

Balance365 Episode 226 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

Hey, everyone, welcome back to Balance365 Life Radio. Today we're talking about how to handle photos you hate. Why? Well, over the last seven years, we've noticed that women experience big body and shame triggers when viewing photos of themselves. This can lead to deleting photos, avoiding photos, or just in general not showing up in your family's record books. So today, we're going to share some possible solutions to help you feel more comfortable with photos. If you love the Balance365 philosophies we share on podcasts, just wait until you work with us. Here is what one of our members Lisa recently shared. "This is the most peaceful I've ever felt while losing fat. And I want this for everyone." The truth is the women who join our program want so much more than weight loss, they want to feel healthy, more comfortable in their bodies, and at ease around food. If this is something you want, too, get on our waitlist. We'll be enrolling members again in September. And we'd love to have you on the inside. Click the link in our show notes. Or go to balance365.com/waitlist to sign up. Enjoy.

ANNIE

Jen, have you ever had a photo of yourself that you didn't like?

JEN CAMPBELL

Plenty.

ANNIE

[Laughs]

JEN

How about you?

ANNIE

Oh, I all the time. I mean, not all the time, but yes, frequently. Has it ever been a problem for you seeing photos you don't like of yourself?

JEN

Definitely for sure. In other seasons of my life. It was just a big shame trigger for me to see photos of myself that weren't particularly, you know, quote-unquote, flattering.

ANNIE

Yeah. Same. And thankfully, in doing some of the things we're going to talk about in this podcast, I have a much higher tolerance to seeing photos of myself that I don't like and can just kind of like, "Not my favorite."

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

And keep it moving. And I think a lot of people can get there, too, by utilizing some of these strategies, because this topic comes up so often in our communities, like, "I saw this photo, and I'm just spiraling."

JEN

Yeah, and you know, for context, in our program, we aren't just doing, you know, nutrition and health coaching. There's a ton of mindset coaching that goes on. And so I think that, you know, we see this so often. And I think our members, you know, they start to see it. And the reason they bring this to us as a problem is they see how, they see how this activation that they experience after seeing a photo they don't like impacts their life in such a negative way. And it's like, "Look, I really do I need to handle this better, because of how reactive I become when I see it. And it takes me to a place where I'm struggling with urges to take action in a way that's actually not aligned with my goals and values."

ANNIE

So it could be the trigger to start a diet to do something -

JEN

Like, "I'm not eating the rest of today."

ANNIE

Yeah, to do something extreme and severe and drastic, to berate yourself or even to maybe just not get in photos.

JEN

Exactly. So just not showing up.

ANNIE

That's something that also comes up in our community a lot, that a lot of women that we work with are parents and they are often the ones behind the camera instead of in front of the camera, and the experience of having someone else take your photo, only to not like how you look in that photo can be a big deterrent to continuing to get in the photo.

JEN

Yeah, and anyone listening who's a photographer, I'm not a photographer, but I've talked to a few in my day. Have a few friends, and they say like, the body worries when they're doing say family photos from women is huge. How they look in the photo, what angle it was. And there's just a lot of anxiety that comes with them to what is supposed to be these, you know, happy fun family photoshoots, I don't know why I just said that. Mine are always very stressful even without the body worries. [Laughs] I'm yelling at my kids -

ANNIE

I've never had a nice family photoshoot.

JEN

[Laughs] Why did I just say that?

ANNIE

The photographers always do some sort of magic that looks as though we're having fun.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

But if you're there in the moment, it's like, "You sit down and you smile right now." Not always joyful. But, regardless of whether you see a photo of yourself online, or you have someone take a photo, and you look at it right away to kind of review it, you get back the family photos, I mean, Jen and I are both of the age where we didn't have digital cameras.

JEN

No, I used to buy the disposables at the drugstore. And then you'd have to return them and they would be sent away to be developed. So you'd be weeks before you got to assess how you looked in photos. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yeah, you couldn't just be like, "Okay, let me check it out real quick. Oh, no, like, I just want to like move my arm or my foot or fix my hair or change my outfit." Like, you didn't have that luxury.

JEN

Right? Or you spend \$9 getting a film developed and you've closed your eyes in everyone.

ANNIE

[Laughs]

JEN

That's me, I have a blinking problem. [Laughs]

ANNIE

And there certainly wasn't photo editing available to the masses, like there was today. But I think before we talk about what to do in those situations where you get this photo back, and you're like, "Is this what I look like? Oh, my God, this is, I am feeling some emotions about this." Let's talk a little bit about why this even happens in the first place. Because I think this context is important. And the first reason why this can happen is the concept of real-life images versus mirror images. And we are so accustomed and used to seeing ourselves in a mirror, the reflection of us that even this slight variation of the actual representation, not the mirror image, can be like, "Wait, what? That's like, it's me, but it's not me like, is that really what I look like?"

JEN

Yeah. Do you want to explain what that is, with our cameras?

ANNIE

Yeah, there is some psychology behind this, I guess you could say. And it's known as the Mere Exposure Effect, M-E-R-E, not M-I-R-R-O-R. And it states that the more familiar we are with something, the more we are likely to like it.

JEN

Sounds like an evolutionary trait that could develop.

ANNIE

Yeah, so we are unfamiliar with seeing ourselves head on the way friends or strangers see us, right? We often, we live in the selfie culture where we have this mirror, first of all, a mirror image, right? And also, we maybe have a little bit of a head tilt, or we're not like dead on center.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

And we know our angles in a selfie. So then, when we have someone else take a photo of us, we're kind of like, "No, I don't like it." Because it's just different. We're not familiar with it.

JEN

Yes. And where you can see this is, so if I take a selfie of myself with my Instagram camera, it stays mirror image. It's how it saves. If I just open my phone and use my regular camera app that came with the iPhone. When I look at it, it is a mirror image. When I take the photo, it stores it flipped.

ANNIE

Yes.

JEN

So when I open it, I'm like, "What is that?" [Laughs]

ANNIE

That's something. Fun fact, there is a setting in your iPhone that can change that so you can get the mirror image. Which, listen, if that saves you some fiddle fating with your selfies and you just have a preference, fine, but I wouldn't want people to utilize that feature in avoidance of looking at the way they will really look, right?

JEN

Yeah, yeah. So for me, I do prefer photos of myself in mirror image and I don't mean that as, I don't mean that in any type of way except those are images that feel familiar to me and when I see them I go, "Yeah, that's what I look like."

ANNIE

This study actually was done, I think there was a reference to, they took the Mona Lisa and they gave the Mona Lisa the way it was painted. And the way it actually is. And then they also did the reflection of it. They inverted it. And they asked a group of people, which is your preference? And people consistently chose the Mona Lisa as it was. I couldn't tell you exactly what that looked like -

JEN

Which way she's looking or, yeah.

ANNIE

Yeah, but it's almost like, your brain just has a bias for what it has seen before.

JEN

Yeah, for sure. Yes.

ANNIE

And so it's not personal. It's just because you're familiar with the mirror image of yourself, whether that's in the selfie camera, or literally looking in the bathroom mirror, right? Yeah. So that's one reason we might not like a photo of ourselves. The other reason we might not like a photo of ourselves is because we just aren't used to seeing ourselves in photos. And that could be because you are the parent that's behind the camera instead of in front of the camera. It could also be because when you are in photos, maybe you take photos of just your torso, or like a selfie, instead of a full-body photo.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

And again, that can be a really unfamiliar experience. And as we mentioned, we have a bias towards the familiar. So seeing a full-body photo of yourself can be a little like, "Hey, that's not how I'm used to seeing myself."

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
Again, it's just new.

JEN
Yes. And maybe even different to what I had imagined myself to look like.

ANNIE
Yeah. Oh, absolutely.

JEN
Or different than the last time I saw my body. Right? So it could have been, there could be seven years have passed, since you've actually seen your full body in a photo right? You know, my body looks very different today than when I was 25.

ANNIE
Yeah, if you're only getting you know, full-body photos, whether that's in your family holiday card, or a family birthday party or whatnot, or you have some sort of yearly milestone, like, you only get one opportunity a year to see your full body photo, that you just don't get a lot of practice or a lot of exposure.

JEN
Right.

ANNIE
And that's okay.

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
Yeah. Another reason we might not like a photo of ourselves, is we have grown used to seeing ourselves and/or others with filters.

JEN
Yeah, I think this is really becoming, or is, kind of a huge issue. It's causing just a total distortion of, you know, not just bodies, but like skin, faces. You know, like, pimples, red marks, age spots, wrinkles, like it's -

ANNIE

Texture. [Laughs]

JEN

Texture. Yes. Yeah. Do you remember when I, this is like six months or so ago, I follow this dietitian. And I really enjoy her content. And I started noticing like, her skin is flawless. Like, it's just incredible. And I sent the photo to you. And I said, "Isn't it just incredible that some people could have just perfect skin? And here's mine."

BOTH

[Laugh]

JEN

And you were like, "Jen, this is a very heavily filtered photo." I was like, "No, no way." Especially because her topics sometimes are around like different acceptance issues. I just like, to have this like total block.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

And I was like, "No." And you went and found the filter she uses for me and said "Here it is."

ANNIE

It's also available to you if you want your skin to look - [laughs]

JEN

And I put it on, and I was like. "This is the filter she uses." Anyways, I didn't use it. But it's just interesting that I had taken that in. And, you know, I consider myself pretty educated and evolved in this area. And it's still some of these filters are still going past me, that they exist and are used. And I think as we all scroll social media reels, you know, TikToks, whatever you're looking at, it could be helpful for us all to accept that probably 95% of the photos we are looking at have been edited in some way, even videos, right? And it's just so easy. It's not like the old days where you had to export a photo to Photoshop. It's like, these exist right in the app. So you can just, click of a button and have smoother skin, or I know there's apps out there. I don't know what they are, but they could make you look thinner. It's just so easy now.

ANNIE

Absolutely. I have one on Instagram, I don't even, I don't know if this was a pre-Instagram hack or post-Instagram hack, where I had a photo of my thighs and shorts with cellulite and varicose veins and lumps and bumps and jiggly bits and whatnot. And in a matter of three to four minutes, I, in a photo app, had smoothed it all out, gave myself a nice tan, and slimmed my thighs. And it looked pretty stinking realistic.

JEN

Was that just like for funsies that you did that? Or?

ANNIE

Oh no, it was, I like video screen recorded it and I showed -

JEN

Oh, just to show everybody. [Laughs]

ANNIE

- how easily you can -

JEN

I was like, "What photo was that, Annie?" [Laughs]

ANNIE

No, no. Like, and listen, I want to be clear here. I don't personally have any judgment or any thoughts about other people using filters. I think we're all, you know, fighting our own battles and trying to do our best. And if you like a filter or whatnot, you know, to each their own. I personally don't feel good about using filters that distort my face. You know, there's ones that give you like, slimmer cheekbones and fuller lips. Like bigger eyes, almost like this Disney character type of look. And as Jen said, I think that it's important to remember when you are scrolling and you're starting to feel some type of way about your own appearance. Making sure that you realize, "Hey, what I'm comparing it to, might not be real life."

JEN

Yeah. And I think the more you know, what happens here is the more people start to use filters, the more we feel like we should use them. Because, you know, even when I look at my skin and stuff in my Instagram Stories, I'm like, you know, I just have these thoughts of like, "Oh, look, I'm pretty looking pretty blah today." And it's like, I have to come back to this, like, you likely, I'm not saying people don't have perfect skin, they do. They're out there. [Laughs] But the majority of people do not. And so when all I'm seeing is that all day, every day, even, you know, even I have to come back to this thought of like, "Listen, this, you are exposed to filtered faces all day long that are, you know, yes, slimmer, larger lips, smoothed out. And like, that's okay, you're right, it is okay that they do that. But just remember that this is what you are looking at. And this is why you feel this way about your skin." I have never, I would have to say in the last few years of the Instagram filters, I have never really paid as much attention to my skin as I have the last few years if I'm being totally honest. And I've kind of thought about that and unpacked it and gone...I've also in my lifetime of being on social media that I know of, seen so many filtered images. You know, like it used to be that you could, like just celebrities did that, you know, or it used to be that if you were using these Instagram filters, it was very obvious there was a filter there. Right? Like it tinted it purple or whatever, where now they're quite...

ANNIE
Subtle?

JEN
Subtle. Yeah.

ANNIE
Yeah, for sure. And you can even edit and filter videos, too, like, that's been a new piece of technology that's influenced how we consume and what we consume. So again, this isn't about you know, the use of filters, if you should or you shouldn't, but it is, I do think it could be an influential piece of the puzzle as to why you don't like a photo of yourself.

JEN
Yeah, because it's real. [Laughs]

ANNIE
Yeah, it's like, Blair, my five-year-old, she takes my camera, she steals it from me, she takes a photo of me when I'm like working at my desk, I'm not posed, I'm not filtered -

JEN
You're hunched over -

ANNIE
- the lighting isn't good.

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
Like, "Oh god."

BOTH
[Laugh]

ANNIE
This is what you see as your mother and you love me? Like, I'm so moved right now.

BOTH
[Laugh]

ANNIE
Okay, another reason, we were talking a little bit about this before we recorded, and I kind of cut you off, Jen, and I was like, let's just jam on this when we hit record, but the concept that we may associate feelings, how we feel and how we look in the photo. Say more about that.

JEN

Yeah, so look, this is deep and not everybody will be able to follow me down this rabbit hole but I believe that we develop at some point in our lives an image to match our feelings. So when we are experiencing, you know, positive emotions, you know, a good mood. Joy. You know, even just feeling well, well being, we have a look that we've attached to that at some point, which, you know, no surprise, I think that, you know, we live in a culture that kind of attaches image with health, image with happiness, you know, we all kind of develop this. So I think when we're having a day when we feel good, we also think we must look good. And by that, I mean, look like the image that we have internalized as a healthy, feeling good person. And so I think it can be quite jarring to be feeling good, and, you know, enjoying a moment and seeing the photo after and being like, "Oh, like, that's very different than how I thought I looked." But the truth is, that is how you looked. It's just that you were feeling a certain way. Do you know what I mean? Are you following me?

ANNIE

Yeah, your expectation of what you look like when you feel that way, doesn't match what you saw in that photo?

JEN

Yes. So you know, say you are at a family event, and you are having the best time. And it's just the best day and you're so happy. And then you log into Instagram that evening, and some family members have tagged you in a bunch of photos, and you are mortified. And it's like, you can see, you know, your stomach is bigger than what you thought it was, and your thighs, and this angle. And you had, you know, maybe a double chin in this photo, or you know, whatever, the things that women go over. Your arms look big. And it's just, it's like starting to ruin your experience of the day. Like, "That's how I looked." And it's because we just have this association with, you know, feelings and image.

ANNIE

Yeah, I think, I don't know if I want to share this experience now or later in the podcast. But what's coming up for me is these pictures that I had taken, maybe a week after Blair was born. And I remember feeling really pretty, like really beautiful. Like, I looked in the mirror and I was like, "Oh," like I just had this, you know, that glow, quote, unquote. And I liked my outfit. I liked my hair. I thought I looked good. And then I got the photos back. And I was like, "Oh, no. Like, this is so disappointing. This is not what I thought I was going to have as like this keepsake milestone moment forever." And certainly now, I'm so thankful I have those photos.

JEN

Right. But in the moment, it's -

ANNIE

Yeah, but at the moment, it totally took away from this really special intimate, one week old, me and my baby in the rocking chair, golden hour type of picture, all I could see was my body, not

how how happy I was, how thankful I was to have this healthy baby girl, how good I felt one week postpartum. And all of that went out the window.

JEN

I had a similar experience when I was roughly nine months pregnant with my third. And I had already started working through some of this body stuff at that point. And you know, my two previous pregnancies had been just sheer panic the whole way through of the weight gain. So in my third pregnancy, I had felt really good. I had really embraced, you know, or told myself, you know, embrace the changes, or I was putting effort in self-acceptance and body acceptance, had become an awareness of something I could have at that point in my life. And so, you know, I had really tried to have a health-centric pregnancy, over a weight-centric pregnancy, all of those things. And we had our son's fourth or oldest son's fourth birthday party when I was around nine months pregnant. And so I remember hosting these kids. And you know, I decorated the house, I made this amazing cake from scratch. And I felt glowing at that point, too. I had felt, I just felt beautiful. Felt beautiful, and I felt you know, just great. It was a very values-aligned moment for me. I had made this cake, there was so much just coming together of like, "This is who I was meant to be." Anyways, my husband's taking photos and again, for all the reasons we've mentioned, I'm the one that's used to being behind the camera and my family. So I don't even know how many photos I have of me pregnant for that reason. So my husband is taking photos as I'm taking, you know, the cake over for my son to blow out the candles. When I saw those photos later, I was mortified at, and really it comes down to just body stuff, just major body stuff. So it's all good when you look at yourself in the mirror and you turn, you know, three quarters to the side and pop a hip and look at your belly. But then when your husband is taking photos of you nine months pregnant, while you're bent over, putting a cake down on the table, it was the kind of a very similar experience of I was like, "This is not how I thought I looked." And I guess a lot of that, if we're being honest, is really rooted in like fatphobia. And just all of the baggage that we bring to these moments as we are assessing our bodies.

ANNIE

Yeah, absolutely. Okay, the final reason, this is not all-encompassing of the reasons, one might dislike a photo. But these are some of the top reasons, the final reason we wanted to touch on is a reason you might not like a photo of yourself is because we can get lost in viewing a photo through the eyes of other people, and not ourselves, which is kind of connected to what we were just talking about how we felt and how we experience the moment. This is more about, "I felt good. I thought I looked good. This is what others saw? This is what...Like, why didn't anyone else tell me that I looked like this? Or how can anyone love me if this is what I looked like?"

JEN

Yeah, or, "What are they thinking when they see this photo? And who is seeing this photo from my life? And what are they thinking about how I look?"

ANNIE

Yeah, and it's so easy to start, I call it spectating, thinking about what others were thinking when they saw us, what others think of our size, of our outfit, of our hair, of that photo. And that I don't think is the best use of our time [laughing] in general. But it's also just something that we will never ever know, for certain, like spending, we talk about this in Balance365, for other reasons, trying to manage what's in other people's minds is a fruitless effort.

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

One that I have tried to do many times. I'm certainly not a stranger to that activity. But we may never know. And what difference does it really make?

JEN

Yeah, it's just, it's a never-ending pursuit of trying to control other people's experience of you. And it's approval seeking. And I think for a lot of women, it is. "Well, if they like me, I can like me, if they think I'm pretty, I can think I'm pretty. If they think I'm successful, I can feel successful."

ANNIE

Yeah. Okay. Anything else to add to why we might not like a photo of ourselves?

JEN

No, I think you've covered it. Five great reasons.

ANNIE

Okay, let's talk about what you can do. Because it will happen. It happens to all of us, as Jen and I said -

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

It still happens.

JEN

And I just, before we get into it, it's like, why is this important? Like, why? Why do Annie and I want people to build some skills here around better handling photos they hate? And it's because it is the places we go when we are in that reactive state. And more often than not, the places we go are not positive for our long-term health. They are usually reactive, you know, maybe, you know, fad diet. You know, as we said earlier, not eating the rest of the day. Miserable emotional experience, right? It's taking us actually away from wellness, not towards it. And, you know, I see this as a skill, even a general skill of just like managing reactivity here. And the whole diet industry is built on, you know, women's reactivity about their bodies.

ANNIE

Yes, capitalizing on moments of intense shame and self-loathing that could be a result of seeing a photo you have yourself.

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

And it's like, this is when we get them, when they're feeling like this. This is when...

JEN

This is when we get them, or just future fears of photos. So there's the wedding diets, and the... I don't know... when we first started in this industry, I think things are changing. But when we first started in this industry, I remember thinking it was revolutionary. We did our first kind of photoshoot together, like a company branding photoshoot.

ANNIE

I know what you're going to say. [Laughs]

JEN

Well, I remember thinking it was revolutionary that we weren't getting ready for the photoshoot because I had just seen that, so often even being a consumer of the fitness industry, you just see these fitness professionals starting their photoshoot diets and stuff. It like had been so normalized that I remember thinking, "Should I be doing something to prepare?" And why it was just an uncomfortable thing that we weren't. And I thought, "Holy cow, this is revolutionary," back then in good old 2015.

ANNIE

To not diet down for a photoshoot.

JEN

Yes. And so I think it's like, this is just so common. And just for everybody listening, just pay attention. Like it's very common, there are people also trying to manage their future experience of photos.

ANNIE

Absolutely. And I also want to say, what you're not gonna find on this list about what to do when you see a photo of yourself, you're not going to, you're not going to find a list of poses that give you the skinny arm, and the narrow hips, and the, you know, chiseled jawline, like -

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

That's - we're not giving you that. [Laughs] That's not going to be here.

JEN

We're giving you some tips to manage your insides. [Laughs] Not your outsides.

ANNIE

So I'm sorry, if like half the listeners just [laughing] drop off. I thought I could just have this angle, if I just nailed the angle.

JEN

If I could control the outside, then I won't have to feel like this on the inside.

ANNIE

Yeah, you're not going to find that. Okay, so step one, don't panic.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

If you're listening to this, this episode is likely to make the rounds. Obviously, when it's published, but again, over and over and over again, as it comes up. "I saw a photo of myself, what do I do? I saw a photo of myself, what do I do?" And so if you're listening to that, because you're in that moment, like, calm down. Deep breath.

JEN

Like you might, you may have already panicked. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

We're sayin, don't panic, you may have already panicked. But what we are saying is, so this is a lot of kind of managing reactivity, right? But when you are panicking for any reason, but we are talking about seeing photos of ourselves, we do go to those control places, right? So it's like this, it feels awful. And everything that comes with it, all the thoughts and feelings coming with you in this panic spiral. You know, the place you go to probably is like, "I need to drop 20 pounds, like yesterday, and that will get me out of pain." And what we are offering here is that getting out of pain can also be an inside job. And so it is like, you are in a very dysregulated state. Let's take a few deep breaths and let some time pass before we make any big decisions about our lives here.

ANNIE

We have said this on other podcasts, on social media posts, whatnot, you can acknowledge that you're having a desire or an impulse to start a diet, to reevaluate your exercise routine, to cut your hair, to burn all your clothes. You don't have to listen to them. You can like, "Okay, I hear you. I'm not going to do that right now."

JEN

"I see this urge. And I'm not going to act on it."

ANNIE

Just pause.

JEN

"I'm gonna wait. I'm going to pause." Yes.

ANNIE

Just pause.

JEN

The famous pause. Yeah.

ANNIE

So step one, calm down. Do your best to get yourself into a more regulated state, out of panic, out of reactive emotions.

JEN

Give yourself some love. Give yourself some comfort, give yourself some love. Take some deep breaths, do a meditation, call a friend, get a hug, do the things that you might do. Other times you're upset, to calm down.

ANNIE

Yes. These aren't necessarily in the order that I would recommend them in. But another thing that you can do to help you manage seeing photos of yourself that you don't like, is to keep looking at the photo after you've calmed down. And to also keep taking photos of yourself, because as we've said, sometimes this experience can be so painful that we just say, "I'm not, I'm not getting in the photos anymore. It'll just be the kids, or the kids and my partner, or the kids and their dad," or whatnot. And just kind of void that experience from our life experience all together. But we would encourage you to keep taking photos and keep looking at the photo, because more often than not, when you can let that panic and reactivity calm down and settle, you'll start to see other things in the photo that maybe you missed the first time. Things that maybe you feel more neutral about or even things that you actually enjoy.

JEN

Yeah, I think, I don't know who said this. There's probably a famous psychologist somewhere who said this. They say your first response, like your reactive response to these situations is like

your conditioned self. And then your second response is like a values-driven response. It's more like your wisest self-response.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

And so I would agree that, that first response, so I'll use the example of seeing that photo of me that my husband took when I was nine months pregnant. It's like, I saw it, and I just, that was my conditioned response to seeing myself, you know, in that large body, it was just, my whole worldview just narrowed and I honed in on how I appeared. And when you calm down and let some time pass, I would say that tunnel vision starts to widen and open up and you can start to take in the whole photo and the whole experience again, and, like you with your newborn baby. I am so glad I did not delete that photo today. I am so glad I have it.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

And I don't see it the same way I did the first time I looked at it.

ANNIE

Absolutely. I know, if you're in the heat of this moment, your first instinct might be to see the photo, delete it.

JEN

Delete.

ANNIE

Burn it. Untag, like, "No one can ever see this. I don't ever want to see it," out of sight out of mind, right? But, again, I think if you keep looking at it, you might notice that, "Okay, the first couple of minutes, I'm really drawn to myself, and specifically the things that I don't like about myself in that photo." With consistent like viewing, you start to see, "Okay, there's other things in this photo, there's a baby in this photo, there's a beautiful sunset, there's a cake, there's, you know, my other kid's hand on my belly or something," like in the corner of the photo that you just totally missed the first time.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

And the other thing is, too, about continuing to take photos of yourself. This was a solution that I personally just happened to stumble upon through my lifting experience, but it's really common for people to videotape their lifts. And when I started doing that, I would watch the replays of the

videos, and I would see myself in all sorts of angles from the side, from the front, from the back, moving, standing still, under pressure, in conversation with my friends between sets, if I just let the camera roll, and through that whole experience, I became really desensitized to seeing my body from one angle in one set, like lighting, doing one thing still, even like watching my body move. It's like, "Oh, my body jiggles."

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
"My body wrinkles."

JEN
When you're lifting heavy weights, when like, this is like, you know, you're gonna have a vein popping from your forehead and you know -

ANNIE
[Laughs]

JEN
- like very, you know, less flattering, quote, unquote, again. And it's just kind of going, "And this is what I look like when I lift weights."

ANNIE
Yeah, it was just the process of desensitizing myself to the experience of seeing photos and images of myself.

JEN
Yeah, so what you're saying here is the urge is to get out of the photo and not look at photos of yourself or have to see those. But what you're saying is, "Hey, you need to go the opposite way. You actually need to see more photos of yourself and just get desensitized to what you look like."

ANNIE
Yeah, yeah. And maybe you ease into that right? So you don't have to just like jump in the deep end of the water. You know, maybe you start playing around with some different angles or different lighting or videos instead of photos, or maybe you even revisit some of the photos that you thought at one time you didn't love and challenge yourself to like look at what else you see in the photo.

JEN
The most incredible, that's been the most incredible thing for me, is to let some time pass, so you know it happens today, it's still happening. You know, Annie and I have done photoshoots, we just did one, well, oh my gosh, it's gonna be going on a year. Man. Time flies, doesn't it? It

feels like we just did that. Anyways. And it wasn't my favorite photoshoot. It wasn't my favorite. How I looked. It wasn't my favorite time of year, fall, heavy sweaters. Like there was just, there was just like, I remember seeing them first, like the first time I saw them and was just like, "Oh, gosh." But you know, I've done a lot of this work and work through those urges of, "Just been it all down." And the reality is those pictures didn't belong to me either, they belong to the company, and they were going to be used in our marketing material. [Laughs] No choice. So I, but, after a few weeks of just sitting with it, I opened them back up and thought, you know, again, same thing. My view had opened a little bit. And I had said, like, these are fine. And it's just that gift of letting time pass has also been, you know, very important for me in like being able to look at photos and feel differently about them.

ANNIE

Yeah. And I'm sure someone else who's famous said this, but my mom would always encourage me to not make permanent or long-term decisions off of temporary emotions.

JEN

Yeah, absolutely. Smart lesson.

ANNIE

I also want to note about those photos that our photographer had encouraged us both to go through the photos and cull the ones that we were absolutely like, "No, I don't like these." I don't think either of us did that.

JEN

Yeah, I mean, we didn't have time. So. [Laughs]

ANNIE

But we were also both like, whatever. If a photo is used that I don't absolutely adore of myself, I'll be okay.

JEN

We can, you can roll on from it. Yeah. Yeah.

ANNIE

Um, okay. The other thing is, we talked about this in the past, too, Jen, you brought this up, and I thought this was such a good suggestion. When you see a photo of yourself, try to reconnect to how you felt in that moment.

JEN

Yeah, it's kind of like redefining why we take photos and like, in this, you know, selfie culture, it's like, why do we take photos? I don't think photography was invented for the reason we necessarily use it today. And it's like, it's to capture, you know, capture moments in time. Capture experiences. And so now you know, where I see it, for some of us it's become a spectator sport. It's like, yeah, like flipping through a magazine. And just spectating, analyzing,

assessing. I don't think that's what it was supposed to be for. And so can you come back to what you want to take photos for? What's important to you? And can you bring yourself back to how you felt in that moment? Versus how you are assessing yourself now on how you look? How did you feel in the moment?

ANNIE

And again, that ties us back to those postpartum photos I have. I'm so happy that I have those because I can reconnect to how I felt in that moment. And it was feeling really happy, content, beautiful. Like, okay, complete, like this is my third.

JEN

Yes, yes. And that's beautiful. And then instead of spectating those photos, allow you to experience that again, and again, and again. So rather than being a trigger, they become one of your most warm, precious moments that you get to revisit every time you look at it.

ANNIE

Yeah. And not, not just for me, but for my children too. Like, that's a gift that hopefully they'll treasure, too.

JEN

For them, right? It's not...It's not all about you, Annie. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yeah. That's -

JEN

And I think there's probably many people listening, I know you have this experience, too, Annie, where we wish we had photos of our moms when they were younger. We wish we're not thinking about what our moms looked like. We just want photos of our moms.

ANNIE

Yeah. Oh my god. Yes. I, for many reasons, the cost of taking photos was, you know, at one time exponentially higher than it is today. Likely. But also my mom's body image issues, I'm sure kept her out of many photos. And as a woman who doesn't have her mom here with her today, like I would love photos of my mom and me as a kid growing up and going to school or dressed up for Halloween or Christmas morning or whatnot. Like, that's so fun. Okay, the last thing, and this is a long game piece, to managing or handling navigating photos that you don't like of yourself, is to make acceptance and peace as we've kind of been talking about this entire episode that not every photo is going to be an amazing photo.

JEN

Just like not every meal is going to [laughing] be amazing. It's not always going to be your favorite. Yeah, I also, you know, under the umbrella of this topic is to just challenge, I would challenge yourself on why, you know, why we...You're looking at yourself, it's not an amazing

photo, and why does every photo need to be amazing? And does it, right? Like, I have challenged myself lots in the last decade to say, "Why do you have to be pretty?" It's another thing, right? Like, it's like, what don't you like about this photo? I don't like, you know, might be I don't like how my face looks, you know, I don't look pretty, and I don't look thin, like the two things we are taught as little girls, that's the most important things you can be. And I challenge that. Who said I have to be pretty and thin?

ANNIE

Yeah, yeah. Lesley Kinzel wrote this article for xoJane, about her own experience and growing more comfortable with enjoying photos of herself. And she said, "If I took a photo of you mid sneeze, you might not love the expression on your face. But you wouldn't believe that you looked like that all the time. It's just what you look like mid-sneeze. That's it." When you see a photo of yourself, that is how you looked at that particular angle. And that lighting, with that setting, that camera, two-dimensional image, trying to encapsulate this like, living, breathing human thing, like, it's not going to be great all the time. And it's certainly not reflective of what you look like all the time or who you are as a person. And how many times, I love this analogy, too, how many times have you tried, I have so many photos of sunrises and sunsets and the moon on my camera. They never looked as good as they do in person.

JEN

Yes. And you're just like, "Damn, why can't I capture this? This is just spectacular." But the photo just can't do it justice.

ANNIE

No. And like maybe that's just because the cameras just cannot capture the whole experience in this, of a sunset or a human.

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

Yeah. Okay. That was it. I think those were some good suggestions.

JEN

Yeah. Do you want to recap this process of what you, what to do when you are...

ANNIE

Yep. So, I'm thinking, you get this photo back and you're like, "Oh, no, I don't like it. What do I do?" First of all, step one, don't panic. Let some time pass. Calm down. Do whatever you need to do to become less emotionally reactive.

JEN

Don't make big life decisions. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yes, don't cut your bangs.

BOTH

[Laugh]

ANNIE

Bangs can be great. Just, we don't want to do the -

JEN

You are reactive. Yes.

ANNIE

[Laughing] Don't want to do them when we're reactive. Keep looking at the photo, challenge yourself to not just zoom in on the stuff that you don't like about you in that photo, but expand your perspective to all of the things that you maybe feel neutral about or you enjoy the aspects of the photo that you didn't see that weren't there -

JEN

The experience.

ANNIE

- before. Yes. Keep taking photos. This can be done on your own time and in your own privacy or just saying yes to continued opportunities to getting in front of the camera to help you. Essentially, just offer more practice to getting comfortable.

JEN

Get familiar with your body and different angles.

ANNIE

Try to reconnect to how you felt in the moment that the photo was taken versus how you looked and making peace with the fact that not every photo is going to be amazing. And that's okay.

ANNIE

And that's okay. Everyone has it.

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

From Ashley Graham to Jennifer Campbell.

JEN

Yes. [Laughs] Jennifer Campbell. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yes. Okay, my friends. I hope this was helpful. Thanks for your time, Jen.

JEN

Thanks, everybody.

ANNIE

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.