to lose weight. What do you think about that?

Maggie Anderson

So I've also said that, from a personal experience, when I stopped obsessing about my lifestyle, my healthy lifestyle is what I would have called it over the last, you know, 13 years, having kids. It wasn't so much like a diet as it was orthorexia. It was all about health. And I put that in quotations. When I stopped paying so much attention to organic and balanced in a way that wasn't balanced, gluten-free and dairy free and all the cleanses and the-

Jennifer Campbell

I've been there.

Annie Brees

Joy free.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah, Joy free. Anti-social. All the things that I want to tell you this because I know I'm not alone in this but when I had two toddlers, I was terrified for them to go to their friends' houses in case their friends would give them chicken fingers because to me, I would rather they only have organic massaged to death chicken or no chicken at all, right? Or if someone gave my kid an apple, like my poor mother-in-law who had to fight battles on this, a conventional apple, like no apple. I'd rather not have an apple than eat something that wasn't organic and again, like massage from a seedling to a tree.

So it was preoccupying and along with raising children and being a supportive and loving partner to my husband, and having my passions which, is teaching yoga, and my friendships that were full-on. I was all consumed. And so when I put that concern down, and I started living with more freedom and autonomy, I did have more, not only energy for other things, but also I was going into even my conversations with my friends and with more intention, and everything was more liberating. So for me, I really understand that when you stop caring about something, regardless of what it is, you're obviously going to have more focus for other things. And then you get to choose what those other things are.

And at the same time, again, we all need to do what works for us. And some people really need structure. And some people need more support. And I think we should be there for each other in a compassionate way. And so if you if food has been a problem for you, for instance, or your body has been a problem for you, or your relationship with

your body and food, it makes sense that you have systems in place to support you towards a healthy, a really healthy mindset, right, mindset first, and then the rest comes.

And if that's what you need to do, I'm not here to tell anyone what they should be focused on. You know, some people are really focused on keeping a really clean house, do we go over to their house and say, "Imagine how much energy you would have in your life if you just lived in the mess." It's condescending, and it's also a little bit true. Sure, you'd go out and play more, go work out at the gym instead of cleaning your house, whatever.

But who are we to tell anyone what to focus on? And I think as a society that that statement is true is that the things that women have been told that they need to pay attention to versus men, let's just say they take up our time, and they take up our energy. Like, think of, I don't know if you all read fashion magazines, but I have friends who, like, collect them, who always have their nose in a fashion magazine. And with that comes a whole bunch of stuff that I just don't choose to engage with. It just doesn't do anything for me.

And so, yeah, I mean, I could look at my girlfriend and say, "Look at all this time you're spending with your nose in that magazine, which is all built to make you feel bad about yourself so that you would then go and purchase all these things that we think we need." And at the same time if that's the moment in her day where she unplugs and she gets joy from that, I'm not going to tell her otherwise.

Jennifer Campbell

Like, I feel that way about many things like makeup and but then I see, you know, some women really enjoy makeup, they really enjoy maybe their routine in the morning, they enjoy playing, right and having different looks and it's how they express themselves and I don't feel anything towards women who opt into I don't know if you call it makeup culture, whatever, or if they're opting in at all or they're just making a choice and they find it fun and, you know, it's just not for me like I'm just right. It's just not something I want to spend my time on. But I do spend my time on other things, like I spend my time cooking things from scratch because I enjoy cooking feeding my family, it feels like an act of love. Annie hates cooking, she hates it.

Annie Brees

True.

Jennifer Campbell

Yes. Annie loves going to the gym, she CrossFit, like five times a week, I would find that oppressive, personally.

Maggie Anderson

I just broke out in a rash, Annie. I feel like "Ugh!"

Jennifer Campbell

However, I do work out three times a week in my garage with a friend. And that's just the right amount of attention for me to be spending on my physical strength. You know, and so it's all about finding like, you know, where do you want to spend your own energy and then I've had times in my life where I do sit and reflect and think, you know, I could care more about my nutrition habits, like that would lead to a better quality of my life. Then there have been other times in my life where I have said, "You need to be caring a lot less about your nutrition habits because that will lead to a better quality of life for you," right?

Maggie Anderson

It's all about personal expression when it comes to whether you enjoy wearing makeup, or you enjoy any of those things, it comes down to personal expression. And the feminist theory would be that we have the choice to express ourselves the way we feel we want to in that moment. I, for one, like, when you were talking about makeup, I've worn eyeliner since I was in grade five. So, what, 10 years old? I had two older sisters and I wanted to be like them. I started shaving my legs in grade five.

I could not leave the house without eyeliner on until two years ago, because I started to get curious around what it was that I was, what that need was about, right and I realized that I thought that I wasn't worthy or that something about putting eyeliner on made me more valid in the world. And so I would put my eyeliner on, sometimes mascara but always eyeliner because I felt like "You have small little eyes." Go out of the house every day. I couldn't sit in front of a class to teach a yoga class without this little mask on that I had, which is, again, really minimal, just eyeliner until I started really examining that belief and like, "Well, what was that I'm just not good enough without it that this is something that I need, even though I wasn't built with dark eyelashes, so why can't I just be who I am?"

And I started, again, as an act of rebellion, stopped wearing it and started sitting in front of 40 people every morning to lead them through a yoga class no one showed up for my eyeliner, by the way, that wasn't the draw. And nothing changed. No one was revolted. You know, I didn't. I guess I just had to examine that belief in order to get cool with it.

And at the end of the day, I really liked the way my eyes look with eyeliner. And so now I can leave the house with or without it.

Jennifer Campbell

Right so and that is where freedom is, right, where you could do it or not do it and be like, cool.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

And so I really think women need, they don't have to do anything, but it can be so beneficial to examine their weight loss beliefs. And one thing you probably found that people kept showing up for your yoga class, even when you opted out of weight loss as a goal. They kept coming, right?

Maggie Anderson

Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

So it's like, because you are in yoga culture, which is, you know-

Maggie Anderson

Oh, goodness.

Jennifer Campbell

It's like, it's like a very intense-

Maggie Anderson

It's the most interesting paradox because yoga, the whole idea of yoga is getting into a really deep state of connection with your body. And if you want to go to higher levels, and I've never succeeded in this realm, but like you wanted to go into the Himalayas and sit in a cave, and all you want to do is meditate, also transcend one's body and connect with whatever that means to you, spirit of the universe, or what have you. But at the very least, it's a relationship with your body in order to have optimal health, right, so movement and breath and mindfulness and all these fantastic things, and for me, yoga was a very oppressive place. I was in tight pants, in front of a room full of people, having had two babies like over the, you know, over the years and going and still teaching my classes pregnant and post-pregnancy, and having people comment on my body every

day, how fast I was losing the weight, how quickly I was getting my body back. It was how it was framed.

And for me, it did become this place where I felt like I needed to keep up. And that's why, again, when I talk about health and wellness, sometimes I'll say wealth and wellness because it was a Freudian slip I made when I was speaking at Grace Club and I everybody laughed and it was like, "Oh, that's so that's so on point" is that the industry around health and wellness and yoga for sure, can be really oppressive. And so I want to be really intentional when I'm setting up space for people that I'm not feeding into that, that I'm actually creating a way out, that I'm creating a liberation. And so my relationship with my body as I went through Balance365 I think really set up a safer place or at least a braver place for people to be in their body and truly work through their stuff with me and along with me, right.

And now it's not an issue, like, now it's a non-issue. I don't talk about body image struggles anymore like I used to in my classes. I don't talk about the way our bodies should, in quotations move or not move. I really just give people personal choice in everything that they do. And I think that's the way to be the most inclusive. Not only in the yoga space, but in life, is like really allow people to share up the way that they feel like showing up and at the same time be a model for that, and what I mean by that is, like, be a role model for that. And I think it gives people, people don't even know why they feel comfort in that but they're like "Oh there's something really, a sense of allowing there that I don't get into all these other aspects of my life." But yeah, yoga, yoga was, it's been a trip.

Jennifer Campbell

Yoga's very, yeah, like, very lots of diet culture seems infused right through the yoga industry, if you want to call it, it's an industry more than a philosophy right? Well, there's a philosophy but this whole industry is around it and I know and just I mean and any exercise module, which is why people are so, have such a toxic relationship with exercise now And speaking of that, that peloton ad, that bike ad that just went viral. I guess you didn't see it. Did you, Annie?

Annie Brees

No, I saw some articles on it. I didn't actually watch it. Yeah, go ahead.

Jennifer Campbell

Well, yeah, basically it's like a thin white woman who was gifted a Peloton, I don't know if I'm saying peloton.

Annie Brees
I think it's Peloton.

Jennifer Campbell
Peloton bike.

Annie Brees
It's a bike.

Jennifer Campbell
It's a spin bike.

Annie Brees
And it, like, has a computer screen that you, like, connect virtually with other classes.

Maggie Anderson
Got it.

Jennifer Campbell
Yeah. And then she kind of webcammed her experience using this bike for a year. And then her and her husband sat down to watch the video after a year. And like she was nervous at first and then became more confident. And there's two ways of looking at it. There was a huge social media public outcry towards this company, that a thin woman was being gifted a bike that she to be, you know, a 116-pound woman trying to be 112 pounds and how problematic it was that her husband gave it to her and it was just like, I think the commercial was a bit odd but never, never did it talk about weight loss and so I did find it odd and I can't believe their PR team wasn't like "Okay, like maybe this is" however, I'd be stoked if I got that for Christmas. And I no longer associate exercise with weight loss. So I can look at an ad like that and even feel like a bit inspired.

Maggie Anderson
But Jen, imagine if that same ad had featured a bigger-bodied woman, and it was a gift from her husband that I think feel like would have been more problematic.

Jennifer Campbell
Yeah, like it's, I don't know I-

Maggie Anderson
Because the assumption would be that she needed to lose weight. And this is like saying this, I mean, maybe it is, I haven't seen it. But what I'm hearing is like, oh, maybe

they're trying to take the whole weight thing out of the conversation and just make it about healthy movement.

Jennifer Campbell

Maybe, like, and so I think the commercial was odd. You should go watch it.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah, I will.

Jennifer Campbell

I think they missed the mark. I think it could have been amazing. I think they could have used a woman in a larger body and in a year later, she was in that same large body. But her, you know, she was just so pumped that she had increased her speed and her time and-

Maggie Anderson

Stuck with it for a year.

Jennifer Campbell

And that would have been super empowering.

Maggie Anderson

All those endorphins. Yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

And so, but people's reaction to it, I feel like people made it more about weight loss than the commercial had.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

And so but there's just, women have a lot of trauma around that kind of thing, right. Especially a man giving a woman and you know, gifting a woman and a new-

Maggie Anderson

And so my husband gave me a vacuum cleaner last year for Christmas. I mean, I was so stoked. It's THE vacuum cleaner.

Jennifer Campbell

But can you imagine a commercial?

Maggie Anderson

Yeah, what does that say about like, "Oh, Maggie, you're supposed to vacuum now," like, no, he vacuums too. But I do think it's like, are we going to react to that?

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah. So people react to that more than, you know, what the situation actually is. I remember you telling me a couple years ago that you have seen reaction from people when talking about you took your husband's last name when you got married.

Maggie Anderson

Oh yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

And you know what I mean? So, again it comes back to that experience bias, I guess, like if you have been gifted exercise equipment or any or a weight loss book or whatever for Christmas that is jarring and traumatic and-

Maggie Anderson

Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell

And then if someone then five years later were to give you a new Peloton bike or whatever they're called, that could bring that trauma back up, right? Rather than-

Maggie Anderson

Sure. And it's also maybe not the best way to maybe it's not the best way they could have gone about it like that. Because it is, because we do already hold all that stuff around.

Jennifer Campbell

Yes, we're all holding it.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah. So it might have come off as super tone-deaf and that might not have been their intention or it might have been, I don't know. But I love that people are reacting because it's holding companies more accountable to the way that they market and the way that they communicate with consumers. And so I do love when I see a little bit of pushback,

because it's like, yeah, a bunch of people sat around the table and they all agreed that this was the way to do it.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, and that's why the commercials are odd because I'm like "Is your marketing team just totally unaware of like, where the world is at with body positivity?" And yeah.

Maggie Anderson

And we do need to, but we do need to keep coming back to like, we can't deny the benefits of physical movement, right? It's just, like, careful how you portray it. Careful that you're not portraying it as this is something you need to do because you're a woman.

Jennifer Campbell

Like, hey, want to look like this? Get a bike. Hey, want to look like this yoga girl? Do yoga. Hey, want to be a? Yeah, and that's, you know, bringing it back to the beauty benefits.

Maggie Anderson

I do want to speak real quick to body positivity because this is a new awareness for me that I'm starting to teach at a new social wellness space and fitness boutique studio here in Vancouver actually right beside where we met Jen when we went for brussels sprouts that one time. So it's called Common Ground and it's a space that it champions body neutrality instead of body positivity and inclusion and accessibility.

Jennifer Campbell

I love that.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah. And it's run by just the coolest, sweetest, young, white gay male who didn't feel seen or his experience positive in, within, like the cis gay male gym culture, a lot of restricted and toxic masculinity in those spaces, a lot of body ideals that are often again, like we talked about just unrealistic for most of the population, and he wanted to create a space where all bodies were welcome.

And when you're doing that as an intention, and inclusion is your number one value, it's really interesting when you talk about body positivity, and this was totally new to me, but the idea of body positivity, the belief that your body is good, and that we want to celebrate our bodies for their diversity and for what they can and can't do and, when you're in a political relationship with your body, for instance, or when by the very nature

of your body, it's a political statement, for instance, someone who is transitioning or who has body dysmorphia, because of the way they're gendered, telling them to have a positive relationship or even modeling a positive relationship with your own body can be incredibly insensitive, because it's denying their experience that no amount of positivity is going to tackle because society is just like, "Absolutely no, that's, you can't feel good about your body. You have to be whatever we say you are."

And so body neutrality is this idea of, like, let's take the emphasis off the body. Let's see it as a vessel. And let's not focus on it. And that is, I think, another layer of freedom that I hadn't considered before.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, I actually feel more wellness in that space. We had talked about this in one of our other podcasts with my sister, where my sister lived her whole life in a larger body being compared, you know, to me constantly and you know, that whole podcast is about our experience growing up together, the different ways we were treated, and kind of where we're at now and what our journeys have been. And I really feel drawn to feel neutral about my body and I, that really feels good for me that it's just a body and I just don't need to, it's not all of who I am. Because that was who I was, right? It was all of who I was.

But my sister was like, "Yeah, I get that. But like I needed to go to where my body was", she needed body positivity. Do you know what I mean? Like, that's what she needed. She needed to be celebrated. And this is the most amazing thing ever. And I see that on social media as well. I see that, the body positive movement, you know, so many people are drawn to that. And that's fantastic.

And there's criticism, a little bit of criticism there, especially around the Instagram sphere, because they still kind of making it about bodies is what they talk about, like it's still kind of making it about bodies and like, and so I see that too. I'm not on any team here.

Maggie Anderson

Again, that's, it feels like when you're saying that it feels like the pendulum swing. It feels like we've been taught Our bodies are this shameful thing that we have to suppress and compress, right? And then the natural reaction when rebelling from that is to go to the other place, which is like I'm going to dance in my underwear with all my rolls out and put it on the internet and it's going to encourage other women to not feel like shit about their bodies and celebrate and like, "Look how brave that person is" and

it's so stupid that just dancing topless or in a bra is brave, but that's the reality of it.
"Look how brave that person is."

Wait, are there tiny little ways that can inspire me to be a little bit less constricted in my body? And that when the pendulum kind of comes back to center, which it inevitably does, there's body neutrality, which is why are we still making it about the body? And especially if you're in a differently-abled body, someone who is disabled and everybody is championing athleticism, and strength, you know, because there's a lot of that hashtag like strong is the new skinny, it's like that is just as oppressive. And again, it's still focusing on the body needs to be a certain way to be valuable. And so now we have to work out like crazy, not diet like crazy, but workout like crazy.

Jennifer Campbell
And have big muscles.

Maggie Anderson
Yeah, can we just, can we just not? And can we all, again, have the freedom to express ourselves the way we truly want to, and get really curious about why we want the things we want for ourselves. I think that's a really valuable curiosity is, like, you know, what, what is this telling me that I have to shave my legs in order to be attractive? Be worthy? What is it about me feeling like I have to cover my grays? Will there be a time where I can tackle all the things other than just eyeliner? I hope so.

Jennifer Campbell
And also that it can evolve right? Like you, in 20 years from now, Maggie, we could sit down and you're in a totally different space than you're at today as far as what you've been able to, like we can only unpack so much-

Maggie Anderson
Yeah.

Jennifer Campbell
In so much time. We all have to live our lives, too, right?

Maggie Anderson
Like, I'll be 65, I will rule in 20 years and I will have nailed it.

Jennifer Campbell
The one thing that brings me back to, like, this weight loss stuff and feeling like, in some ways, passionate about defending people who desire weight loss for themselves. So

first of all, I would encourage every woman to unpack what that desire is, especially because we have a lot of women who are actually in thin bodies talking about how they need to, they need to lose weight, and it's bizarre to me now because I used to be one of those women. So the descriptors I would use for my body, you know, if I happen to be a size six instead of a size zero, and it's just bizarre to me how I thought and something popped up on my like, Timehop yesterday, my reminders of this is where you were, you know, six years ago. And it was a picture of me in a bikini on the beach.

And I was six months postpartum. And you know, I've got a stomach full of stretch marks. And I thought I was doing something radical then, like, it was so freeing for me and it was felt so radical and I look at that picture now and I'm like, you look like, you know, a stereotypical thin white woman on the beach. Like, what on earth did you think you were accomplishing there? And now I, but it's like, it's just all this, that programming conditioning that all women have, thin women, medium, larger-bodied women.

And I think what thin women really need to look at is the privilege they have of being in this thin body. And so back to why I, this defending of weight loss, so part of the reason I am like "Whoa, hold up" when we start saying, like, "That's wrong," is I feel like that can be a very thin privileged thing to say. And over the years, I have noticed that there are a lot of white thin women in this movement talking about how weight loss is not okay. And I have intimate relationships with women in larger bodies who feel, so one in particular, she was, felt as if her body weight was higher than what was natural for her.

And the reason she was in that size was a result of so many decades of dieting and rebound eating, and three pregnancies and for her to sit there and you know, kind of unpack the stuff with her and then also have her say, "Well, my conclusion is that for me, reclaiming my body would be to, would be weight loss. And I don't want anyone telling me otherwise." And she had this experience with a therapist where she talked with a therapist about her desire for a tummy tuck. Abdominoplasty.

And her experience in her body after three pregnancies and losing some weight was that the excess skin she had on her stomach was physically uncomfortable for her, it chafed. She would, like, get rashes, she would have to lift it up to dry it. She had to lift it up to tuck it into her pants. And the therapist she saw told her that her desire to have a tummy tuck was just societal conditioning.

That's all it was and like, she had more work to do. And I remember her coming to me in tears, like, just devastated and she said "I am so tired of people telling me what to do with my body." Yeah. And I feel like that's such a no, it's still such an emotional story for me because it was also so profound and it was like that moment where I was like, "I will

never tell a woman what she can and cannot do with her body. I want to educate her. I want to empower her. And whatever that looks like for her, I support that."

Maggie Anderson

And that's when it comes down to it, what it comes down to is a personal expression because, and individual expression because and what you were just saying to me was like setting up all these alarm bells because that was my experience after my second child. I had tons of, is it collagen in your skin that breaks when it stretches?

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah, yeah. So I could feel my stomach ripping when Bean was at her like eight months and it was really painful and then when I did have my second daughter, I did have that massive separation with my abdominals and I had a really hard time breastfeeding, like failure to latch or whatever they called it, a dysfunctional birth. They had so many fantastic names for what my experience was with my kids. And I was left with this body that when I looked down, I saw it as broken and actually referred to it all the time as broken, which makes me so sad today. And I saw my mom's body which was really impacting my marriage, particularly my relationship with intimacy within my marriage. And I didn't see a way out.

I really didn't see a way of one day accepting the package that was now on me that was a result of having children. Do I wish that I could just look down and love the physical comfort of what I was left with, because that was the home of my babies? And because I have two healthy children? Absolutely. However, I didn't feel like I was going to get there. And I did make the choice to have an abdominoplasty and a breast lift. And one day I will have to explain the scars that I have on my body to my daughters, you know, and I haven't yet. They just think it's from the C section.

And one day, they'll know what a C-section actually looks like. And this is not that. And that will be a tricky conversation, to be honest, because I don't want them to think that there is this standard that they have to live up to and that your mom's body didn't meet that standard. And so she went to these extreme lengths.

And at the same time, I want to encourage them that they have the power of agency over their own bodies, and as long as they're making informed choices, and they're coming from a place of, like, self-love to me that felt like the most loving thing I could do for myself, was to schedule that appointment, to go through the consultation, to feel

hopeful again, and to feel empowered in my body again, to the point that I thought it was really going to, my thinking going into it was that it was really going to impact my marriage in a positive way, because I did feel so disconnected from my body.

And to be honest, like, turned off by it because it wasn't what I was used to seeing anymore. And so I went all through that and at the end of the day, I found out like, you know, that the cliché is I found out that I will always have things about my body that I want to change, and that that didn't solve that. And at the same time, my choice is to every day, wake up and not and remind myself that I don't need to change those things to be lovable, and that I can put on clothes without a big fight every morning.

I can put on a pair of jeans and a T-shirt and it's a non-issue. That wouldn't be the case had I not gone to the lengths I went to and the same time there's still other things that, you know, I always fiddle with in a mirror. And I have to keep coming back to you. Yeah, you could get your, whatever wrinkles around my mouth taken care of, I know it's doable. And also I want to age. I want to be a role model for my kids that they don't have to do all the things. And at the same time I do some other things. I color my hair, all those other things. All that counts as body modification, right?

Jennifer Campbell

It's kind of like, we were kind of, what we talked about initially. Like, what length are you going to, what amount of energy are you willing to do, you know, what is the outcome for you that you're hoping for? And those things are worth questioning. I know, for me, after I had my first son. I can't even tell you how much time I spent looking at tummy tucks online, the before and afters and I was like obsessed and I was devastated at how my body looked and how many stretch marks I had.

I always encourage people to like really unpack that. And so for me the outcome of kind of healing and loving myself and feeling neutral about my body was that for me having surgery like that is a no, a hard no for me. But it's okay if it's a hard yes for another woman, right? Like we all have to do our own work. And so I feel terrible that I can make that choice to say no, that's not for me. And I feel really lifted up by women of the world today to be rebellious and make that choice, but then there's other women that are making that their choice is "Yes." And they feel like they have to hide that and they're not woman enough. They're not feminist enough.

Maggie Anderson

And you're, you're like, exchanging one layer of shame for another layer of shame.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, totally and I just want us to be a more open society I guess. And we have this saying in Balance365, like, "Good for her, not for me," right? Like, it's like, like let her do her and you do you and what other people choose for their life is not a reflection of how they feel about your choice or how you should feel about your choice. Like, it's okay to opt-out, opt-in, just, like, just keep doing you.

Maggie Anderson

Right? And also, like, how much, if we're going to talk about the expenditure of energy and like, how much energy it is to focus on, let's say dieting? How much energy is it to focus on judgment of others, and how much easier is it to accept that other people are going to have different experiences, different issues, and different expressions based on all that and it feels so much better to be in a place of acceptance, both radical self-acceptance and also acceptance of others, then it to be in a place of judgment both of oneself or and others.

And it's what I am passionate about creating a space for. It's like, I love all these conversations, because they do, at the end of the day, start to unpack or like, tweak little things, little belief systems that we had maybe not even realized that we carry. And at the same time, they also affirm our beliefs, sometimes. Sometimes they really validate and they further, not entrench us, but they're like, "Yeah, that's the choice I made, and that feels good," or "That's a choice I'm still making and maybe I want to look at that, maybe I want to unpack that a little." So a warm and safe place to have these conversations I think is what we need more than radical judgment on any end of the spectrum.

Jennifer Campbell

Yeah, there's and the other thing in back to the weight loss issue and in discussing healthy weight loss and just being able to have those conversations and not just shutting them down, because if a woman, whether she's deciding plastic surgery is right for her, or if she's deciding that maybe a weight loss surgery is right for her or changing her nutrition habits is right for her, if we don't allow healthy conversations around, "Okay, like, what does that look like? How can we get you safe access to those things?" then they are forced to go into a place that's often unsafe.

For example, I came across this new dieting methodology a couple weeks ago on Instagram, but I was like, "I can't believe I live in such a bubble. I can't believe this stuff still exists and what this program is you doing to women, this is crazy." And so unless, you know, we have to be able to have those conversations. And Annie and I have met, you know, many people over the years that we've run Balance365 dieticians, doctors that that are, you know, have the same mindset of us, like, let's have the conversation

and like, let people decide, right because there are extremely unhealthy ways to do weight loss.

There are people, there is potentially unsafe ways of getting plastic surgery. And so let's, you know, keep the dialogue open and not shut people down, give them the information they need to feel informed, and let them move forward making that decision. And whether that decision for them in two years, five years, 10 years ends up being "I don't think I would make that decision."

Just let them make that decision right now. Like, I don't know how you would feel today if you had never had plastic surgery. If you had done all your work, you don't know where you would have landed, you know, you might have still decided, "Yeah, this is a choice. This is the choice I want to make, and made the same decision but just from a different empowered place. Right?"

Maggie Anderson

Well, and that's the key word is empowerment. So you're empowering. Specifically in this case, we're empowering women to be able to make choices feel right for them. And we need to be careful that when we are talking about these issues that we keep coming back to coming from a place of empowerment, of giving tools that are healthy, and not shaming and not telling people, they have to live inside a box based on any reaction to any social structures.

You know, and also I want to say like I have a husband who is so incredibly supportive of my journey through all this. And he also is the first one to point out to that, like, this was off his radar. This was, he was, this is all like, he's like, "Really, that's how you feel as a woman. That's how it is?" And I do think that these conversations do need to be opened up, because I realized that a lot of people are living in boxes that feel constrictive, and that don't have a place to have these conversations.

And a lot of people don't have this and they are curious about what it's like and then you have more people who are compassionate on your side. So like how do we involve different communities In these conversations, that's kind of where I'm at right now is like trying to take, trying to open it up to not just creating brave spaces for women, but brave spaces for whomever, however you identify, because we are all more same than different, and we are all different, too. But we're different, like each other. not different from each other. Right?

Annie Brees

We, I feel like could talk about this for three more hours. There's a lot of goodness here.

Jennifer Campbell

Annie, do you have anything that you want to say, you were just sitting back and listening?

Annie Brees

Yeah, we've kind of like passed it. But I was just thinking that, like, at the time that I was most critical of other people's choices it was because I was critical of my own choices. Like it was like I was taking that magnifying lens that I was using on myself and just like, yeah, putting on other people. So for me, the best thing I could do to accept other people's choices was to start being more compassionate of my own.

And then and then because I could hardly give it to other people if I wasn't giving it to myself, you know. But I loved all that we talked about. And I think what I'm hearing, which I had anticipated and aligns true to our values is autonomy. It all boils down to autonomy. And what is right for you might not be right for the next person and that's okay. It's not for us to judge. Yeah, as we've said many times in Balance365, we don't have goals for your body, that's for the participant to decide.

Maggie Anderson

So and how rare is that? So thank you for providing that service and space because it is so rare to move into any space that's about health or fitness or, or wellness or whatever you want to call it, and it not be about your body? It's, like, it's radical in itself. I would say you two are creating something that is feminist in its very nature.

Annie Brees

I feel that. I really do and I don't think I necessarily realized that I identify as feminists until creating this and there's something, I don't know there's something very feminist to me in weightlifting too. It just feel like that.

Maggie Anderson

Yeah. Pick those heavy things up, put those heavy things down.

Annie Brees

Yeah, but it is just kind of innate but yeah, thank you for your time. This was such a good discussion. It was so good to have you on, you have contributed so much gold to this episode.

Jennifer Campbell

And you have contributed so much to my belief system, Maggie, just-

Maggie Anderson
Oh cool.

Jennifer Campbell
Following you.

Maggie Anderson
My propaganda is getting through.

Jennifer Campbell
Yeah, you've really opened my world view since I have met you and you've started Grace Club and I mean, I can be very, there's lots of different areas that I can become very narrow-minded. You know, applying my own experience bias and then but your whole page just opens me up. It's amazing.

Maggie Anderson
Thank you for that. And also, that's exactly what Grace Club YVR is for, t' just exploring ideas. So I'm glad that it's infiltrated to your psyche.

Annie Brees
One day, I shouldn't even say these things publicly because then our audience hears it, and then they hold us accountable, how dare they hold us accountable for the things we say? But it would be so fun to have a retreat in Vancouver and have you there.

Maggie Anderson
Oh, yeah, it would. You said it publicly.

Jennifer Campbell
We can have a like a Grace Club evening.

Annie Brees
Yeah, like, it's not that Jen and I don't want to do these retreats. It's just we gotta get our head above water enough with podcasting and content and programming and all that other good stuff to be able to play in that. So-

Maggie Anderson
Maybe if you're just focused less on building your business, you would have more time-

Annie Brees

We would have more energy for retreats. Maggie, thank you so much for your time and we'll we will have to have you back again so we can finish up all these discussions.
Thank you.

Maggie Anderson
Thank you for having me.

Annie Brees
We'll talk soon.

Jennifer Campbell
Bye, Maggie.

Annie Brees
Bye, Maggie, thank you.

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.