

Balance365 Episode 272 Transcript

ANNIE BREES (INTRO)

Welcome to Balance 365 Life Radio, a podcast that delivers honest conversations about food, fitness, weight, and wellness. I'm your host Annie Brees, along with co-founder Jennifer Campbell. Together we have a team of personal trainers and nutritionists who coach thousands of women daily and are on a mission to help women feel happy, healthy, and confident in their bodies on their own terms. Join us here every week as we discuss hot topics pertaining to our physical, mental, and emotional well-being with amazing guests. Enjoy.

ANNIE

Hello everyone. We are back with another guest this week, therapist Maggie Nick. Jen and I were absolutely over the moon about this interview because we are both huge Maggie fans. Maggie runs the super-popular Instagram account [@Maggiewithperspectacles](#), where she is real and raw about the messiness of parenting while you're dealing with your own wounds. Maggie specializes in what she calls, "The Mother Wound," and we did quite the deep dive into it this episode. We covered what the mother wound is, how it can relate to body shame and disordered eating, setting boundaries, and how we can start healing ourselves when we've had challenging relationships with our mothers. Maggie calls herself a recovering, people-pleasing perfect child. Her therapy practice focuses on healing low self-worth, shame, resilience, parenting, and re-parenting. She's also the co-founder of the Estrangement Project, which is a course for individuals who have strained or non-existent relationships with their mom. We've linked to all of Maggie's resources in our show notes, from her social media handle to her estrangement course. We hope you get as much out of this conversation as we did. Enjoy.

ANNIE

Maggie, welcome to the show. How are you?

MAGGIE NICK

Hi. I'm so good. Thank you for having me.

ANNIE

I'm feeling a little fan-girly. Is that the term? I watch you online, and I'm like, "Oh my gosh. Yes. This is exactly what I needed to hear," and here you are today. Jen convinced you to come on the show and we're so thankful.

MAGGIE

Oh my gosh. How kind of you to say Thrilled to be here, y'all.

JEN CAMPBELL

I'm also fangirling. I've been following you for a really long time. I follow you for parenting, initially for parenting, and again, anyone listening, Maggie's parenting stuff is so good. It's so relatable! When you say, "Here's how I parent while I'm triggered." And you literally say like, "This stuff happens to me," and you're the therapist, and it reminds me, in our community, our

members seem to appreciate that they are getting nutrition and health coaching from two women who also have nutrition and health-related habit issues we're also working on. And it just normalizes that we're all actually a work in progress.

MAGGIE: Oh my gosh. I mean I, I remember in the early days online being a little concerned that they would like, take my parenting expert card if I like, admit it publicly, you know? Because I just, nobody does it.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

I can remember, I mean, I've been on this gentle parenting-ish journey now for like eight years. My oldest is eight and a half. And you're supposed to be able to like, listen to the podcast, or read the book and like, "There are the words" and like, "And use 'em!" And there's nobody talking about what happens when I get completely hijacked, and rage takes over, and I look a lot like the parent I had when I was growing up. Like what now?

JEN

Mmm. Oh my gosh, yes.

MAGGIE

And I just felt like nobody's talking about this. Like, what am I supposed to do here? Hate myself? Great. 'Cause that's what I'm already doing.

JEN

Yeah. It was so helpful for me. And you are pretty much the only parenting person I follow now. Because you just normalize the real life of it.

MAGGIE

Wow. Thank you.

JEN

Then I got really excited when you started the Mother Wound Project, and that's what we are actually talking about today. Maybe we can convince Maggie to come back in the future. I need to talk about more parenting stuff, however, we are going to talk about the mother wound. But it is all-encompassing, isn't it? It really all relates to each other.

MAGGIE

Yep.

ANNIE

Maggie, before we dive into all the things we wanna talk about today, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

MAGGIE

Yes. So I was a good kid growing up. I was a kid nobody ever needed to worry about. I was easy to parent, a delight to have in class. I got told, you know, "I wish everybody was more like you. So easy to parent." And I've spent my whole freaking life recovering. Perfectionism, people-pleasing, self-hatred. I mean, crippling fear and anxiety around letting other people down, making them mad. You know, the, "Are you mad at me?" Just like terrified of conflict, couldn't set boundaries, and a really messed up relationship with food. I had a binge eating disorder for most of my life, and I came into parenting totally terrified that I was gonna mess up my kids, truly. And when I was in graduate school to be a therapist, I used my access to all of the scientific literature to be like, "How do I not mess up my kid?" basically. You know, "Why am I the way I am?" And in therapy everything kind of kept coming back to like parenting. 'Cause I have legit SVU trauma in my childhood. And I really thought once I healed that, that like, things would shift. And then they didn't. And it was like, okay, well then what is it? And it kept coming back to like, well, I do remember as a kid being told this, or, oh, I do remember this time, this. And like, as we peeled back the layers that kept coming back to parenting. And so I became an accidental expert. I just wanted to be a therapist and a mom. I had no plans to do any of this. But I became an expert in parenting and in low self-worth. The shame and kind of how shame poisons our self-worth. And how shame gets placed on us and integrated into our being and all the freaking selves of our body through parenting. And it's so crazy because so many parents are trying so hard to give their kids what they didn't have. But nobody's talking about the shame in parenting.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

And so much of our suffering as humans comes back to shame. And it's so deep in there. I mean, it's all over our mother wound. I mean, our mother wound basically, in one word, is "shame." And so, in order to be that parent I wanted to be for my kids, and give them the childhood they deserve, that I deserved, I had to get really clear on like, I gotta let go of all this shame in parenting. I have to learn how to be that confident leader who doesn't say things like, "You should be ashamed of yourself. What is wrong with you? I'm not mad, I'm freaking disappointed." You know, who doesn't give their kids the silent treatment? And I have parts of me that want to do those things when I get triggered, like desperately want to make my kids suffer, right? And like, make them bond to me and make them frantic, and like over-apologize to me and fall to their knees and beg for forgiveness. When we've had that in childhood, then we're a grownup and like some part of us needs to like, work that out on our kids.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

And so I founded Parenting with Respectables a couple years ago just to start sharing information, and then it exploded.

JEN

Yeah, I was gonna say, only a couple years ago. Because you really have exploded.

MAGGIE
Yeah.

JEN
Yeah. Amazing.

MAGGIE
Wild.

ANNIE
Why do I feel like I need, I'm gonna need tissues for this episode? (*Laughs*).

MAGGIE
You might.

ANNIE
I'm a little nervous about what you're going to say, Maggie. Although I've been following you. Like, even just hearing you talk, I'm like, "Oh my gosh. Yes. That, that, that there, I bet there's something there too..." And yeah. I'm just so excited for this conversation.

MAGGIE
Good. If it needs to come, let it come. Don't bottle it.

ANNIE
(*Laughs*)

JEN
That's spoken like a therapist.

ANNIE
It's almost like you do this for a living!

MAGGIE
It's almost like I do this. Yes.

ANNIE
Okay. So Jen was saying the mother wound.

JEN
Yeah. Let's define it.

ANNIE
What do you mean by the mother wound?

MAGGIE

Okay. So I've never come up with a better and more succinct explanation than my good friend Michaila Tyson, who's one of my team members on the Estrangement Project. So she talks about how it's an internalized set of core beliefs about who we really are and our worth and our value. And what makes us lovable, and what makes people wanna run away from us, basically.

JEN

Wow. That doesn't even mention "mother" in it.

MAGGIE

Right?

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

Yeah. I mean, everybody's got a mother wound. My kids will have a mother wound, no matter how hard I freaking try, they will have a mother wound. It's not something we can escape. And shame is, I mean, it will take God, how many generations of, like most people trying to eliminate shame to kind of move the needle here. But to me, the mother wound, and when I'm assessing a client and kind of looking for it, I'm looking for things like, "Nothing I ever do is good enough." People when they say something like, "I don't deserve love when I act like that." Or this like core belief that like, "I don't deserve my husband," or, "I worry my kids will see me the way I'm afraid they're gonna see me, they're gonna see through this and see who I really am." And then there's the fear of abandonment, right? That like, "When people see who I really am, they leave, they can't love me." And it's also this core sense that there's something fundamentally wrong with me.

JEN

Hmm.

MAGGIE

That's the mother wound to me.

JEN

Do you attribute it to the mother?

MAGGIE

So I'm still kind of working out the nuances to a place where I can teach it. The nuances between mother wound and father wound. Like we can get all of those same messages from a father, but it's different. As a child, we are not separate from our mother.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

We don't know where we end and they start. For a long time, actually, longer than you would think. And so I think when the shame comes through, the mother, right, and the mother is accidentally, unintentionally, with the best of intentions, nurturing these ideas that we don't deserve love under these conditions, that there's something wrong with us. Right? It hits so much deeper. Father wound is similar, and different. I don't know if I can like really explain it well right now. I'm still kind of working that out in my head. But I think because our mother is us and we are her, that's part of why it's like, we hear her voice in our heads.

JEN

Yeah.

MAGGIE

Right, and kind of our blueprint around relationships and like, when I'm in a relationship with someone else, whether it's a partner or our child or our friend or our supervisor, our attachment and our blueprint is so impacted by our mothers, and we expect other people to have the same automatic reaction our mother would. We expect them to judge us the way our mother would. We expect that her reactions are other people's reactions. Our psyche kind of generalizes it to everybody else in a way that you don't tend to see with father wound. And I just think it's because we are of our mothers.

JEN

Can I ask, how would this change in, say, homes that have two moms, or one mom, or no mom and one dad?

MAGGIE

Yeah.

JEN

Or two dads?

MAGGIE

I mean, that's a big question, but I think in my experience, children, let's start with two dads, children who do not have a mother present, whether they've lost their mother or they have two dads, they will compulsively seek out a mother-person. It might be an aunt, it might be an older sister, it might be a cousin, but this is one of those things I don't tend to see on the father wound side, that these kids will compulsively seek it out.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

It's like an instinctual thing. It's like the turtles that know to crawl to the ocean.

JEN

Yeah.

MAGGIE

They just know it's like that.

JEN

There's this interesting, I don't know if you would agree with it or not, but what I just thought of was, I was listening to a therapist speak several years ago, and one thing she mentioned, and she sort of just mentioned it flippantly, she was talking about how important mothers are. And things could have changed since then. But what they know is that, so she was talking about the resilience of children and then she flippantly said, "Children can recover from almost anything except losing a mother before the age of 10." And like everyone in the room was just like, uh. And then someone in the crowd had lost his wife and so did have, you know, kids who didn't have a mom. And he asked her, you know, "What do I do?" And she said, essentially, "They will find a mother." You know, not that they're gonna leave home and go find one. But she was essentially saying, "Bring in an aunt, make sure they have a mother figure."

MAGGIE

Yeah.

JEN

Yeah.

MAGGIE

Well, and I think for so many of us who have a complicated relationship with our mothers - I'm one of them, I'm estranged from my mother. Like I felt lost like a freaking paper bag flying through the wind until I found my therapist.

JEN

Yeah. Oh gosh.

MAGGIE

You know? It's just like, I had never had it.

JEN

Yeah.

MAGGIE

And when I found her, it was like, "Okay, here's a secure attachment. Here's a mother figure."

JEN

Yes.

MAGGIE

There was something fundamentally that was in place now, that wasn't before. And then I tell this story in the Estrangement Project, but we've got two puppies. Last year we lost our dog suddenly, and my husband and I both got our dream dogs. And for me, that's a golden retriever. I've always wanted one. Hazel is my golden. And what's wild about her is that I'm her person.

Finally, a dog's person. I was not our other dog's person, and that was hard. But Hazel will be dead asleep on the couch. On the other side of the, we have a big room, our like big, great room. And I will experience any kind of big feelings, frustration, anything. And it's like she will wake up out of a dead sleep. And I remember the first time this happened so clearly, she looks at me across the room like, "You okay?" And I was like, "Oh my gosh. That's what I should have had for my mother."

JEN
Mmmm.

MAGGIE
I was attuned to her instead, I was the Hazel.

JEN
Yeah.

MAGGIE
I was, "Are you okay, Mom? What can I do for you, Mom? Are you okay? What do you need?" And I had never had a mother. Like, Hazel mothers me, it's wild. But she like checks on me and it matters to her when I'm upset and she comes and sits with me and like, it's just wild. So yes, we find mothers, even in our dog.

JEN
When you had that experience, did that hurt you? Was it healing for you?

MAGGIE
I mean, it's "brutiful." Glennon Doyle talks about "brutiful." It was brutal and it was beautiful, all the same moment.

JEN
Yeah. Oh, I love that.

MAGGIE
You know, I still struggle with her. I was just thinking about this the other day. I was like, gosh, right away goes into like, do I deserve this? This fierce devotion to me, this person that never leaves, that never, right? It's not conditional. It's very love without conditions with her. And there are parts of me that are still struggling at a very deep level to believe that I deserve that.

JEN
Hmm.

MAGGIE
And I was thinking the other day, "But I'm so kind to her." And then my highest self was like, "No, she just loves you because she loves you. You don't have to earn it. You don't have to love her the right way. Like, stop that right now."

JEN

That's so relatable. So many women out there Hustling. Hustling for belonging, hustling for worthiness, hustling to be seen.

MAGGIE

Yeah.

JEN

And they don't have that unconditional belief.

MAGGIE

I mean, how could you, right?

JEN

Yeah.

MAGGIE

And I think this is where the mother wound comes back to parenting, right? I had a video just the other day about how when like, I got the silent treatment as a child, it was terrible. I mean, as a therapist now I could teach a 24 hour class on how damaging the silent treatment is. And yet, when I get triggered in just the right way by my kids, really, disrespect is like the biggest one for me, parts of me want them to like walk on eggshells and fall to their knees and beg for my love. Like this is generational trauma. Like, I'm still healing those wounds from childhood. And so then I become a mom and now I'm working it out with my kids.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

And this is how it gets passed down.

JEN

You think your mom was just, had her own mother wound and that is just... ba dump ba dump, down the line?

MAGGIE

I mean, she, I believe, has several personality disorders, so she has moments of like profound emotional instability where she's kind of not there. But a hundred percent, she's a woman with a tremendous amount of unhealed trauma. And the parts of her trying to protect her from getting hurt again, never relent. They're fiercely working to protect her. And there's a good person deep down who loves me.

JEN

Yes. Gosh.

MAGGIE

But she can't love me the way I need to be loved because she's trying to defend herself from getting hurt again.

JEN

Yeah.

MAGGIE

I mean, I just remember times in my childhood where I can look back now, I remember as a child being like confused, like, "I feel like the tables are turned here." But there were times I think she had deep fear of abandonment and she was worried that I would abandon her.

JEN

Hmm.

MAGGIE

But as a mom, I kind of get that now. Like I have worked through that a little bit. This feeling my kids are gonna see the real me and leave like, yeah.

JEN

Gosh, that's just amazing.

ANNIE

Maggie, I've heard you talk about this a couple times on social media about, this isn't always intentional. A lot of us are passing on some kind of crummy crap to our kids, and we're doing the best we can.

MAGGIE

Oh yeah.

Annie

Like, both.

MAGGIE

A hundred percent.

ANNIE

When I think of it from that perspective, it allows me to be really compassionate to my parents, my parents' parents, their parents. It's like, oh, this wasn't to be mean.

MAGGIE

A hundred percent. I think the first book, I don't know the exact date, I should look this up, but the first book that was ever published that presented the idea that children had emotional needs was published in like the fifties. My parents were already born.

ANNIE
Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE
I mean, it's just, it's not possible.

JEN
Kids were like dogs. It was, I mean, but even dogs have emotional needs! (*Laughs*).

MAGGIE
Right? But like, this is the thing, like this is the big freaking setup of modern parenting is that a good parent has good kids who never disobey, who are automatically compliant. Right? Who are blindly obedient, who are never disrespectful. Never - that's a good kid. And that's such a setup because it makes parents feel like they're failing when their kid is acting out.

JEN
Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE
Which, perspectives on, where I sit as a clinician, I'm like, "Yes, that is good. That is what I want to see." I'm deeply concerned about a child who never pushes back. But parents feel like they're failing. It's like the exact opposite. Right?

JEN
Right.

MAGGIE
A kid that I'm worried about is the one who never acts out. The one that most parents are not worried about. That's the kid that I'm most worried about. It's like this setup for parents, and then we're going against biology, 'cause kids act out their stress, they resist us to release stress and regulate their bodies. They resist, to release, to regulate. So the resistance, the pushing back, the saying, "I don't wanna do that," it's so important. Oh, I talked for hours on this, but like, it is so important for them to develop their sense of self, their autonomy as a human. They *have* to push back. There has to be this battle. Kids are not supposed to be easy to parent. But I think that's the setup is that in modern parenting, we think we're a good parent and we're told by our parents' parents and our, you know, all the other generations, but even our fellow parents, we think a good parent is one that can, like, look at their kid in Target and their kid's like, "Okay."

JEN
Yeah. I mean, people-pleasing, I mean, for me, I know that it's that big people-pleaser in me that like also I want to be seen as a good mom. And the way I do that is when I have good kids who are doing well in school, who are always polite and kind, then I'm getting my needs met.

MAGGIE
Yep.

JEN

You know? And of course it's sort of like an autopilot pattern until you have a look at it, it's kind of yucky to look at. (*Laughs*)

MAGGIE

You don't have to tell me! I feel like I rattle shame's cage within everybody just by talking and existing in the world and saying things I say. And whew, it's not an easy pill to swallow.

JEN

Yeah.

MAGGIE

Right? To realize, oh my gosh, like that's actually not good.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. I wanna, real quick, because your handle is "Parenting with Perspectives," right?

MAGGIE

Mm-hmm.

ANNIE

Tell me, where did Perspectives come from? I don't know the background of that.

MAGGIE

Yeah, it's a fun story. So Glennan Doyle was the first person that I ever heard that word from, and she, I think she had a viral post where she was talking about, "Let's put on our perspectives." And it was not like a real thing, it was just, and so as a therapist, I did that in the early days with clients. I'd be like, "Okay, but let's put on our perspectives, what's really going on here?" Or, "Let's put on our perspectives, is there really something wrong with you?" And just kind of a way to zoom out and critically think through this, and kind of, I feel like, access our highest self, the truth.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

Right? Our gut or intuition. Initially "Parenting with Perspectives" was called "Functional Parenting." I was talking about getting to the root cause of things. That was only for like six months, but I kept talking about "putting your perspectives on," and so then at some point, I was like, I just need to change the name.

JEN
Rebrand!

MAGGIE
Yeah. Early on, thankfully. But I had, for my daughter's birthday, we got these party glasses from Target.

JEN
Fun!

MAGGIE
Perspectacles, there they are! And so I was like, "Oh, perspectacles!"

JEN
That's awesome.

MAGGIE
That's where they came from.

ANNIE
I love it.

MAGGIE
Yeah. So it's just this idea that like, we need to look through, see past the BS happening at the surface, the disrespect, the eye-rolling, the sigh, the storming off. Right? The triggering behavior that we could not have done, and we need to see through that to our child inside. And like trust and believe that they're doing the best they can and that they're trying.

JEN
Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE
It's not a matter of they just won't do the thing, it's that they freaking can't right now and they need our help.

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE
Everything changes when kids feel that, when we're putting out this like, "I see you trying, I'm not gonna let you do that. I'm not gonna let you talk to me like that, but I see you trying." That changes everything. Time after time, clients, whether they're the good kid or they're the more difficult kid, like more on that end of the spectrum, when parents switch to that mentality and

kids feel seen, like, “Oh my gosh, you understand that I'm just hijacked right now. I've lost control. I wish I could stop. I don't know why I'm doing this,” it changes everything. And I think that relates right back to “little us,” right? Like, “little us” feels like it's disappointing us constantly. Our inner child. And so I write all of my, everything for Parenting with Perspectacles, with the idea that it can immediately be turned right back to little you, from a reparenting standpoint. Like “Little you needs to hear all of these things too, little you needs to hear *you*, today you say, ‘I see you trying. It's okay that that didn't work out. I know how hard you tried. I believe that you tried your best. This is what your best looks like right now, and your best is good enough for me.’”

JEN

Hmm. Beautiful.

ANNIE

I think Maggie, you should just put those on loop.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

On Spotify or,

JEN

Like, is this a meditation available somewhere? (*Laughs*)

ANNIE

You could just pull that out of the back pocket! (*Laughs*)

MAGGIE

That's a good idea.

JEN

Can you contact the Calm app company, please? (*Laughs*)

MAGGIE

(*Laughs*)

ANNIE

It's like Stuart Smalley from Saturday Night Live, except the cooler, Floridian version (*laughs*). Let's put on our perspectacles as it relates to the mother wound, though.

MAGGIE

Yeah.

ANNIE

Because we started talking about that and,

JEN
Yes.

ANNIE
I think we took a turn.

JEN
Thanks Annie. Yes, Annie keeps us on track.

ANNIE: Do you wanna talk about why, Jen, you thought this topic was important as it relates to what we hear from our members?

JEN
Totally. So, Maggie, we have so many members who are working through unhelpful thoughts about their bodies. Some people might call that negative body image. And as they're working through these unhelpful thoughts, we hear a lot of painful memories coming up related to their mothers. I mean, I have many examples, but, you know, many of our members grew up with mothers who were highly critical of their bodies and would have them on different restrictive diets. Sometimes they were being taken to like Weight Watchers meetings at 10 years old and getting weighed in front of a big room of people. Sometimes they are having to eat different meals than their family because their mom has them on this restrictive diet that they have no choice in. When I saw that you were doing mother wound work, I was like, that's it. This is what our members need to hear about. And I am curious if you hear about this in your practice, and if you would say this falls under the mother wound.

MAGGIE
Oh, a hundred percent. A hundred percent. I mean, again, the mother wound in one word is "shame." Right? And in every scenario you're describing, the kid feels profound shame.

JEN
Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE
And I think another really important part of this is, when we experience shame, our nervous system experiences that as a threat. So it's like there's a tiger in the room when we're in shame as a child.

JEN
And you're just activated. You're activated.

MAGGIE
Yeah. And so I, I just think we're extra-vulnerable to these, this toxic shame. It just gets in there.

JEN
Yeah.

MAGGIE

So I had this moment, my bathroom-mirror moment, where shame suddenly made sense. And actually this one relates directly to my body image. So the lifelong binge-eating disorder-sufferer, made some headway about 10 years ago in just kind of understanding, "Oh, I'm numbing. It's hard feelings, and I don't know how to feel them." So I asked my therapist, "Can you teach me how to feel my feelings?" when I was 29 years old, and it was so hard, so hard to feel safe, feeling big feelings as a freaking grown up, man. I had really made some progress and like, "Oh, this is an eating disorder. Oh, okay. But still, just hated my body. Just hated it. Disgusted by it, right? And so my son was born, I had a three-year-old and a newborn. It was a traumatic birth. He was born really early, long story short. And like the four months since he had been born. when this moment happened, I had been on like 20 courses of antibiotics. I'd gone septic. My body had just been through hell. And I just remember this day, I'm getting outta the shower, drying off and just trying to love my body. And like being me and knowing all that I know, just being like, "Why is this so hard for me? Why can't I?" Like my body just safely delivered this child in a really dicey situation. It nourished it. It built - like just, "Why?" And a part of me, unconsciously, had come to understand that the parts work idea, that internal family systems idea, that we have these parts of us that are operating unconsciously until we become conscious to them. And we have this like army of protector parts: shame, rage, anxiety, eating, disordered-eating parts, even self-harm parts. And they're trying to protect us. Their intent is to protect us. And so I started to understand shame as like, okay, it's a protector part, but why is it so mean? So looking at myself in the mirror and I'm trying to love my body and shame shows up. And I can hear it this time. I just remember there are all these times, I do have legit memory stuff, I think just from dissociation and childhood. But I would have these moments where all of a sudden I felt bad and it'd be like, what just happened? What was I thinking about? And I would be in shame and I couldn't remember what, and I think it was because shame was that unconsciously kind of dropping a little shame bomb. And this time I heard shame. And shame shows up and I'm having this internal conversation with shame and shame's like, "Ugh, we gotta do something about this." Talking about my body. And so inside I'm like, "Here you go again. Why are you like this? Why are you so mean to me?" And shame goes, "I'm not trying to be mean to you. Your mother loves you more when you're thinner."

JEN

Mmmm.

MAGGIE

"And I'm trying to make you be more lovable." And you know what? Shame's not wrong. Like my mother struggled with her body and does love me more. And not only does she love me more when I'm thin, but she's disgusted and repulsed by my body when it's not thin.

JEN

Mmm.

MAGGIE

And what made so much sense to me, that was one of those moments that there's like a before and after, I think shame, I think back in the day when we like lived in caves, there weren't jails for like bad people. And so we know shame is one of the five basic human emotions. Mad, sad, glad, afraid, shame. And I think shame's purpose, and the reason it's there, is because back in the day, if you did something that went against social norms, if you put the group at risk by doing something dumb, shame is the like, "Uh, you're gonna die, dude." We're gonna put you out there

on your own and you're not gonna make it." It activates survival terror, like shame and survival terror operate very closely together. It's not just a fear of connection. It's like, "I'm not gonna make it. I can't survive without this connection." And so I think in modern day, shame paid really close attention for me and all of us, of the places where I was made to feel shame as a kid. And body stuff was a big one. And so, according to "Article four, section 42," I don't deserve love when I have extra weight on my body. And so when I'm violating that code of how I had to be, to be lovable, to feel like I deserve love, shame's gonna be like, "No!!" Does that make sense?

JEN
Yeah.

MAGGIE
I call shame the enforcer of the code. And so shame works very closely with the three other parts of the inner critic, as I see it, which is, shame, fear of disappointing others, fear of upsetting others and making them mad, and fear of abandonment.

JEN
Hmm.

MAGGIE
Those four parts work together as a cluster, and that's our inner critic. That's that critical voice inside.

JEN
Well, I can see just how body stuff really activates all, right?

MAGGIE
All of them.

JEN
I remember having this thought after I had my first baby that my husband was going to leave me.

MAGGIE
Mm-hmm.

JEN
And it was just like this conditioned, like, "If I don't look, then I don't deserve." Like, "Men don't want this, and I need a man." Like it was just, you know, the places we go, right?

MAGGIE
Yep.

JEN
And so when you talk about abandonment, I would say that was my biggest body image. Fear, I

guess. Like I will be abandoned. It's not just, "Oh, I need to fit into this size." The deeper wound there, the deeper narrative is like, "I will be abandoned if I'm not this size."

MAGGIE

Yeah. And it activates that survival terror.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

It's like there's something wrong with who I am.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

And people don't stay when they see this. Like, when we get the silent treatment, when our mother makes that look. Like my mother, at some point I asked her to stop making comments about my body. I remember when I went to college and I gained the freshman, whatever, I just had this moment of assertiveness amongst a lot of people-pleasing with her. And I was just like, "Do you want me to have an eating disorder? Because keep going. Like, stop. You need to stop. You need to stop. You need to stop. Stop talking to me like that. Stop. Like figure it out. Go to therapy. But just like stop." I already had an eating disorder (we didn't know that yet). But like that's the thing, right? Is like the look, she would make this look when I would walk in the room and it would just be like, oh boy.

JEN

You probably just felt that, yeah.

MAGGIE

And it cuts so deep.

JEN

Yeah. Oh my gosh.

ANNIE

Maggie, what about relationships with children and mothers that maybe the shame isn't quite as directly about the child? I'm thinking of someone like a relationship that I had with my own mom. I have tons of body image shame for sure, or have worked through that, knock on wood. But, she never explicitly said anything about my body or my weight. I saw her wrestle with her own body and her own weight and avoid pictures, and I had just kind of always assumed that I just saw what she was doing, and adopted it as my own, like you said, beliefs and set of values, even though it wasn't directly aimed towards me. Is that still applicable? Does it still apply?

MAGGIE

Yeah, when I see that, either with kids or adults, how that generally played out is that when you're a child and you're so hyper-controlled, everything is controlled for you and you have no dominion or agency over your life, we turn to, "I can control what I put on my body." It becomes the thing that is not the thing. Right? There are a lot of us out there and not us, I'm not one of them, but there are a lot of people out there like you who didn't have the mother who like, openly criticized. I mean, I think the looks are there. And I think our mother can communicate to us on such a deep and profound level, and we're so hyper-attuned to their energy that sometimes it's sneaky and it is there, even though we don't consciously recognize that it's there. But I think that for so many kids, that becomes the outlet to like how to cope, right? That like, unfortunately, food and emotional eating works.

ANNIE

Mm-hmm.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

Right? Like it helps us numb through. It starts as like, "Oh, okay, I can numb with this and my body feels better. I feel calmer. I feel safer when I've had sugar, when I've, you know, binged essentially, or had sweets, and then it becomes like, then I put on some weight and then there's some sort of conversation about that, or a comment by somebody, our mother or otherwise, and then it kind of launches the life-long struggle.

JEN

Annie, when you were saying that, I was thinking of just that attunement that a child might have with her mother and just picking up on a mother's preference for thinness could do it.

MAGGIE

Yeah.

JEN

I also did not have a mother that criticized my body directly. I had a very like body-positive mother, which was revolutionary in the eighties and nineties, but I picked up on other mother figures in my life, their preference for thinness, aunts, grandma, and for me, it was like very clear from very early on, and I was thin, but it was like, "Oh, this is the way, staying like this is the way that I am accepted."

MAGGIE

At all costs.

JEN

Yes. Accepted and loved and, yeah. So it's just so prevalent that message. It's everywhere.

MAGGIE

It really is. The confetti.

JEN

Yeah. So we got this wound. It's fairly universal.

MAGGIE

Mm-hmm.

JEN

I'm curious, you know, as we're sitting here, what was coming to mind for me was, you know, solutions. And I was thinking to myself like, as you're talking through this survival mechanism that's kicking in, or survival drive, that the solution must be something about feeling safe.

MAGGIE

Mm-hmm.

JEN

And so I'm curious if there's a process or framework that you think we need to go through in order to start addressing, even just acknowledging, this mother wound.

MAGGIE

As an adult?

JEN

As an adult, yeah.

MAGGIE

Yeah. I mean, I talk about our six core needs. There's a lot of people that have lists of needs, but I spent a long time trying to figure out what are the core needs. And I feel like I've got a pretty comprehensive list. So we've got our four attachment needs: *safe, soothed, seen, and secure*.

JEN

Hmm.

MAGGIE

And then we've got two other needs that nobody talks about: feeling like we matter, feeling like we have value as a human, and then to release stress. And what I've done so many times is write those six needs out with kids and adults. But where's the breakdown, right? Is it in feeling safe? Is my nervous system activated? Okay, good. Let's figure out how to soothe your nervous system. That's gonna require releasing stress. Like they're all interrelated. For so many of us, *safe*, I mean it's hard to rank, but like *seen* is such a big one. I think shame hits our core need to feel seen because when we're ashamed, we feel seen in a bad way.

JEN

Hmm.

MAGGIE

We feel like, "Oh, that's who I really am. I'm bad, I'm manipulative, I'm evil. I want to hurt people or something," you know? And so, so many of us, like I can remember telling my therapist years ago that I felt like there was the *me* that everybody saw, and then there was the real me. And it was not something to be proud of. I now know that wasn't really me. That was shame. Shame's version of me, how shame saw me.

JEN

Hmm.

MAGGIE

But like we've gotta figure out like is the breakdown around feeling safe? Is it around feeling soothed? When you have a parent who's emotionally dysregulated and emotionally unavailable and emotionally unstable, there's a lot of soothing that never happened that needed to happen, and we can always come in as the parent today and soothe little us, the reparenting and really the re-mothering. Is it feeling secure? Like one of the most surprising parts of healing my own mother wound from a reparenting re-mothering standpoint, is that, I think, how to explain this, I only knew how to set boundaries with myself through hating and berating myself. And so let's say it's 4:45 in the morning, I wanna get out of bed and do my 15-minute workout. And it's like, "Come on, here you go again. You always do this. God, you're pathetic." Right? "Just get up. Come on, you're so lazy. Come on. People will be, think about how great your body will look." All that's bullshit. And like to learn and really apply parenting with perspectives and the way that I teach setting boundaries to my own self, when I go, "Gosh, I know, right? It's early. It feels so good to be in bed, doesn't it? But we need to get up now. It's time. I need you to get up and I need you to go because that's what we need to do to take care of ourselves. All right, ready? Let's go!" That makes me feel secure. I think so much of addicts I see, really with any addiction, eating or otherwise, you're just kind of flailing. There's no boundaries. You don't know how to set boundaries without extreme shame. So then you learn, okay, I'm not gonna set boundaries for myself. And so learning how to lovingly be like, "I think one glass of wine's enough, Maggie, let's not have another. I think maybe we've had enough of that cupcake. Let's stop," right? Or like, enough sugar for today. Or I think maybe we have a cold coming on and so maybe we shouldn't have a whole bunch of dairy right now, cuz we know how that makes you feel." Being that loving parent, it's like boundaries meant to control and power, and like, ugh, feeling terrible growing up in my whole life. And it turns out I can be that parent for myself and be so loving, but also firm.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

Without making myself feel stupid or worthless.

JEN

You are literally speaking our language right now, Annie and I are just like, we talk about this with our members, Annie and I aren't therapists, but we're coaches and we've been doing this for eight years and you see the same things over and over again. So we have a concept in Balance365 called Learning to Mother Yourself. And it is finding a balance of soft love and tough love. But our definition of "is loving tough love" and it's what you're talking about here, it's being able to set boundaries with yourself without shaming yourself. And we talk with our members about how you would never talk to your children this way. I mean, some people would, but so it's

like, if my son is sick, he does not have to go to soccer practice and I am that nurturing, loving mother, I'm pulling you in. When my son is like, not sick and not wanting to go to soccer, "I understand, it's not always fun, but we're going."

MAGGIE

Yep.

JEN

"And I'm going with you. Let's do this." It doesn't have to come with a big dose of shame. My theory, again, not a therapist, but my theory is that people struggle to set boundaries with themselves because it's not safe. Because their inner critic is so mean to them, they just can't even go there over time.

MAGGIE

A hundred percent.

JEN

And over time, they can't even be honest with themselves about what their behavior is 'cause they just can't go to that place.

MAGGIE

Yep. Couldn't agree more.

ANNIE

Maggie, people are gonna think that we like made you say that because it was literally just like...

JEN

(Laughs) We just recorded a podcast about it, yeah!

ANNIE

A page out of our book.

MAGGIE

They didn't make me say it! That's my stuff. *(Laughs)*

ANNIE

It's so great to hear it echoed in your words as well. I don't know how this fits in, but a realization that a lot of our members come to when they start digging into this work about like, having self-loving boundaries and following through on your commitments and motivating yourself to take care of yourself with love and compassion and respect, not shame and self-loathing. Something you've said a little bit ago, it made me think that there's this realization that people are like, "Crap. I'm the only one that can do this work. Like I cannot outsource this to..." They can hire us as coaches, and we can help support you and guide you through what that could sound like, what that could look like, what you're actually committing to. But when it's time to do the thing, you are the only one in the driver's seat. You're the only one. And on one hand, I think

some of our members are like, "Oh my God. That's scary. That's terrifying." But there's also a lot of members that are like, "Oh, I *can* do this. I am in control. I can influence my experience here."

MAGGIE
Mm-hmm.

ANNIE
Do you have any thoughts about being the person that's responsible for caring for yourself as an adult?

MAGGIE
Oh yes. How long have you got? (*All laugh*). You know, one of the wild things about healing, I love the internal family systems framework, if you guys aren't familiar, it's the parts work where we have parts of us who are protecting us from pain, parts of us who are holding pain from childhood, and then we have *self*, right? Highest self. And what's wild about parts work is that I am all of those things. Like when I'm in *self*, and I talk to a wounded part, I hear from all three sides. I experience this as me, today, I experience this as the protector, and then I experience it as the child. I know exactly what I need to say because I'm all of the parts, which sounds so woowoo, but it's so freaking true. You know exactly what you need.

JEN
Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE
Right? Once we can release you from the shame of believing you shouldn't have needs, you know exactly what you need to say. And what's so beautiful about inner child work, in my opinion, is that so much of it is not even saying words, it's just being. You literally know exactly what to do. If we can just get all the parts to kind of step back when it's you and your inner child, you don't even have to do anything. You just have to be there.

JEN
Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE
Your brain and nervous system and unconscious will just do all the work for you. Your body wants to heal, and if you can just be in the room long enough to like show up for a minute, magic happens. As a therapist, I'm not even doing anything. I'm just trying to guide them to a place where their body can heal itself, truly.

ANNIE
Mm-hmm. And in conversation, and again, we're very careful to stay within our scope of practice, but the way I kind of hear that come out in coaching conversations is members will say like, "Well, a part of me says like, this is the move. If I weren't me, if I were someone who loved me, this is what I would like encourage me to do. But then there's another little voice in my head that says it's not good enough." You know? Like they're talking about the things that you're talking about here. But just, that's like how it comes. And so often we're saying to our members

like, "You know, you have the answer." It's a matter of like, building trust, turning up the volume on that voice. But those other voices might there, right?

MAGGIE

Oh, they are there. Always. I know I keep harping on this, but like the day that I found Internal Family Systems, I heard a podcast, I had to stop the car. Like I couldn't even drive. Like I was so just like, "Oh my gosh, this is it." And I knew it was gonna be the way that I would make sense of shame and heal shame, and it's everything. Learning how to be a self-led system, learning how to live from your highest self. The way I teach clients is just to notice the parts. So when shame's there, just be like, "Hmm!" With curiosity and non-judgment. Like, "Huh, part of me is being really mean." And when we can notice it with curiosity and non-judgment, we can do what IFS calls unblending from it. And so we can experience shame separately now, and it's integrated with us. It blended. It's like we can observe it separately and we can be like, "Huh, that's just a part of me." Not to minimize, it's a very painful part, but it's not you. And I think so many of us think our highest self *is* shame for so long. I know I did. With no internal compass, right? I thought shame was my highest self. Turns out it's just a part of me. And what I know for sure is that all of our parts, whether it's eating disorder parts or shame, or rage or panic or self-harm, they do not want to be in control. They're in control because there was no other option.

JEN

Hmm.

MAGGIE

We were parented in such a way where as a child, self-trust was not nurtured. We were taught to look outside. We were taught to make other people happy. We were taught to make them proud and avoid disappointing them. "What do you think I should do?" Right? And so I weave this so deeply into parenting with spectacles because when you raise kids, and you say things like, "What does it feel like inside for you? What do you think you should do? What feels good for you right now? Thank you for telling me how it feels inside. Thank you for telling me what you needed." We're nurturing that self-trust from childhood.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

Like I had to literally learn as a 30-year-old how to trust myself. But the parts work got me there so much faster because it's really just getting into *self*. When I'm in *self*, and sometimes my stress level's too high, and I can't be in *self* because all the parts suit up at like seven out of ten. Ten is where we can't hold any more stress, and our body forces the release, and about seven out of ten, the parts are all suited up and ready. And so sometimes we have to have that release, which is hard for those of us who bottled our feelings our whole lives! We have to learn how to get that release right. So like letting the tears come or punching pillows, or I like to scream F-bombs into pillows, that's my latest favorite. And like, regulate down a little bit and then we can get in *self*. From *self*, there's this stunning calm, and stunning clarity on things. There's eight C's that describe *self*, and I can never remember all of them at one time, but it's like *calm*, *curious*, like there have been moments where we've all been like weirdly compassionate towards someone. That's when you were in *self*.

JEN
Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE
That was just self-energy.

JEN
Right, and what you're saying is when you're dysregulated, when you're activated, it's hard to access that. So first we need to focus on regulating, and then we can access what is good for us.

MAGGIE
And it's releasing to regulate.

JEN
Yes, yeah.

MAGGIE
This is, I have very controversial opinions on calm down corners because when I'm in a nine out of ten, I don't need to snuggle a stuffed animal. I need to let my body blow.

JEN
Yeah, yeah.

MAGGIE
Right? Have that release.

JEN
Absolutely. I love that.

ANNIE
I mean, we talk about that as it relates to emotional eating. If you're rage eating,

MAGGIE
Yep.

JEN
A warm bath is not gonna do it!

ANNIE
Yeah. A helpful swap is not gonna be like snuggling up with a blanket, like you mentioned. It's gotta meet that need to maybe in that case release.

JEN
It's a, it's an energetic emotion that needs expressing, yes.

MAGGIE
It is.

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE
Well, and I think there is a lot, I mean, I know the work around burnout and like “completing the stress cycle” in Nagoski sisters, I do think that that was revolutionary for me to learn that. If I can get my feet under me at all and be like, okay, I'm feeling like, and I've been mostly in remission, I've had a little bit of a relapse in the last six months probably with all the transitions happening in my life and a bunch of deep trauma that, that I'm working through. But when I can get my feet under me and say, “Okay, part of me wants to binge, I hear you. I see you. Let's complete the stress cycle real quick and have a release. Let's do a five-minute kettlebell workout.” Or I like to do a two-song workout where I take two songs, and I just do something for six minutes.

JEN
Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE
And if after that time, if I feel like I need something to soothe my system, I'm gonna let myself do it.

JEN
We teach exactly that in Balance365, too, that there's nothing wrong with emotional eating. It actually meets the need. It's when the frequency of it becomes problematic for the person.

MAGGIE
Right.

JEN
We have a framework called *Stop, Identify, Swap*. And if you've run through that and it's still not working, just eat. Eat and move on with your life.

MAGGIE
Yes. Do whatever you need to do to survive that moment.

JEN
Yeah.

MAGGIE
Because oftentimes what's happening in the moment is feeling familiar to something from childhood. And that's why the parts are like, “Oh boy, we've seen this one before. This one's

terrible. We've gotta do something.” And so we're not just reacting to in-the-moment stress, we're reacting to childhood stress. And the crazy thing is, our parts are seeing this through child eyes. So like I'm 40, almost 41, but when I get triggered in just the right way, it's like my eight-year-old is seeing this and has no critical-thinking, big-picture-thinking, it's just freaking the hell out 'cause they're experiencing it as an eight-year-old. So much of that panic and terror, I think, that drives bingeing, drives addiction is because you're re-experiencing this moment as an eight-year-old or a five-year-old or a three-year-old.

JEN

Totally. Maggie, if we were to walk through like a body image trigger situation, you catching yourself in the mirror. I've had those experiences, I'm sure Annie has, our members. The shame is there, and what I'm hearing you saying is like if they're in that super-activated space, they may not be able to access the kindness, the care, the compassion they need. And step one, when you are very activated by body image thoughts, is to regulate.

MAGGIE

Mm-hmm.

JEN

Is to find that path that works for you to calm down, regulate.

MAGGIE

Yeah. And like guys, deep breaths are amazing.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

Belly breaths, there's lots of science, but when you're at a 9.5 out of 10, they're not gonna do a lot for you.

JEN

Right, right.

MAGGIE

Like, it's just not, we need to think about releasing. “I need to have a release right now.” I think there's so much, like *fight mode* as a nervous system responds is so demonized in childhood, right? The difficult kids who had fight mode. But there's mountains of literature. The children who go through stress and trauma, who tend toward a fight response, do so much better.

JEN

Oh, wow.

MAGGIE

And kids who are on freezers do so much worse. Because they're releasing stress from their body.

JEN
Okay, yeah.

MAGGIE
I bottled it all up, right? I never got stressed out, I never got regulated. I stayed in a chronically, profoundly dysregulated state for like the first 29 years of my life. So I think that fight mode is where we heal. I encourage my clients to get mad, let yourself get pissed. Before everybody comes at me on the literature about aggression, like there have been studies on kids and a lot of the kids who have come to me with oppositional defiance disorder, there have been well-meaning clinicians that have said, "Don't let them, you know, get mad. That leads towards aggression." That's bullshit, guys. Like I've looked into it. Nobody's considering shame. Shame's what drives aggression

JEN
Mmm.

MAGGIE
It's not gonna make us a violent person to like let ourselves punch pillows or scream f-bombs into a pillow. To me, that's accessing a nervous system response to allow us to move that stress out of our bodies.

JEN
Okay. So move the stress out and,

MAGGIE
And sometimes I'm moving the stress out. Like sometimes, for a long time actually, my release was me letting myself get pissed at how hard shame made my life.

JEN
Yeah.

MAGGIE
I could notice I'm going into a shame response, and I'm just like, "I cannot believe that I'm so dealing with this!" You know? And just letting myself get like, whatever you can find to get upset about. Frustration is like this magic island emotionally where it feels safer for most people. Anger doesn't necessarily feel safe for most people, especially women. And like vulnerable feelings don't really feel safe. But frustration is like this magic portal where we can release all the vulnerable feelings and all the angry feelings, but it like feels safer. So maybe think, what are you frustrated about in this moment? And just let yourself be really frustrated. Knowing that, you're not really this mad about the little thing that happened in the moment. Like we feel shame because we're like, "I'm overreacting. I'm being dramatic." The thing is not the thing. You're not really at a 9.5 over the jar you couldn't open.

JEN
Yeah. Or the two pounds on a scale or... yeah.

MAGGIE

And all the times in your life that you've been made to feel this way. So just get frustrated and get it out.

JEN

Yes. Yeah. And then at that point I'm hearing you say, we need to see ourselves, we, what is the four S's? *Safe, soothe* ourselves, and *secure*.

MAGGIE

Seen and *secure*, yep.

JEN

Okay. I love that. Yep. And I think there's just a little, there's a circle back, right? To little you like: "Wow, that was a lot. That was hard. I know that you were struggling. I know that you might be worried that I don't love you. You might be worried that I'm disappointed in you." Whatever like, it needs to hear you on that one. There's nothing wrong with you. I think so much for like the first nine years of my trauma-healing journey was really about just challenging shame every time I got triggered.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

It's like, "Enough. I am not gonna shame that little girl anymore."

JEN

Yeah.

MAGGIE

"Over my dead body will anybody shame her." And when shame shows up and wants to shame her, I'm like, mama bear.

JEN

You're like fiercely protective of yeah, yeah.

MAGGIE

Yeah, get back. Do not take another step towards her. Not that shame is the enemy. Shame is a part of us, but like it's that energy of just like fiercely protective of little me. Like I finally have that mom, that mama bear that I never had.

JEN

Yeah.

MAGGIE

Like she feels so protected when there's this mama bear who's like, "I will fight you. Step back. Don't talk to her like that.

ANNIE

And I think that's, so taking it back to like trust and the confidence we have within ourselves and security we have in ourselves. A phrase that our members use a lot is like, "I am good for myself" or, "I've got my own back."

MAGGIE

Mm-hmm.

ANNIE

And to know that, "Whatever happens, I can take good care of me, and all of me is gonna be okay."

MAGGIE

Yep.

ANNIE

"And I trust that we'll work through this and we'll do the best we can," is so earth-shattering to the women we work with.

MAGGIE

Well, that self-trust is everything.

ANNIE

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

You know, we've been raised to believe we can't trust ourselves. Like there's something wrong with us. I've been teaching this to my daughter, like she'll be like, "What if this?" And I'm like, "Repeat after me, I trust myself to figure it out. I trust my body to take care of me."

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

Because that was, as you said, utterly revolutionary for me, when I finally reestablished that self-trust, that like there's nothing I can't handle. The catastrophizing parts of me that wanna get all activated about these crazy scenarios, I'm like, "Well, I hope that doesn't happen, but if it does, I'll figure it out." It's like high-fiving future me.

JEN

Yeah, yeah.

MAGGIE

She'll figure it out. She's smart.

JEN

She's got this! I love that. I've got two quick questions: Many of our members are still dealing with body comments from their mothers. So it's like the wound is ongoing or constantly having salt poured into it. Do you have any advice for those members?

MAGGIE

I set some boundaries.

JEN

Yeah.

MAGGIE

Yeah. And there is sometimes a cost for that. There certainly was for me when I started setting boundaries. We never recovered. But it was either I keep self-abandoning and pretending like that doesn't hurt me, or I take care of myself.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

That's not a situation any of us should be in. We're having to choose between continuing a relationship with our mother or self-abandonment, like that's, that's not fair.

JEN

Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE

And also, that's not ours to own. But so many mothers, when they move right into defensiveness, that's their own shame that's showing up.

JEN

Yeah, absolutely.

MAGGIE

There's a part in their self that's inside and feels terrible and wants to repair, but when our mother has her own unhealed trauma, sometimes those parts just hijack her and just can't. And so I think understanding that it's not you-

JEN

That's not ours to own.

MAGGIE

No, that's all a reflection of how she feels. She's reflecting that out. And until she heals that, it's gonna be kind of messed up. And so sometimes it's better over a text, sometimes it's better over an email. I've worked with so many clients and been in this situation myself of painstakingly writing something, trying to set some boundaries, and sometimes we have a mother that just

can't hear that and has an emotionally violent reaction to that. I hope that everybody listening, if you go to your mother and say, "I need you to stop making comments about my body. I appreciate it, and also it's making me sick. My body is sick, my mind is sick. I'm struggling. And what I need from you right now is for you to not comment on my body ever again. And I need you to watch your face when I walk in the room. And like if you have a thing that you're feeling and you're feeling grossed out by my body, that's your work, mom, not mine, not my problem."

JEN

Mm-hmm. Oh, I love that.

MAGGIE

And hopefully, she has the reaction we want her to have. And if she doesn't, give her some space. Like being on the other side of a lifetime of self-abandoning, acting like things that hurt don't hurt, and staying in essentially a relationship that feels abusive, is no way to live.

JEN

Yeah, absolutely. Thank you. And then last, I'm curious, so we have women in our program who have adult children. And I'm wondering if you have any advice for them, so this is kind of on the other side, if they believe they've created a mother wound here around body image. And I know I talk to women, again, who have adult children who are saying like, "I am seeing my stuff in my daughter. Her obsession with food, thinness, and it is just eating me up." But they don't know how to approach it. Do you have any advice there?

MAGGIE

Absolutely.

JEN

Talk about it. Talk about it, okay.

MAGGIE

I mean, I teach calm circle-backs in parenting with perspectives. And they don't stop when our kids grow up. Anytime there's a pattern or any problematic situation within our relationship with our kids, we can circle back once the dust has settled. And the vibe here is curiosity and non-judgment. We're potentially repairing, right? Apologizing. But I think, personally and professionally, that it is more impactful when we feel seen by our parent and the impact they had.

JEN

Hmm.

MAGGIE

Like that's even more important than the apology. The apology's like, two words. And again, sometimes it's not backed up by action so it's complicated. But I think it's so important for anybody in that situation to circle back to their kid and go, "Oh my gosh, I hurt you. This self hatred you're dealing with, that's 'cause of me."

JEN
Ugh, yeah.

MAGGIE
“I hurt you. I said this, I did this. I did this in front of you.” And you can say, “I had no idea. I did the best I could, but I can see that I've hurt you.” I think that's more important than the apology. Honestly.

JEN
That is powerful. Honestly, I am just choking up here.

MAGGIE
Yeah. And so just committing that like, “I don't know why I did this to you. I don't know how to fix it right now, but I am committing right now to figure this out, to get myself into therapy, to heal myself so that I can show up in this relationship. It's a healthier version of myself, and I wanna support you and do everything I can for you as *you* heal this. Because I don't want you to hate and berate yourself about your body. I don't want you to believe that you don't deserve love when your body looks like this or that. I want you to believe you deserve love all the time. And I'm so sorry that I've put you in this situation where you feel like it's, ‘Under these conditions I do and under these conditions,’ like I, I see that I did that and I'm so sorry.”

JEN
Mm-hmm. Gosh, beautiful.

ANNIE
Maggie, one thing that you've shared online and you just shared there as well, that I think is so important and so like I so appreciate it, is that in addressing how do we apologize, how do we circle back, you're acknowledging that you're not gonna get this perfect. You're gonna screw it up, and no matter how long it's been or when it happened, like you can always revisit this. That's like really, I just think, really encouraging. Like, “Oh, okay, I can, if I do happen to have some mom rage, I can recover from that, and here's some recommended framework on how you do that.” Or if you're noticing you're visiting your daughter and she makes a comment, here's how you can address it years later. It's really awesome to have that perspective from a professional that you're not gonna get it perfect.

MAGGIE
It's important. I mean, I have an ongoing calm circle back with my daughter. She's the oldest, she's my mini-me, and where I say, and I feel like the first one was maybe like three years ago, she was five-ish, and I had this moment of like, oh God, I saw the impact. And so I sat her down and I said, “I think I'm making you feel like nothing you do is good enough. Is that how it feels for you sometimes? It's safe to tell me if that's how it feels.” Sometimes we have to reassure our kids that they're not going to be punished for telling us the truth. And she welled up with tears and she was like, “That *is* how it feels.” And I was like, oh my gosh, I have felt that way my whole life and here I am doing it to you. Since then, we've probably had like eight of those in the last three years. We just had one the other day, walking to a school event. I was like, “Oh yeah, I've been doing it, haven't I?” And she's like, “Yeah.” And it's like, “Honey, I'm doing my best. It's my job to keep figuring this out. It's not your job, it's not your fault. This is me, this is my work.

I'm gonna keep trying. I had a very critical mother, like it's gonna be that way sometimes when I'm dysregulated. It's not my fault, but it is my responsibility.”

JEN

I love that. Thank you Maggie.

ANNIE

This is great Maggie.

JEN

You are so wonderful. Thank you for having me, guys. I love this conversation.

ANNIE

Appreciate it.

JEN

Where can everyone find you and what resources do you have for our listeners?

MAGGIE

So I was Parenting with Perspectacles on all the places and I changed it to Maggie with Perspectacles. I still have Parenting with Perspectacles though, I like changed another account, so there is still a Parenting with Perspectacles account where I'm putting just the parenting, re-parenting stuff. But I just wanted to share more stuff, like not just parenting and re-parenting. So on Maggie with Perspectacles I'm sharing about anxiety and eating disorder stuff and kind of the other stuff. So you can still find me at both, but like my main account now is Maggie with Perspectacles on Instagram and TikTok.

JEN

And your courses?

MAGGIE

Yeah, so I'm about to launch, or actually I just launched it, a course about parenting a good kid. Parenting the kid who nobody ever needs to worry about. I mean, every viral video I've ever had has been about that concept, and I've had thousands of requests for a workshop. So I finally wrote one. So I think by the time this comes out, that will have closed, but it'll probably be opening again soon.

JEN

Awesome.

MAGGIE

All about how to parent a child who isn't expressing and is pretending they're fine and bottling up all their feelings. And then I also have the Estrangement Project, which is my project with three other mother wound experts and mental health clinicians. It is about estrangement, but it's also about healing yourself when you've had a relationship with your mother where you would need to be estranged if that makes sense.

JEN

Yeah. What if people aren't estranged but just have challenging relationships with their mother? Is that course appropriate for them?

MAGGIE

Absolutely. Anywhere on that spectrum of estrangement. I mean, we do talk about estrangement, but it's more about coming home to yourself and how do we parent yourself and what is the mother wound. Our intention is to give everybody all the tools we needed, 'cause all four of us are estranged from our mothers and have walked this alone. And so our intention, we literally sat down and said like, what are all the things that we would've needed a video on? And so there are 15 videos. We're gonna add a couple of more as time goes on, but that'll be opening right around Mother's Day.

JEN

Awesome. All right. Well, definitely, it'll be open when this podcast comes out.

MAGGIE

Perfect!

JEN

If the mother wound is something anyone listening is dealing with, Maggie's course and just the team of creators is absolutely incredible. Check that out. We'll link to it in the show notes.

MAGGIE

Thanks.

ANNIE

Thank you, Maggie.

MAGGIE

Thanks, guys.

JEN

Thank you Maggie, so much. We will talk soon.

MAGGIE

Thank you so much. I would love to come back anytime.

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 <https://www.balance365.com/> to join coaching.