

Balance365 Episode 236 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 another episode of Balance365 Life Radio. Today we're getting pretty candid talking about divorce, dating, and body image. Initially, when Jen asked me if she could interview me on this topic, I had some serious reservations. It's a deeply personal conversations with outcomes that affected more than just me but at the end, I decided if sharing my experience is helpful to any of our listeners then I am happy to do it. So today's the day. In this episode, you're going to hear me unpack my experience with the last few years as it relates to divorce, dating, and body image. I want to emphasize, though, that I am not an expert on this topic. This is just my own personal experience of working through some lingering and surprising body image issues after my 13-year marriage ended and I reentered the dating world. Also, if you haven't heard, in 10 days, just 10 days, Jen and I are hosting a brand new workshop on a topic that so many of you tell us is your biggest struggle. It's called Nighttime Eating: Why You Do It and How to Stop. This workshop will be a live virtual event the evening of September 15. And we would love to see you there. For those of you who can't join us live, yes, there will be a replay available following that week. If you've tried and failed over and over to curb that nighttime eating, this is for you. It's something I've struggled with and have absolutely worked through, as something our members have struggled with. And they, too, have worked through it. It's time for you to do the same and work smarter, not harder. The link to sign up is in the show notes or you can hop over to balance365.com/workshop to sign up. Enjoy this episode, my friends.

ANNIE

Hi, how are you?

JEN CAMPBELL

Good. How are you?

ANNIE

I'm good. The tables are turning this episode.

JEN

Yeah. Turning. What do you think?

ANNIE

Well, like you're gonna be the host.

JEN

Yes, sort of.

ANNIE

We're gonna, I'm gonna spill the beans about my experience with divorce, dating, and body image. Sounds like a, like a Netflix documentary or something.

BOTH

[Laugh]

JEN

Yes, call us. So welcome to the show, Annie.

ANNIE

Thank you for having me.

JEN

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

ANNIE

I'm a co-founder of Balance365. [Laughs]

JEN

Ooh.

ANNIE

I guess if you're new here, I have three children, I'm in the Midwest. I am 39. And, I don't know. I mean, that's probably all that's probably relevant to this episode in particular. But the reason why you're interviewing me for this episode is because I recently went through a series of multiple separations and a divorce. And in the last two years, I guess, started dating, which, as you know, I have confided in you, my friend, that there were some really interesting, surprising, unique experiences that - some caught me off guard, some were as expected, some were tough, some were way easier. And I know I'm not alone. And it stirred up some stuff that I think is relevant to what we talked about on our podcast.

JEN

Yeah, I thought it was really, I guess, relevant and real. And, you know, full transparency to our listeners that you know, we talk about these issues so much and it was like, when you went

through your dating experience, it was like, "Huh, there's stuff there that I didn't think was there anymore. And it's there."

ANNIE

Yeah, and, I mean, we can get into that a little bit, but it kind of caught me by surprise. And I think an experience that women who have done this internal self-worth, self-respect, self-trust type work, can have this experience where you think you're doing well, you're doing well, you're doing well. And you're feeling really good. And then all of a sudden, something happens. In my case, it was dating. But something happens that challenges like, "Oh, maybe I'm not doing as well as I thought I was doing." And that was like, kind of shook me a little bit.

JEN

I think it is, for our listeners, whether you've, you know, gone through a divorce, ventured back into the dating world, whatever that is, I also see it coming up for our members when, you know, circumstances are about to change. And it, it's like, "I was doing really good in this environment is what I learned. And now this environment is changing. And I'm realizing there's some stuff there." So I've seen that come up in just a number of ways, right? Like, I guess, post-pandemic, we saw it a lot with our members who are like, "I'm returning to real life, I'm going to see family I haven't seen for a while, and I've realized, like, I'm not okay, I am panicked. This is like, an activating experience for me," or, "I have a holiday coming up." I was just actually coaching somebody yesterday, who's has been doing well. And she's got a holiday where she's going to be in a swimsuit in two weeks, and she's starting to have some spiraling thoughts. Yeah, that's where you find it. [Laughs] We get comfortable and feel confident in the environments we're in. And when they change, we can sometimes find some stuff.

ANNIE

Yeah, absolutely. And I don't think the discomfort that I felt in this whole experience, and I would say the same thing about our members, the discomfort that they may face, it is not, it does not mean that the work you've done was not helpful. It wasn't valuable. It didn't stick, quote, unquote, that you're back at Ground Zero, like it doesn't mean any of that. So regardless, if the specific context of getting divorced and dating is relevant to you, I think my experience of just like you said, being comfortable in one environment and one circumstance and then shifting to another is related, relatable to a lot of people.

JEN

So do you want to start with how - you want to start with how you were venturing back into the dating world? And how long had it been? Like 20 years since you had dated?

ANNIE

So before I get into any specifics, I just, I feel really compelled to have this clearing. Because people that listen to our podcasts may know me on a personal level, they may know my ex-husband, they may know my children. And I really want to be mindful to like honor their privacy, and like their experience, you know, so I really just want to like speak to my own experience. And certainly, I'm not an expert, just sharing like what I experienced. And I just want

to like, disclaimer, my ex-husband is a great man, he's a great father. He's an all-around amazing human, I have nothing bad to say about him. It just wasn't a good fit for me. And I actually never dated. He was my first boyfriend. So I really didn't have anything to fall back on. Like, it wasn't like dating was completely different from what I had known. It was just completely new, period. And I had some context because I've had friends that dated, of course, and I've you know, got my popcorn and like, "Oh, tell me about this. And let me see your dating app. Like, can I swipe? Like, what's out there? Like, who, do I know any of these people?" But I had nothing to compare it to. I literally, he was literally my first boyfriend.

JEN

So were you excited?

ANNIE

Yeah, I was. I was also probably a little too confident maybe. Because, you know, I felt very secure in who I was and what I was doing. I felt very confident in my ability to communicate, to get along with people. Yeah, I just felt like, well, this is gonna be fine. It's gonna be fine.

JEN

And was it fine?

ANNIE

Sometimes. Sometimes it was fine. You know, I'll tell you, I remember going on my first date. So I was, this is also an interesting element that influenced my experience. But I became single, officially single, in a pandemic. And it was like, are we like going to meet for a walk outside and then stay six feet apart or whatever? And so I really just kind of sat in my house by myself for a while. And I'll tell you, if you're single, if you live by yourself, going from a house full of kids, noise, chaos, even the arguments, TV is on, music on, to complete silence. It was like, oh, this is like, it was fun for a while. But then when the dust settled, it was like, this is really lonely.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

And then combined with a pandemic, you know, just having very limited opportunities to socialize or connect with people. It was pretty rough. It was like, "Ugh."

JEN

I remember when you went for a massage. And you told me that you just needed someone to touch you.

ANNIE

I needed someone to touch me. And you know, I totally believe in, I'm not talking about sexual touch. I am talking about just touching other humans. I think humans need touch. And I know at one time, I knew the science behind it and whatnot. I'm sure I could dig it back up. But I mean,

think about babies, you know, babies come, we deliver a baby, a newborn baby, whether it's your own or someone else's. And it's like skin-to-skin contact, like, this is what we need to thrive, right? And I had periods of, you know, five days or so where no one touched me. And then when my kids did come back, the kind of touch that they were giving was a very like withdrawal type of touch. You know, it was like, "I need you." I'm giving the hugs. I'm doing the comforting. And after a while, I was like, even the little things like going to the gym and seeing a friend and giving them a hug, like the very just brief encounters. Those weren't happening anymore. So I got to a point where I was like, "I need someone to touch me."

JEN

Yeah, oh, absolutely.

ANNIE

[Laughs] Just put your hands on me.

JEN

It's connection and like intimacy, you know, whether that's friend intimacy, or, yeah, I think everybody listening could probably understand.

ANNIE

Yeah, yeah. So thankfully, there was a woman at the gym that I was at at the time that was doing some limited massage work with, you know, pending vaccine and all that stuff. And I started to get some massages occasionally. And that felt so nice.

JEN

I swear that you told me that you just you cried during your first massage.

ANNIE

Oh, I probably did. I probably did get emotional. I was like, "This feels so good." And if you, if you know me, like, if we meet in person, I will probably, consent pending, will probably hug you an obnoxiously long time. Like I say to people all the time, "I'm not done yet. Like, do not pull away from me." [Laughs] "I just need a little bit, a little bit more. I just want to soak this up." But actually, part of my therapy at that time was asking for and receiving hugs. Because, and this is like a whole 'nother tangent, but I'm always the over-the-top hugger, which leaves me feeling like I, again, I'm doing the embrace, I'm not getting embraced, I am comforting. I'm not being comforted. I am giving, I'm not receiving. So she's like, "Maybe you should just ask for a hug." And I was like, "That makes me uncomfortable." But anyways. So eventually, we, you know, started slowly, as many people know, being more social as we move through the pandemic, and I went on my first date, and I got there first. And I was so nervous. I was so incredibly nervous. And I remember having this thought, "This guy is too good-looking for me." And it was almost instantly that I was back at 13 years old and convinced that this guy was going to take one look at me and he was going to make up some excuse to why he couldn't go through with the date. He was going to ghost me, he was not going to be interested in me, not only just not interested, but he was probably going to be rude that I was in over my head, like almost instantly all these

old thoughts came back and these were not thoughts that I had been thinking. They just - new circumstance and almost instantly it was like, "Oh, here they are." [Laughs] It's been 20 -

JEN

Yes. "There she is."

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

"11-year-old me."

ANNIE

Yes. Middle school me is now on this date.

JEN

I remember you, I remember us talking one day and you telling me that that was the literal experience you were having, that middle school you was showing up. And you were going, "I thought, you know, I thought we had made friends. But she's still there. And she's mean and she's mad." [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yes. Here's some context. And like, this is stuff that I had gone to therapy about. But for, leading up to this dating point, a large part of my conversations with my therapist was about, should I get divorced? What does this look like? How do I navigate this? How do I feel good about this decision? Is this the right decision? Like it was not about dating, it was all about the divorce. And then, once I was through the divorce, I thought, "Oh, I made it." But then it was like, "Oh, we got over this hill." But now it was like ultimately, if I want to be with someone that's going to require me dating. And that brought on this, all these other sets of challenges that I did not anticipate. So I was kind of blindsided by that middle school girl showing up on this date. And I have written about this. I've shared this before. But when I was in middle school - or no, high school - I went to a dance. I had asked a boy that I had a big crush on at the time. And he accepted my invite. We all went in a group of friends. We went to dinner, we went to the dance, and somewhere during the dance, he left. And I was asking like, "Hey, do you, have you seen so and so? Where did he go? Like, I haven't seen him." And finally one of my friends was like, "Oh, he left." And I was like my, my date just left me at the dance like, okay, so we were all going to a friend's house after the dance. I got a ride with another couple, which is like, not cool, you know, when your crush leaves you at the dance. You're like, "Okay, I guess I'll just third wheel with you guys." And I showed up and I was like, "Hey, I didn't know you were leaving, like could have told me." And he was like, it was no big, like, just played it off. Like it was no big deal. And of course, being who I was at the time and my beliefs at the time, instantly blamed my body. My appearance. He just wasn't into me, because he didn't think I was pretty, he didn't think I was thin enough. It was you know, it was all of that - never in my mind, was it, "Maybe

he's just rude. Maybe he's just immature. Like maybe this is about him, not you." But so, it's no surprise when I was on this date that that girl showed up.

JEN

She showed up? Yeah. Oh, Annie.

ANNIE

She's like, "We're coming back. We aren't done yet." [Laughs]

JEN

Yes. She was there to... What was she there for? Do you think?

ANNIE

You know, I think she, I don't know if this is going to make sense. But I think, in a way, that was a traumatic experience to me. And I, at that time, didn't process it, work through it, digest it in a healthy manner. I think it got stuck in me. And I believe whatever language you want to use, that that experience got shoved way down deep inside my psyche, my soul, my belief system, whatever. And because I wasn't dating, it just didn't come up. There wasn't anything that activated that like pain. And when, and so then when I was dating, it was like, oh, it bubbled to the surface. And I think she was there to like, as a way to heal on a completely different level.

JEN

Gosh, I love that. Yeah.

ANNIE

You know, and I think what women do and what I wanted to do was be like, "Go away, like, get out of here. Like, we are done with this. We're not doing this anymore. Like, stop it." But if you can imagine that an actual 13-year-old girl was standing right next to me and saying, "Hey, I'm a little nervous. I don't feel good enough. I'm like really worried that I'm gonna get rejected." And for me at 36, 37, 38 to just say, "Stop it. We're not doing this anymore. Go away." Like, that's not compassionate.

JEN

No.

ANNIE

So the last couple years, it's been really like, working with her in a more compassionate way. Instead of just telling her to get lost and be quiet.

JEN

That's so beautiful. And I guess that's kind of leads to my next question here of, so we know that you, you didn't date. So this was your first dating because I was going to ask you, "How's dating different today?"

ANNIE

Hm. Yeah.

JEN

And you're like, "Well, I didn't date." So, for you to be jumping on apps and swiping and stuff like, for me if I was entering the dating world, and maybe some of our listeners could relate to this, it's like, that stuff didn't exist.

ANNIE

Like seeing people first, you mean?

JEN

Yeah, just even now, I think, "Wow, weird. Weird that this is dating," so...And you know, you and I know a few people who are divorced now. And we have these conversations. And it's like, this is how people think now, like this, this is it. This is not uncommon. This isn't like a fringe thing that people do, go online to meet someone. Because, you know, I remember back in the day, a cousin of mine got married many years ago, and her and her husband met online. And everybody was like, "Oh, that's weird. But okay, we're going to their wedding now."

ANNIE

[Laughs] "He's probably a psycho. She cannot know him that well, if they met online."

JEN

[Laughs] And now this is how people are meeting and dating. I mean, not every single scenario, but it's very common.

ANNIE

Yeah, you know, I think there's definitely some perks because I'm, you know, I work a fair amount. As I have choose to do. I have children. When I don't have my kids, I was kind of catching up on workout time, catching up on work time, I was cleaning the house, I was doing errands. I certainly spent a fair amount of time with some of my friends, like I golfed so much. So much more than ever before. But -

JEN

Oh yeah, I remember your golfing season. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yeah. [Laughs] It's golfing season now. And I've only golfed once. But that's for different reasons. But I wasn't going to bars. I wasn't going to, I guess, community events or activities where I would meet like-minded people other than the gym, which, you know, the gym is fine. But, I guess I should say, it's really fine. Because, I don't want to spoil too much. But my current relationship, I did meet him at the gym. But I wasn't going to the gym with the intention of finding a date necessarily. So I guess, you know, online dating was helpful in the sense that it connected me with way more people than my life just allowed to me on a day-to-day basis,

because I just, I work from home, I often work out at home, you know, like I just wasn't engaging with a ton of people. But it is weird that people are judging you on your looks, and they are swiping so quickly. And I think that's unfortunate, because I can think of quite a few both men and women that, you know, that experience where, if you judge them based solely on their appearance, you might think of them one way, you might make some assumptions, you might fill in the blanks, and then you get to know them, and they become like even like more attractive, you know?

JEN

Yeah, absolutely.

ANNIE

Or you realize like, "I totally misread you, I totally misjudged you," all these notions that I had in my mind about tattoos, or no tattoos, or piercings or profession -

JEN

All your unconscious biases are like living there, that can be overcome within person-connecting experiences.

ANNIE

Yeah, even silly things like their name, like, "Oh, I cannot possibly date a man with that name. Because that reminds me of, you know, so and so from college," or -

BOTH

[Laugh]

ANNIE

It's just so silly how we do that. But, you know, I think if you can be mindful of that in the way that you use apps, that's really all we can control.

JEN

Yeah, I never would have swiped on my husband if I had -

BOTH

[Laugh]

JEN

No, I - let me... [Laughs] Let me, sorry, sometimes things just come out. As our listeners may know about me.

ANNIE

Walk it back. [Laughs]

JEN

Walk it back, walk it back. I hated guys who looked like my husband. And he is very handsome and blonde and tall and beefy. And I hated those guys. Because as you were talking, I was thinking, you're talking about your high school you, and that was like, "Oh, yeah, I have an experience similar to that." And I hate guys that look like him. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yes, yeah.

JEN

And I grew up in Saskatchewan, which is an area of Canada, where people are obsessed with hockey. I mean, everyone in Canada, I mean, a lot of places in Canada, are obsessed with hockey. But if you get into like the rural areas of Canada, people are obsessed with hockey. And I grew up, I think a bias over the years of disliking hockey players. And how they looked. It's a whole thing. Like we could spend a whole podcast - this is not about me, this is about you. Anyways, walking back, my husband looked like a guy that I wouldn't be interested in. Because I had an unconscious bias there around what guys that look like him are like.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

Yeah, that's all.

ANNIE

Exactly, exactly. Or even like, what you think you can get, quote, unquote, like, he's out of my league, I'm out of his league, like that sort of stuff, just based off of, again, based off of looks alone. And I do think that there seems to be a push for less filtered, more real, less posed type of profiles, but you know, you're still looking at someone's pictures and, reading some short answers to some questions that they probably thought long and hard about.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

[Laughs] Yeah.

JEN

Okay. So this is how dating is different. How are you different? Say, even -

ANNIE

Oh, my God.

JEN

- you met your ex-husband, John, who I also adore. By the way, everybody, he is a really great guy. And to then when you started dating, after your divorce, how are you different?

ANNIE

You know, we have a podcast called Women Are Sleeping. And I think, I don't think, I know that I was asleep for the first 30 years of my life. And what I mean by that was, I was just following the path of least resistance. You go to school, you go to college, because that's just what everyone assumed you did. You play softball because that's what people wanted you to do. You go into education, because that's what your family did. And what seems to like come naturally to you, and there were paths along the way, where I deviated a bit, but then it was like, you get married because you get married. And quite honestly, I'm so happy, again, I'm so happy that I got married because I obviously have three children who I love and adore. And I got really lucky in that John is such a great guy. So I certainly wasn't miserable, right? Or in an unhealthy, unsafe relationship in that way, but it was just like, you just get married because women get married. And John is such a good guy, like, what do you think else is out there for a woman in a larger body? Who again at the time, like my body image stuff wasn't, I have not addressed that yet. Like, I just didn't feel worthy of...I felt like I had no choice but to just take what I was given.

JEN

Yeah, I remember you sharing with me that kind of the thought or the feeling then was like, "He's choosing me." Like, "I'm so lucky." And no thought to like, "Is this relationship right for me?"

ANNIE

Yeah. Am I choosing him?

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

It was like, you are, he chose you. And that isn't gonna just happen over and over and over again, this is a very rare opportunity that a man would choose you, a good man would choose you. You don't let this opportunity escape you. Right? And I didn't have the words for that then; that certainly was not my conscious thought process. Then I remember just thinking, "This is just what you do. And any questions or any doubts or any worries, like that's normal, and you can just like, let those go." And pretty shortly after we got married, we bought a house, had babies, then another baby, than another baby. And, you know, somewhere after my youngest was born, she's six, I started waking up, quote, unquote, and that's when I started noticing some behaviors in my marriage that I was like, "Hey, you're seeking something that isn't being met in your marriage. Like what's that about?" Which, that's what prompted me to go to therapy, which then kind of like broke me open in this way of considering what I wanted. What are my values? What's important to me? What do I need? I remember going to therapy for the first time and her asking me questions like, "Well, what do you think?" And I was like, "Well, they said this, or they thought this, or this is what they did." And she's like, "No. What do you think?" And I'm like, "Well, I thought that they thought," and she's like, "No."

BOTH
[Laugh]

JEN
I love it.

ANNIE
I could not even answer that question. I was so disconnected to myself at that point that I couldn't even answer that question. So the past five years have really been a reconnection to myself, and my values, and unapologetically owning what I want. And what I need. Another dating story that comes to mind was, I had gone on a handful of dates with a gentleman. And I was pretty into him. And I ended up finding out along the way that he was still on dating apps. And we had not discussed exclusivity, we had not discussed, you know, our relationship status. But I inquired, because I thought, like, "Hey, what, like, I know what I'm doing here. I'm not dating just to date, I am dating to discern who is worthy of more time with like, and going down that path. And if you're dating just to date, then we're not on the same page." And so I inquired about it. And he was like, "Hey, like, just, you're moving too fast, like, you're so intense." Like, and just, it was just this, like, essentially, the message of, "Calm down. Like, you're trying to be too serious, too fast. And I'm not ready for that." And I remember trying to be like, "Okay, I can be like the cool girl, I can be calm and like, totally casual. And this is fine. If he wants to date other people, like, I'm secure and confident enough." And I let that ride for about a week. And I don't know if you remember, but I was anxious.

JEN
Yes, I do remember, yes.

ANNIE
Like stomach ache, big trouble sleeping. And I had this fear that if I took ownership and responsibility and spoke up for what I really wanted, that he would walk away. And he would say like, you know, this isn't a good fit. But on the flip side, I was struggling internally with trying to appease him to stay connected to him or whatever. And after, like, I don't know, five days, I called him up. And I was like, "Hey, this is what I need. This is what I'm looking for. And if you're not there yet, that's fine. But like, this is absolutely what I'm looking for. And I need to know what you're doing." And as soon as I said it, that anxiousness went away, and what I attribute that to was, I was out of alignment with my values. And that was me, like, almost like, going back to sleep. It was probably that middle schooler that was like, "Hey, just like, forget about what you want, and just do the thing that you need to do to stay in this relationship." And ultimately, my wiser self was like, "No, we're not doing that." [Laughs] And this is why you're having this like emotional reaction, you are out of alignment.

JEN
I love that you just said that. And I think there's probably so many women just like hitting pause right now. And like going back 15 seconds and going, "What did she just say?" So I think so

much of our collective anxiety is self-betrayal. And my therapist would say, "You are betraying yourself, and you're abandoning your sense of self," and that's when I start getting anxious. And I imagine like little girl me, and when I feel most peaceful, safe, it's like, big girl me has little girl me. Like I am the parent I needed. And I get anxious. It is big girl me abandoning little girl me. And I need to in those moments, kind of, what's going on here? She needs me. What are you doing? What is the betrayal? What is the abandonment? And like, get back to having my own back. And there's just this instant peace.

ANNIE

Yeah. It was very illuminating to me. And in the same way you describe that like, it was very much like me taking the hand of middle school me, approaching this situation together and saying, "Hey, here's what we need to feel good in a relationship." I need transparency. I need communication. I need honesty. And if you can't give me these things, then we are out. [Laughs]

JEN

Yes, yes. And that's okay if we have a needs mismatch here, but my needs have to be expressed, not suppressed.

ANNIE

Yeah. But I, you know, this - I could spend a lot of time talking about this. One of my observations of dating was the admiration and praise that women get for being the cool girl like, "Oh, she's just like one of the guys like, so low drama. And she's so easygoing, and she doesn't like really care if I do this or that." I don't doubt that there are women and relationships that are like that, truly. And in alignment with their values.

JEN

Because that's who they are.

ANNIE

Yes. But I do think there also are a lot of women who are trying to be that, to maintain relationships, and it's causing a lot of inner turmoil. And case in point, can we fast forward to where I'm at now?

JEN

Well, you know what? We can, and that is definitely a conversation that I want to have, but I want to pause for a minute, because what we haven't touched on is the body image stuff like -

ANNIE

Oh, yeah.

JEN

- what came up? And how did it start coming up? And how did you, which I think what our listeners are most interested in, how do you work through this body image stuff that comes up when you're in these new situations?

ANNIE

Yeah, if I can just be radically candid, I had a journal, I still have it, it's on my nightstand. And I would, when these thoughts, unhelpful body image thoughts would come up, I would jot them down. And I would remember to reflect on them when I wasn't maybe in such a heightened emotional state, right? But the thoughts that were coming up were, "You're ugly, you're not good enough, you need to lose weight, you're not pretty enough, you're too old, you're not lean enough, you're not funny enough, smart..." I mean, just like all of the things that typically you would expect to come up with someone that is really struggling with what they look like and who they are, they came up, they found me. Thankfully, I had enough knowledge and experience to know that like, when these come up, you don't have to listen to them. Because what followed those thoughts were, "Fix it, fix your body, fix your hair, fix your look, fix your clothes, fix your makeup, like fix that, you have to do something about this." Like for example, it's just, take the body specifically, like you're you're not lean enough. The impulsive, habitual thoughts in my head that followed sounded like, "Go on a diet. Do this thing, like up the intensity of your workouts. Start getting more meticulous with your nutrition, pull back on X, Y, Z, like do these things. So you can get rid of this feeling and not have to feel this way again." Thankfully, like I said, I know enough to know like, I've done that, been there done that, many times. This is not the answer. And ultimately, the answer for me was to sit with that discomfort. And really identify like, "Hey, this is not the choice you want to make right now." Just like I would talk to that 13-year-old. "I know you're feeling like really insecure right now. And you're feeling like you're not good enough. And I know that you want to do something about it because it feels like a hot potato. But that's not the most helpful thing right now. The most helpful thing right now is to go to bed, get some sleep, focus on, you know, focus on something else, like and take intentional focus, control of your mind your focus, whatever it is, journal on these thoughts, call a friend. But like, we're not going to diet. We're not going to go buy a whole new wardrobe. We're not going to change our hair." [Laughs]

JEN

Yeah, and I love that you're sharing this because I think that our listeners, our members, our email subscribers, I think they may think the ultimate goal here is to not have these thoughts, and I think they may think that you and I never have you know, mean thoughts, negative body image thoughts, self-critical thoughts. And that is absolutely not the case.

ANNIE

No, I certainly have unhelpful judgmental, downright mean thoughts, I don't know, probably on a daily basis if I was really like monitoring it, but I don't indulge them.

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

Whereas, you know, years ago I would have.

JEN

Yeah, yeah, you'd fixate on them and be all downhill from there.

ANNIE

Yeah, I would, as one of my favorite authors, Michael Singer, says, I would try to control the outside, so I could feel okay on the inside. I would try to lose the weight so I would feel okay on the inside. I tried to change my outfit, change my hair, change my makeup, change my nails, my car, my house, my home, whatever, so I could feel okay on the inside. And now I know the answer is like, if you want to feel okay on the inside, you have to work on the inside.

JEN

Yeah. Yes, you do. And so would you say that, in this process, let's imagine you're dating. You know, some of this stuff is coming up. You're wading through it, you're writing down these thoughts in the journal. And you dated anyways.

ANNIE

Mm-hm.

JEN

Yes, you did it anyways.

ANNIE

Yeah, I did. And you know what, again, with practice, I looked at dating as practice. It was all just practice, I really tried to let go of expectations of an outcome. Because that's a lot of pressure. I am dating to find the man that I'm going to spend the rest of my life with, like, we would just, like just go have a conversation, like this is just practice. And I noticed that when those thoughts came up, they tended, they tend to feel very urgent. And that causes panic and like anxiousness. With practice, I noticed just sitting with those, and eventually that urgency, that panic that came with, like, "I'm uncomfortable, I'm gonna pick a fight out of this one thing that they said, because I'm feeling some type of way." Like if you just let that sit, it will simmer down.

JEN

Yeah, yeah.

ANNIE

And then you can address it, you can reflect on it, and assess, is it truly something you want to bring up? Voice a concern or whatnot, from a more calm, rational frame of mind versus this panicked, anxious frame of mind.

JEN

I think, too, when we have these thoughts, it's even, as you come down, and they're still there, and they're painful, and it's so tempting to, you know, rush into something that is promising, that it can help you fix the outside, look, like it is very normal in our culture, you know, you're a woman in our culture, and you have negative body thoughts, like, welcome to - this is happening

with 100% of women. And I would, you know, arguably, you know, men across the gender spectrum, like we are a human species of analyzing how we look, and I don't think social media and selfie culture and swipe culture has made that any better. But I think that, you know, I'll just speak for myself, I've had these moments where I just allowed myself to be sad about that, like, "I'm having these thoughts. And it's normal. It's normal to have these thoughts. And I know where these come from. And it's unfortunate, and I'm just really sad. I'm really sad that I have to spend energy on this in my lifetime." And that's all. Period. That's the conclusion. There's nothing I'm going to, quote-unquote, do about it. I just need to process it and be and just be sad that that exists for - definitely for our generation of women. Verdicts out on the next one

ANNIE

In the same way that when I was 13, and this guy left me at the dance, and I just like shoved it down and ignored it. If you do that, if you continue to do that, like, you know, Michael Singer talks about, it's like, if your mind is like your house, and you never take out the trash, eventually your house quote unquote, is going to be smelly. It's going to be full of like fleas and mice and raccoons, and it's not going to be a pleasant place to live. So when these things come up, you let them come up. You feel them, you notice them. And you move on.

JEN

Take out the trash. [Laughs]

ANNIE

Yeah, you got, you could take out the trash, otherwise, that stuff is going to come back and bite you [laughs] when you're, when you're on a date and you're 36. [Laughs]

JEN

Yeah, you know, often when we are dealing with our members' coaching, I know the woman I have in front of me is just, she's sort of, she's overwhelmed. She's you know, feeling a little chaotic. She's, you know, having trouble even getting a grip on what the heart of the issue was and I think you have spent, you know, 20 years collecting beliefs, and never unpacking any of them. Never discarding any of them. You've just collected this belief, maybe it's, you've done this diet and carbs are bad, and you've done this diet, and this food is bad, and this, and maybe it's things about her body. Maybe it's, you know, things about her ability to follow through and succeed at everything, and I'm like, "You are full, you are full of thoughts that have become beliefs. And you can't even take one step forward, because you can't even get through the clutter." It's just all there, like, shouting at you. And it's just, you're just, it's like, you're just paralyzed in the middle of it all.

ANNIE

You got to start cleaning house.

JEN

You gotta start cleaning house. Yeah.

ANNIE

If you ultimately want to work through this.

JEN

Yes.

ANNIE

Otherwise, you could just keep shoving stuff in, which is also an option.

JEN

Just putting it aside as you try to take a step forward.

ANNIE

Yeah, exactly.

JEN

Okay. So where did you end up landing with all of your body image stuff?

ANNIE

You know, I think, in the end, I am in a relationship. So I'm not actively like dating, so to speak, new people over and over again. So there might be this element of I'm just again, as we were just talking about at the beginning, in a different circumstance where the body image stuff can maybe just naturally settle a bit more. But I think in the end, I thought I was coming into dating pretty secure and confident. Even though I had a really at times bumpy, rocky road, I am coming out with a much more deeper understanding of myself, and how to work with me. And all the parts of me, instead of just the favorable parts of me, like, I created way more space for the kind of stuff that I'm like, kind of like, this is still a thing we deal with. And instead of just ignoring it and pretending like, "Oh no, I'm good all the time. Nothing ever gets to me." More honoring, like, "Hey, this is a part of me." And this is a thing that comes up for me from time to time.

JEN

And that's okay.

ANNIE

And that's okay.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Like she's, it's, get the whole package.

JEN

That's so loving, Annie. So loving.

ANNIE

Yeah.

JEN

Yeah. Everyone knows that Annie is like beautiful and lovable. And we all love her. And I want names of these guys who -

ANNIE

[Laughs]

JEN

- hurt you, because I'm going to find them. [Laughs] But just so everybody's listening, like you had some horrific dating experiences. And you had rejection, you had, you know, it wasn't all roses for you on your dating journey.

ANNIE

No, not, I mean, I don't think I had, I wouldn't say I had a bad date necessarily. I never felt unsafe. [Laughs]

JEN

Sorry, I'm dramatic. If everybody -

ANNIE

[Laughs]

JEN

- horrific, like, I will go to the, I will find the worst.

BOTH

[Laugh]

JEN

Annie, Annie, come on, drama, bring it up, bring it up. It's good for ratings.

BOTH

[Laugh]

JEN

Unpleasant? Would that be a good word?

ANNIE

Well, you know, I think what was unpleasant - I'm gonna say something kind of arrogant. I don't think anyone like truly broke up with me. No one ever said to me throughout this experience,

like, "Hey, I really like you. I think you're great. I just want to be friends." No one said that, specifically, but I do think there were some circumstances where they maybe just didn't prioritize me or they didn't create the space or the time to be with me. And what that called me to do was to like, stand up and say, "Hey, this isn't acceptable."

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
Right? And so that, that was kind of unpleasant at times, because then I had to face this, like, I don't want to be the bad guy. I don't want to hurt, you know, like, I don't know. It just, and it really like required me to take ownership over what I wanted. And then there was also, I guess, some unpleasant experiences, and I found myself at times feeling a little bit more desperate for a connection than I would ideally have liked and therefore maybe going on some dates with...How do I put this kindly?

JEN
People who aren't right for you.

ANNIE
Yeah. Yeah, they're gonna be great for someone just not -

JEN
Settling. Settling.

ANNIE
Yeah, yeah. For sure.

JEN
Yeah, I wanted to bring that up because I think, I just think you're so beautiful. And I think many people probably, you know, you could develop a belief where it's like, well, dating is fine for Annie because she's beautiful. Or, you know, that person sees you as beautiful. And they're like, "It's going to be, you know, worse for me," or, but it's like, hey, look, I saw Annie, you know, kiss some frogs or, you know, going, "What is she doing?" [Laughs]

ANNIE
Yeah, oh, I remember -

JEN
There was some flakiness there, there was, you know...

ANNIE

You know, I feel fine sharing this. I had a trip planned with a gentleman. And he was flaky. And my time is valuable. My time is my time, my money, my energy is my biggest, hottest resource that I have to offer. And he was flaky. And so I canceled the trip. And I went to Canada. [Laughs]

JEN

Oh, yeah. You came up here.

ANNIE

Yeah. And I remember when I got to Canada, you were like, "Annie, your man is like, he is in New York doing this business thing. He is like too busy focused on his own, like career, his own wellness, his own self-development. Like, this is your guide." Like, you were really calling me and challenging my standard for what I had set for myself. And you were in a really nice way of saying like, this kind of behavior isn't good enough. And again, that's like, I'm sure that guy is a great guy. But for whatever reason, in the context of our relationship, that's how he was behaving. It wasn't personal about this guy. It was just like, "This behavior is not okay. You should not be okay with this. Like your dream man doesn't do this."

JEN

Yeah, this is not your guy. I will describe to you your guy. And you know that that's your guy.

ANNIE

Yeah, but when you've kissed some frogs, you can start to create this story about like, "Oh, there's no - that guy does not exist, Jen."

BOTH

[Laugh]

ANNIE

Yeah. But he does. I found him.

JEN

You did. So this is my last question for today's interview, Annie, is how are things for you now?

ANNIE

Things are so good. I am in a relationship that is going smashingly well. I feel very lucky to have an opportunity with this individual, to have a relationship, but also it feels incredibly healing to be in this type of relationship. Because I think we both have come to the table with some lived experience that has set us up for success to be in a prime space to communicate. This is what I need.

JEN

He's divorced as well. Can we share that?

ANNIE

Yeah, I think so.

JEN
Okay.

ANNIE

We'll ask after we record. [Laughs] But we've both been very clear about like, "This is what I need. This is what's not okay, this is what's okay, this is what I'd prefer." And it's gone really, really well. And he, every time there have been situations that I have been like, "Oh, if I tell him, if I share this thing about me, it's maybe not flattering, quote, unquote, it's not attractive. It's embarrassing," whatever it is. Every time I have come to him with a conversation that's like, "Hey, this is really difficult for me, but this is actually something that I need to feel secure in a relationship. And I'm feeling insecure right now. And I'm wondering if like we could work together to improve, this change this." Whatever. Every time I have done that I have been scared. I have been nervous. And he has met me with like, "Absolutely. Like, let's do it." And every time that happens, it's like, "Okay, I'm safe. Me and my 13-year-old self, we are safe here. We are okay. All of us are welcome." And that feels really good.

JEN

Yeah, I bet. Yeah, I like him. I like him. [Laughs]

ANNIE

For me to admit, to literally say the words. I'm feeling insecure right now. And to have someone hear those words and receive it and not be like, "Ew. Don't put that on me. That's gross. Insecurity is - like, you sound needy. That's ew. I don't want to help, like I'm not here to fulfill your -" You know? Versus, "Okay, like, how can we change that? What can I do?" It's like, "Oh, god, okay, I'm okay now. That's all I needed."

JEN

I think people who experience divorce, you know, if you do your, if you do kind of the work through the divorce, it is transformative. And I think it would be challenging for you to be in a relationship with somebody who hadn't experienced something significant in their life that would lead to a trajectory change, right? Because you had experienced so many. And it's not about, not necessarily about being divorced, or any one lived experience. It's like, it's the awakening. It's the not sleeping anymore. And you can't be with somebody who is sleeping through their life. You need someone awake and alert and intentional. And yeah.

ANNIE

Oh my god, yes. Like, his commitment to his own self-development and self-growth, his intrinsic commitment, this is something that he has been doing long before me, it wasn't something that he was like, "Oh, I'm dating Annie. And she's really into this stuff. I'm going to be into this stuff too." Like he was independently into all this is so necessary, to your point, like the standard, you know, like, this is the standard. And also we have this very, what feels like, to me a very deeply connected relationship. But we've also maintained our independence. Like we have a lot of

things in common, we share a lot of like interests, but he is still his own individual person. I'm still mine. And that is respected and appreciated in the relationship, which I think is - are some aspects that I was missing in my marriage, and I truly come to value.

JEN

Beautiful. Annie, thank you so much for sharing with us today. I think this was so helpful. I really appreciate that you would be this vulnerable with our listeners. It was really beautiful.

ANNIE

Thanks. And if anyone knows who I'm talking about, don't tell anyone.

BOTH

[Laugh]

ANNIE

Just kidding. I hope I was respectful of everyone that might have been impacted by my personal development through the dating season of my life.

JEN

Okay, thanks, Annie.

ANNIE

All right. Good luck, everyone.

JEN

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.