

# Balance365 Episode 232 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

Hello, faithful listeners. Welcome back to our three-part series on exercise. In the last two weeks, we have covered part one: exercise 101, helping you understand the foundations of exercise. Part two was myths and truths. And this week, we're covering part three, how to build muscle and get stronger. Holea and I do a deep dive into this. We hope that you have enjoyed this series and that you are walking away with a much better understanding of exercise. Here's to getting your exercise actions in line with your exercise goals. And if you are ready to explore the messy middle of health, wellness, and weight loss with us, we hope you'll get on our waitlist for our next enrollment period. The doors to our coaching program open again in September. Get your name on the waitlist for early access to spots at [Balance365.com/waitlist](https://Balance365.com/waitlist). Enjoy, friends.

ANNIE

Holea, just you and me today.

HOLEA CHARLES

I know, it's a little weird without Jen.

ANNIE

Well, it's, you know, it's probably okay. Because really, this is a topic that you and I are particularly passionate about.

HOLEA

I would say that that's accurate. Yeah.

ANNIE

[Laughs] Not that Jen - not that Jen isn't. But Jen, unfortunately, couldn't join us for the third and final episode of this series. We're talking about how to build muscle and get stronger. Which Holea and I like both. We like both, right?

HOLEA

Yes.

ANNIE

Yeah. Should we do a quick refresher from the podcast last week, because we briefly touched on the myth, building strength and building muscle are the same. And we said it was false. And we're gonna get a little bit more into that today. Do you want to tell us how they're different?

HOLEA

Yeah. So building strength and muscle are different in that building strength is about increasing your relative max strength. So think like the heaviest you can lift, right? And this is all relative to you. Building muscle, on the other hand, is about increasing your muscle tissue size. This is also known as hypertrophy. So while these two things absolutely happen simultaneously, meaning you can get stronger and experience hypertrophy, just like you're going to, you're going to notice strength gains and hypertrophy gains, simply from being on a consistent strength training program. The important piece here to consider is that as you grow in your training age, meaning like how long you have been consistently training, having a focus one way or the other, will be most helpful in seeing and feeling the strength results that you are actually wanting. And we'll get more into that today.

ANNIE

Yep, before we do, what's your training age?

HOLEA

Oh my goodness. I feel like I started training and seriously training in high school. So math. Let's see here.

ANNIE

[Laughs]

HOLEA

Oh, my goodness, like, maybe like 16 years?

ANNIE

Yeah, isn't that wild?

HOLEA

Uh-huh. How about you?

ANNIE

20 years. Same. I started lifting seriously, consistently, and seriously, like with intention, when I was 18, and I certainly have had ebbs and flows as I've had, you know, various seasons of life, pregnancies, postpartum, whatnot, but lifting consistently, I can't even think of - that's not true. I can think of some period of my life where I did take a few months off, but other than that pretty consistently. So you can see that the maturity, if we can even use that word. [Laughs] Holea and

I can be pretty goofy. The maturity as it relates to strength training at 16, 18, 20 years compared to someone who is just entering strength training for the first time of their life, like their experience is going to be quite different and their needs and the results could be quite different.

HOLEA

Yeah, like especially someone who is just starting out. They have this like experience of my favorite piece of strength training, which is beginner gains, where you're going to notice that you're getting stronger quicker, you're going to notice just the way that your muscles feel are different. Whereas someone who's been training longer, for them to increase by five pounds on their max lift, like that could take, like a year, versus, you know, someone who's just starting out.

ANNIE

Yep. And so that's where you'll see, you and I both have a history in powerlifting, you will see lifters literally prep for a meet for months and months and months and just be elated when they get five pounds on their squat or their deadlift. And whereas the beginner might be like, "I did that in like three months."

BOTH

[Laugh]

HOLEA

Same, but not same.

ANNIE

Yeah, yeah. And again, that's not related to your actual biological age. It's how many years you have consistently been training. So I think that's an important key point in some of these considerations, but we're going to touch on five key points that we think need to be acknowledged or addressed when it comes to building muscle and getting stronger. Specificity. That's a tough word.

HOLEA

You nailed it.

ANNIE

That and hypertrophy, I always want to say "hyper trophy."

HOLEA

[Laughs]

ANNIE

Hypertrophy. Those two words are difficult for me, but specificity is the first point that needs to be discussed. Can you tell me why that's important? Or what that means?

HOLEA

Yeah. So this is where you are going to want to be clear about your strength goals. So like, do you want to lift the heaviest weight that you can? Or do you want to just generally become stronger? With also this nice added perk of maybe more muscle definition? Or do you want to be able to do a particular exercise with, you know, a bunch of reps, for example, like, I want to be able to do 50 pushups in a row. This is where the like the maturity piece comes in - that's sarcasm, that was a joke.

ANNIE

[Laughs] We're not doing 50 pushups in a row.

HOLEA

No, thank you. [Laughs]

ANNIE

But maybe yours sounds like, "I want to get my first pushup, I want to be able to squat a barbell, I want to be able to do a pull-up."

HOLEA

Yeah, absolutely.

ANNIE

So knowing the intention behind why you are lifting, why you're interested in strength training, can be really influential in how you do that.

HOLEA

Absolutely. So knowing what it is that you want to achieve with your strength goals is also going to be helpful in what type of program that you would choose. So, for example, someone who wants to increase their maximal strength, it's going to require that you in fact, lift heavy weights, and repetitions. And the amount of weight that you use has an inverse relationship, meaning the heavier weights that you use, the less reps you're going to perform. So, you know, for max strength, you're doing less reps using higher weights, so thinking like reps in the one to six range. So whereas if you're thinking, like maybe you're just wanting to be generally strong, some nice, you know, size and muscle would be wonderful, right? Increase, or excuse me, that's going to require volume in your training session. That meaning, volume is the total number of repetitions that you're doing in a workout. For example, like, let's say you have squats, you're doing three sets of five, the total volume is 15, three times 5, 15. So the goal would be to increase your training volume from week to week and over the time that you are lifting. So that is like, that's kind of that mid-range there, of just increasing the volume. Then lastly, we have, you know, if you are wanting to be able to do higher repetitions of a particular exercise, like we talked about, let's say you wanted to do a bunch of push-ups or something, that's called like strength endurance, where you're going to be doing maybe less sets, but you're doing more repetitions in that set, for example, like maybe you're doing two sets of 15 type of thing. So with all of this being said, okay, you will increase the strength and hypertrophy simply by strength

training, but it's important to identify what your specific strength goals are, because that is going to help determine the structure of your program.

ANNIE

Yep, yep. And obviously, I think this goes without saying, but before you get too granular into sets and reps like mastering technique and form, and safe usage of equipment is like a precursor to all of this.

HOLEA

Mm-hm, absolutely.

ANNIE

Yeah. And then what about if your goal is like a specific movement or skill?

HOLEA

Yeah. So that's the other thing like, when it comes to goals, you may have kind of like that overriding like, you know, yes, max strength or whatever. If you have a performance goal where you're like, I really want to do my first push-up, or I want to be able to get my first pull-up, you will absolutely be doing push-ups in your program, if you want to do a push-up, you will absolutely be doing pull-ups, if you are wanting to get your first pull up, also keeping in mind that there's you know, there's like different variations of the exercise until you actually get to doing the actual thing. But you know, specificity, meaning that you are practicing the thing that you want to get better at.

ANNIE

So again, to put this in terms that we hear a lot, again, the push-up one is super common. Maybe that looks like spending more time in a plank position. And like that's like ground one. And when you get good at that, then you know, we're working on shoulder stability and chest muscular strength and all that stuff, tricep strength and kind of breaking down the aspects of a push-up to be able to do a push-up.

HOLEA

Mm-hm.

ANNIE

Yeah. Okay. So that's the first element we want to talk about, like, what is your intention? That needs to be such a consideration. Like, why am I doing this? What do I want to get out of it? The next one is consistency. This is my favorite. Tell me why this is important.

HOLEA

So for consistency, this one is very important in that if you want to be able to keep doing what you're doing, you have to keep doing what you're doing. Meaning if you want to be able to do pull-ups. And that means that you need to continue to do pull-ups. Because otherwise, if you're

like me, and you stop working on pull-ups, and then all of a sudden all you can do is hang from the bar now.

ANNIE

Yes. [Laughs] Yes.

HOLEA

You know? [Laughs] So with that, like, okay, so there's this, use it or lose it principle, okay? So our muscles will atrophy, meaning the opposite of hypertrophy. Atrophy is that they will lessen in size and strength, that just naturally happens. Okay? This is actually a natural process of aging. And also like why strength training, in general, can be so impactful towards the aging process. It doesn't prevent it from happening, but it does slow the rate of muscle atrophy happening. So when we talk about like consistency, it is to help preserve the progress that you've made, so far, the strength that you have had so far. So that way, this principle of "use it or lose it;" isn't going to take over.

ANNIE

Yes, you know, what I'm thinking of is when I broke my wrist, and -

HOLEA

Oh, stop. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Oh no! Oh, my God. I'm not even making fun of Jen, I'm not even. I didn't even mean to do that.

HOLEA

[Laughs]

ANNIE

I really didn't mean to do that. Oh, she is going to nail me for that. If you're new here, Jen broke her wrist a few years ago, and I think she's mentioned it in every podcast since. And it's now become a running joke. And I just did the thing that I make fun of Jen doing for. But truly, I did break my wrist. And I had surgery on it, I was in a cast. And I remember getting the cast off. And my forearm and hand was just so small, so small, because, that's, my muscles had shrunk. They had their, I lost my strength, I lost my size, they had atrophied because I wasn't able to utilize my wrist. I'm not like doing, you know, wrist curls, per se, but just in the everyday action. So you might have seen this already, if you've been injured, or you've had surgery or whatnot, you might have seen the results of this use it or lose it principle and effect with your muscles. So that's really just a vote for encouragement of why it's important to keep consistent with strength training.

HOLEA

Yeah. And I think it's also important to like kind of define consistency, not as you are perfectly committed to three times a week. So I do it three times a week, and it's super duper perfect. But

consistently being that you are consistently moving forward with this habit, like sometimes it may be twice a week, someday, you know, sometimes it might be three times a week, but it's constantly moving forward, where there isn't like these larger lapses of time in between when you're actually practicing this habit.

ANNIE

Yeah. And that's also not to say on the flip side of the coin, that your gains your muscles, your progress will evaporate overnight. That's not what happens either. But it is again, just a nod to the importance of consistency in either getting stronger or building muscle either way. Okay, the next one is progressive overload, which I just want to say, like stay with us here because I feel like we can get into the some of these more technical terms like atrophy and hypertrophy and progressive overload, and people are like, "I'm overwhelmed. I'm going to shut down, I can't do this." But break down progressive overload in really simple terms.

HOLEA

Yes. So this just means that you are placing more stress on your body, for your muscles and nervous system to adapt. So that equates to, you are going to get stronger and more muscle tissue. And exercise, no matter what form of exercise you do, it is stress on the body, and our body is awesome in that it learns how to adapt and recover. So that way it can perform to the demands that you are placing on your body. And so that's where this kind of comes in, it is just placing more stress on your body, whether it be through using more weight, doing more repetitions, doing something for a longer period of time, that is going to result in your muscles adapting, rebuilding, so that way they can do that again.

ANNIE

Yeah, yeah. And to be clear, this is a good stress. So if you go and you do 10 squats one day, and you consistently do 10 squats multiple times a week, after a few weeks, the effort that it takes your body to do those 10 squats is not going to be the same on day 30 as it was on day one. And that's what we want. Like that's the response we want from exercise. But if you don't, as Holea said, have some progression in those squats, the results that you're getting from those consistent squats is also likely to diminish. So that's why it's important to have progressive overload in consideration with your workouts.

HOLEA

Yeah, and so in true, not to go into like true all or nothing fashion with this, it is important to find, you know, an appropriate amount of progression, meaning too much, too soon, can lead to poor movement patterns and injuries. So for example, if you are brand new to strength training, and you go and lift, try to lift the heaviest weight that you think you can, and then your form is sacrificed, it could kind of set you back a little bit versus starting where you are. And then as the week's progress being like, "Okay, I think I can do a little bit more weight here," you know, and kind of going from there just building up slowly from there. And on the other side, too little can lead to no improvements. It's about finding that happy, you know, that happy medium where it's enough of a challenge, but it's not leaving you absolutely gassed at the end of your workout. Like something I think that is really, really helpful is like, you know, using this idea of leaving a

little bit left in the tank, right? Like, you know, you're doing enough during the training session, but you are still able to participate in the rest of your day.

ANNIE

Yes, yeah. Yeah, that's important, especially for us who fitness - regardless of how you feel about fitness is not your life. [Laughs] It's not your job, which I'm guessing is a very large percentage of our listeners. They want to be able to live their life after their workout.

HOLEA

Yeah, well, I mean, even as someone who loves movement and all of that, like, my life is not about movement, like, you know, that is to enhance everything else I do in my life. So it's not something, even though I love to geek out and talk about it, it's not something I choose to spend an incredible amount of time on when I do train.

ANNIE

Yes, yep. Yeah. Okay, what's the right amount?

HOLEA

Yeah, so the answer to that question is my favorite answer to most questions in this industry. And it's: it depends. So this is where strength training can be a really powerful tool to connecting with yourself and beginning to listen to the feedback that it's giving you. So this is why, you know, also a strength training program is helpful. So it's not just showing up and just kind of doing whatever, when you're at the gym, that when you are following a training program, it is going to have progression built in, especially if it's designed well enough, it's going to already offer that for you.

ANNIE

So say someone is maybe not on a structured program that has this built-in for them, but they're doing maybe their own thing, or they're going to exercise classes or group fitness classes, how can they ensure that they are engaging in some progressive overload?

HOLEA

Yeah, so this would just be a matter of really paying attention to the movements that you're doing within your fitness class, what weights you're using, the reps that you're doing, if you're doing something where you're holding something for time, you know, making note of that after class or during class, if that's a possibility, and using that to inform the next time you go into that fitness class, you know, consider going up in weight next time or consider adding another rep or doing a little bit longer. So you will get stronger and be able to do more reps with a heavier weight but it takes time and patience and just continued practice. So knowing like progressive overload isn't necessarily always on a week-to-week basis, you may be doing the same thing two weeks in a row before you increase weight, or reps, or time. So it's really just a matter of, like I said, using this as an opportunity to connect with your body, and seeing how things are feeling to be able to make that decision of like, yeah, I think I can do a little bit more today or this week.

ANNIE

Yeah. And sometimes, you know, you can have the best laid plans on paper. And because of life stress, or sickness, or lack of recovery, you might not be able to progress as you'd like, you know, I've certainly had workouts where I'm like, this just feels like I should on paper be able to do this, but this just feels really tough. And that's okay. Like, that's part of the process. That's where that patience comes in for me.

HOLEA

Absolutely, absolutely. And that's like, we are not robots, where we can just like have this, like, "Oh, I'm going to enter in this, I can do this weight today. And it's just going to happen." Like you said, there's other stressors in our life that are going to, you know, affect how we are feeling in our body, how strength feels, all of that type of stuff. So just allowing yourself to meet yourself where you're at, and really listen to that feedback.

ANNIE

The other thing I want to note that I have picked up on in working with women and I have a hunch you might have had a similar experience is when you say, you know, like pay attention to your body and how it feels. When I have worked with women who have a history of maybe more on the heavier on the cardio side, like they're marathon runners, they're into like heavy circuit or high-intensity type training, something that is hard for them to manage, is not feeling completely gassed after a set. And that's okay. Like, sometimes when I would say oftentimes for strength training, I don't notice the effects of a workout or like the soreness, or the fatigue until 12, 18, 24 hours later. And so when you're strength training, it might not be the same post-run like, "Oh, I'm so exhausted, I'm out of breath." It might be like, the next day or like, "Ooh, a little sore," you know, you're not going to feel that in the moment. So like kind of taking zooming out, I guess, to see how you feel in the moment, but also in the days following to ensure that you're progressing properly. Not too fast, not too slow.

HOLEA

Yeah. And I think that you make a really good point there where it's not just during the workout, and we're going to touch on this in the next point there, is that you know, what's happening when you're not strength training. There's a ton of information in that alone. And it's a big piece of the puzzle as well.

ANNIE

All right, I feel like that is a great segue into our fourth point that needs to be considered when you are building strength or building muscle and that is rest.

HOLEA

Yeah.

ANNIE

Tell the people why rest is important, Holea.

HOLEA

So it may not seem like it, but the real strength work is happening when you are resting. So while you're strength training, you are actually breaking down muscle tissue. So when you're doing your squats, these little muscle fibers are tearing. And this is sending signals to your brain. And it's saying, "Hey, we need more helpers." So when you're resting, it is your body sending more helpers by recruiting more muscle tissue. This is where you get hypertrophy. This is where you get increased strength. So exercise is stress on the body, which like we talked about before, which is why rest is such a crucial component to a solid workout routine. Right? It's a part of it. And so when it comes to this like resting piece, it's hard. I feel like it's a hard concept for a lot of us to wrap our head around when maybe we're coming from diet culture and it's like more and more and more like more workouts, more intensity, but without the resting piece, now understanding this without that resting piece, all of those efforts can feel pretty exhausting. I don't know if you've been there before, Annie, but that's definitely been in my history with exercise.

ANNIE

Yeah, and when we say rest we mean both like days off and/or days with lower intensity recovery type activity. And also sleep. Yeah, like both aspects are important, and I certainly have noticed too little of rest or recovery in between workouts, and I'll tell you the first way that shows up is often my motivation to train. My excitement for a workout, my motivation to go do a workout is like, I just don't want to, or my body just feels like, "Blech."

HOLEA

Yeah, like, typically things that feel more challenging, for example, like, going for a walk usually isn't that big of a deal for me. But when I'm under recovered, going for a walk is kind of a big deal for me. Like, I feel it in my muscles right away. And like, that's an indicator of like, "Okay, maybe I need to get a little more rest time in here in between my next strength training sessions."

ANNIE

Yep. Yeah. Tell me about people who have maybe more specific goals, whether that's like a push-up, or they're competing in their first powerlifting event, or some sort of like community CrossFit competition. Like, what does that look like? How does that impact the rest?

HOLEA

Yeah, so having like more specific goals like that, especially if it's like competition related, or, you know, like, you have a more focused performance training goal, it may require more days of actual training. And you know, with that, there also needs to be a solid recovery strategy. So, you know, it is looking at the differences in like the intensity in which you're working out, like, let's say, you need to train five days per week, not every day is going to be at 90%. There may be some days worked in there that you are working at 50% of effort, or your duration of your training session is shorter. But with that being said, you know, like, if we're talking about like, general strength, most people are going to see and feel a really noticeable difference in, you

know, just consistently training like two to three times per week, and therefore you already have, you know, anywhere from five to four rest days built in, but like you were saying, rest days isn't just like, chilling on the couch, per se. It could be going for a walk, it could be just doing some type of active recovery, like stretching, mobility, you know, any of the different things that are in between those rest days.

ANNIE

Yeah, I think that's an important point. Because I think, just in the age of social media, it's a common experience that people are following maybe fitness professionals or professional athletes on social media as a means of motivation or inspiration, aspiration, and they're seeing these people workout five, six days a week. And what they don't see is what you said, how the intensity of those days vary from day to day, from week to week, and how rest is like, scheduled and looked at as similar to a workout would be like, we're in bed by this time, this is our rest time, these are the things that we are doing to aid recovery.

HOLEA

Right. And I think that, you know, especially looking at something like that, it's like comparing apples to oranges in that they likely have completely different life circumstances than you do. For example, me comparing a training, you know, somebody who's online doing this fantastic, they're super athletic, and they're doing all this awesome training. But they, you know, maybe they don't have kids at home, like I do, or, you know, like, I'm not sleeping through the night because, you know, there is a child or you know, whatever, there's different life circumstances that are also going to come into what your training is going to look like, versus what someone on Instagram who is literally like, their job to perform at that level.

ANNIE

Yeah. And, you know, I don't, I won't get on my soapbox. Okay, maybe just for a little bit. But this is where I have a hard time with, I feel very protective, as do you, of our community. And I don't love the idea of someone who has a life circumstance that allows for more time in the gym because they work in a gym, they don't have kids, they aren't you know, involved in extracurricular activities - that they are promoting this "fitness should be your life" sort of aspect or like concept, because how many times do you lift a week? Right now?

HOLEA

Three times tops.

ANNIE

Yeah. I'm -

HOLEA

That's a good week.

ANNIE

Yeah, yes. I'm also three. I'm thrilled if I get four. And we're both fitness professionals who have full time jobs. We have kids, we really like movement, and we're in the gym three to four times a week.

HOLEA

And it's enough.

ANNIE

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Well, truthfully, it's all I can do right now. So it really doesn't matter. [Laughs]

HOLEA

Yeah, and like when I like you know, when I say enough, I mean like for me to see the strength results that I want to see. Three times a week at no more than 30 minutes is plenty. Like I feel like minimum effective dose, like a little bit really goes a long way.

ANNIE

Yeah, and you, even if you're like, I don't like lifting, but somehow you've made it this far in the series and the podcast, hat tip to you, first of all, you know, even just one time a week could have major benefits on your health, your wellness, your strength, your bone density, I mean, all of the things we talked about, and I think it was episode one. So don't get don't get turned off about, you know, three times four times, whatever. Just, if it's one time for 20 minutes, great.

HOLEA

Yeah.

ANNIE

I'll take it. The other aspect of rest that we need to talk about, though, is something that you do between sets. And again, I think this shows up in women who are used to, like more cardio type activities, or who just tend to be very, like, "I cannot sit still" type of personalities. Rest in between sets can be very difficult for some people, but it's important. Holea, I know that you are all about getting the most bang for your buck and workouts. If people are feeling like they're struggling to rest, literally just put the weights down and stand still for a minute or two in between sets. What can they do?

HOLEA

Hmm, yeah, that's a great question. So in between exercises like that, it can be productive time as well. Like, it could be something as simple as like a mobility exercise, it could be something that is going to help the movement that you're actually working on. Or maybe it's just focusing on your breath. And you know, working on just slowing that down in between rest periods, which is actually a really great way to like develop recovery skills of, you know, slowing down your breath right in between it being elevated from doing an exercise. So there's, you know, there's lots of different things that you can do in between sets, you know, exercise and stuff like that, that can feel productive. But it is also okay, just to practice being okay with just being there.

ANNIE

You're not slacking off, you're not like cheating the workout. I do want to say on the flip side because I have a tendency, I can fall into this trap of taking too much rest. And when I time my rest periods, I generally, my training program right now is what we would consider more hypertrophy based, like a minute to two minutes of rest in between a set, and so I do time my rest, because I know that if I don't, I'm likely to pick up my phone. And before you know it, it's five minutes later, and I'm scrolling Instagram or texting back someone else or on TikTok. And my workout takes a lot longer than it really needs to and then all of a sudden, two days later, I'm like, "I don't have time to do a workout." And it's like, well, if you actually took the recommended rest, your workout would probably take 30 to 40 minutes instead of an hour. [Laughs]

HOLEA

Yeah, absolutely.

ANNIE

So again, that sweet spot is important. Okay, can you tell that we could talk about this all day, we've got one more element to consider. And that is nutrition. Tell me about the influence of nutrition when it comes to building strength building muscle.

HOLEA

So more muscle requires more energy. So you may notice that if you are beginning a more consistent strength training program, and you're noticing that you're getting stronger, and maybe you're feeling more muscles, you may also notice an increase in hunger. And that's simply just because your body is like, "Hi, we're doing some work here, and we need some more food. Okay? That would be great." So, with that being said, more food would be great. Protein in particular is going to be really advantageous alongside your strength training program. So amino acids, which are found in protein, okay, they are the building blocks to your muscles. So they help to maintain and repair the muscle tissue among many other cool benefits of eating protein, like increased satiety and all of that type of stuff. So eating a sufficient amount of protein for you will support building those strength and muscles that you are looking for.

ANNIE

Yes, we, if I had \$1 for every time we talked about the importance of protein and the value of adequate protein, so many women just aren't getting enough. That's a very common issue that a lot of our members are working on increasing protein. If you are lifting, it's like so valuable.

HOLEA

Absolutely.

ANNIE

So nutrition, you might notice an increase in hunger and to focus on protein to support your efforts in the gym are the two takeaways there. Okay, so a quick recap. And then I want to talk about what beginner lifters can expect. So the five elements that we've touched on are

specificity, consistency, progressive overload, rest, and nutrition. Again, you can get as granular as you want or need with each of those, but just some consideration, or some thought about how each of those shows up as you pursue either getting bigger muscles, getting stronger muscles. But if you are, like brand new, you've never picked up a weight in your life. What can people expect? What are some things that they might experience?

HOLEA

Yeah, so we touched on this a little bit earlier, but beginner gains. So this refers to a rapid increase in muscle and strength, that people who are new to lifting are going to experience especially in that first year of lifting. So this is when you're like, "Oh, wow. Last week, I used 10 pounds. And now this week, I'm using 20 pounds, like, whoa," right? But that's just your ,you know, your muscles are adapting, they're, you know, doing that recovery process that we talked about. So that way they can do more, and it tends to happen faster. With people who are brand new to lifting, most women or people with female sex hormones can expect to gain about 10 pounds of muscle, their first year of lifting, give or take a few pounds either way, depending on your genetics.

ANNIE

I remember my, I went to college, I played softball, the training program was a required aspect of being an athlete. So it was the first time that I followed a pretty intense structured program. I remember when I came home for summer, and I was going through my closet like looking for something to wear, and my weight actually I think was about the same. So when we say gain 10 pounds of muscle, we don't necessarily mean like your weight is just up plus 10. It could be that you have lost fat and gained muscle. And my weight was about the same, but I swear I remember thinking, "Things have shifted."

HOLEA

Yeah, shape-shifting.

ANNIE

Yes, my like shoulders were like busting out of my jean jacket. And you know, back then they didn't have stretch in it, which is unfortunately back and [laughs] back trendy now, the nonstretch denim. But that was a welcomed result in my book. I knew it was proof of the work that I had done in the gym. It wasn't a deterrent for me. But you know that 10 pounds can be genetically influenced, I think you and I both are more genetically inclined to put on muscle say as compared to like Jen. Jen is just less genetically inclined to put muscle on as easily. And that's also with like consistent effort. You're not just snapping your fingers in two workouts getting 10 pounds of muscle. I wish. I wish.

HOLEA

[Laughs] Yeah.

ANNIE

Okay, what else can they expect as a beginner lifter.

HOLEA

So even, you know, doing it, we've been talking about programs, right? So even a poorly designed program is going to help someone gain strength. But the more advanced that you become, again, meaning you are growing into your training age, the more important program design becomes to continue gaining strength, like that's where that specificity comes in. And just being you know, really clear about what those goals are, and also taking into consideration your training age to be like, okay, you know, we need to progress things a little bit differently at this point versus just go strength train consistently in the beginning.

ANNIE

Yeah, so at some point, you might come to a fork in the road where the low-hanging fruit has been snagged. And you're going to have to get a little bit more detailed and what you're doing and how you're doing it.

HOLEA

Yeah, exactly.

ANNIE

Yep. Okay, what else?

HOLEA

So there is a law of diminishing returns with building muscle. So you'll see the greatest gains at the beginning of your lifting journey. And then very small additions to muscle and strength when you are several years in again, we touched on this, for example of the, you know, someone who's just starting, maybe they double their weight in a few weeks, versus someone who's been lifting for years and years and spent a year training just to gain five pounds on a mass lift. So if you don't enjoy the process, and are just there for the result, continue to train beyond one year may feel less enjoyable. So like, you know, the question is like, can you find a way to enjoy the process? And I think that that really comes to zooming out and being like, "Okay, I don't love showing up to strength train, but what does this allow me to do in my future? What did this allow me to do, you know, into my, you know, aging process?" And just kind of zooming out in that sense.

ANNIE

Yeah, and just, you know, we talked about this a lot in terms of realistic weight loss expectations, like managing your desire for this instant or quick gratification, like that's going to come into play with strength training as well. Tell me about, I hear this often, and I just, I want, I want everyone to move in a way they enjoy, but I really want them to strength train. And I have heard so many times, "I started lifting, and I swear, I gained weight, like, what's going on?"

HOLEA

So, during the strength training journey, there may be additional weight gain. And you know, it could be body fat, or glycogen stores in your muscles. So when we are looking at, you know,

again, this is stress on your body, your muscle tissue is breaking down, there is, you know, things happening where we have to have like, fluid, and you know, all of like blood and all of these wonderful things coming to repair our muscles. And yes, it is very likely that there will be weight gain, but much like you talked about Annie, there's also this really beautiful thing that I think is undervalued, when it comes to being consistent with strength training is this, you know, body recomposition, meaning, like, you may gain weight, but you may find that your clothes no longer fit you, they may be loose. So it's kind of like, looking at what is really, I mean, what's important to you, you know? I mean, is it, you know, the number on the scale? Or is it how you feel in your body? Is it, you know, how you see yourself in the mirror? You know, all of that type of stuff. And, you know, like, is additional weight gain, is that something that you can accept knowing all of the other things that come along with it?

ANNIE

Yeah, I actually think, I think I shared this a little bit ago, I am kind of having the opposite experience that a lot of women talk about, I'm actually lighter in body weight, but my strength is down. And as a result, looking at pictures when I was 10, 15 pounds heavier, I looked like visibly more muscular, compared to what I look like now. And so it's just, again, another nod to how influential is the scale in your experience of your body and what your goals are. Because for me, it's, I would take the 10 pounds and more visible muscle. But that's my personal preference and everyone gets to decide that for themselves. The one thing I want to add, before we wrap up here, too, is women just in exercise in general, this isn't just related to just strength training. They have, they can have a tendency to say like, how hard it is, and, or you know, like, "I get so sweaty," or, "I'm I'm huffy puffy," or, Oh, this is just - this burns," or, "This is, you know, I'm a little shaky or whatnot." And they sometimes when they say those things, I almost hear this, like I'm doing it wrong, because it's hard. And I'm like, no, no, no, no, like, that's the point. Like it should be, as we've talked about, not too hard, where you can't live your life, you can't do the movements with good form, where you can't like have finished the workout well, but also, like there should be some stress. You know, you and I have worked out many times. And I'm like, "Whoa," like, I mean, not together, we have worked out together. But there have been times in the moment where I'm like, "This is hard." And that's the point.

HOLEA

Yeah, well, I like to think of strength training, as much as it is a strength and muscle builder, I like to think of it as a like, building character, meaning like patience, and like doing hard things. And like being in that hard place. Like knowing that, you know, there is something good on the other side of that, and it's okay to experience discomfort knowing that the reward is far greater than maybe you realize, like to feel capable in your body, you know, to be able to do things. Like a member the other day, noticed after doing you know, some of the workouts within Balance365 was, "I can get up and down off the floor quicker now." And I was like, "Yes, like that, like when you notice those little things in your life, it's like that hard thing that you've been doing in the gym or working out at home. Like it is going to pay dividends elsewhere in your life to actually set you up to like live that fulfilling life that you want to live."

ANNIE

And with all this said if we have like sold you on strength training, I hope we have, and if we haven't, that's okay, too, there's still time. [Laughs] If you're like, "Okay, Annie, Holea, Jen, I get it. I hear what you're saying, I see the value in it, you've talked me into it; I want to give this a go. I'm gonna, I'm gonna do some stuff. But I'm like, just so nervous." I remember, after I had my first, after I had my first baby, I was kind of inching back into the weight room. I was in a commercial gym for the first time with people I didn't know. I was so stinking nervous, despite like my years of experience in college. I swear, I did curls for like three weeks. Because I knew I could, I knew how to do curls. And I just needed to like spend some time in the weight room. And after a few weeks, I was like, "Okay, these people, they're not yelling at me. They're not even actually watching me. They're, like, they look familiar, I'm getting acclimated with where all the equipment is in between sets." And I was just like, spending some time literally in the weight room and getting comfortable might be where you start. And then it's like, "Okay, I'm gonna start lifting a couple times a week, and then I'm gonna get a little bit more detailed with what I'm doing when I'm lifting." Like this can be so gradual to help you ease into it, and before you know it, you're gonna be like Holea and I.

HOLEA

Yeah. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Or maybe you won't, maybe you'll be like, Jen, and you're like, "I don't really love it, but I'm gonna do it anyways, because I see the value in it." And it's all welcome. So, this was great. Holea, anything to add before we wrap up?

HOLEA

I don't think so.

ANNIE

Okay, well, we'd love to hear if you take up strength training, send us a DM at Balance365. Live tag us in your lifting photos or tell us your stories. I can't wait to hear about it. I know Holea wants to hear about it, too. Thank you, Holea, for sharing your expertise with us. This was fun.

HOLEA

Yeah, it was fun. Thanks for having me.

ANNIE

Will you come back?

HOLEA

Of course.

ANNIE

Okay, great.

HOLEA

[Unintelligible] are gone.

ANNIE

Oh, good. We got the nerves out. See, you can embrace discomfort.

HOLEA

Absolutely.

ANNIE

Some people get nervous in the weight room, while Holea gets nervous on the podcast. Same same. [Laughs]

HOLEA

Well, yeah, yeah.

ANNIE

Okay, thank you, Holly. We'll talk soon, okay?

HOLEA

Sounds good.

ANNIE

Bye-bye, everyone.

HOLEA

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](https://balance365.co) to join coaching.