

# Patricia Bannan

Fitting Nutrition Into Real Life

**P**atricia Bannan, MS, RDN, is focused on helping career-driven women like herself shift from chaos to calm, emphasizing sustainable wellness practices that enhance lives without overwhelming schedules. It's the latest phase in a multifaceted career she has built around translating complex nutrition science into practical strategies that work in real life.

Bannan's path to becoming a leading voice in nutrition communications began during "an eye-opening rotation" with a dietitian at a public relations (PR) agency during an internship with the National Institutes of Health after she graduated from the University of Delaware with a bachelor's degree in nutrition and dietetics.

"I was immediately drawn to the idea of creating content that could impact thousands of people at once," Bannan says.

This insight led to her first full-time nutrition communications position at PR agency Porter Novelli, followed by a 25-year journey that would take her from national reporter to bestselling author to nationally recognized spokesperson and media expert.

The spark that ignited her media career came during graduate school at Tufts University's Nutrition Communications program when she reached out to CNN's Carolyn O'Neil—one of the few dietitians on television at the time—for a summer internship.

"I took a chance and reached out about interning with her in Atlanta. [It's] a perfect example of why I always tell young RDs to go for what they want," says Bannan, who later joined CNN as a reporter and producer in its Medical News Unit.

From there, she built an impressive career spanning the next 15 years, traveling the world and establishing herself as a nationally recognized nutrition expert, author, journalist, and consultant. By 2024, she had conducted over 2,000 media interviews and written for renowned publications like *People*, *Shape*, *Glamour*, *Parents*, *Men's Health*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine*.

This personal journey ultimately led her to launch Wellness Intelligence,

where she draws upon a philosophy shaped by professional expertise and personal experience to help clients develop powerful micro habits and systems that save time while maximizing wellness impact. In addition to one-on-one coaching, group programs, and corporate wellness initiatives, Bannan continues her work as an author, speaker, and spokesperson.

From her childhood struggles with weight to her own brush with burnout, Bannan's life experiences influence her approach to nutrition and wellness. Her book, *From Burnout to Balance*, for example, combines health guidance with healing recipes to help others avoid the same struggles.

"I'm passionate about helping others find a more sustainable, joy-filled approach to nutrition," she says. "Whether I'm in a TV studio, boardroom, or working one-on-one with clients, this personal journey helps me connect with others who are seeking their own path to balanced wellness."

**Today's Dietitian (TD):** If you could talk with a 10-year-old you, what would you tell her about food, health, and wellness?

**Bannan:** As someone who struggled with weight as a child—a struggle that sparked my initial interest in nutrition—my message would be simple but powerful: It's more important to be strong than a certain weight. This shift in perspective from appearance to functionality, from restriction to nourishment, is something I wish I'd understood earlier. I'd want that young girl to know that her worth isn't tied to a

number on a scale and that true wellness comes from building physical and mental strength.

**TD:** What was it like to work at CNN, and how did you develop story ideas?

**Bannan:** The CNN experience was transformative. I discovered an immediate passion for broadcast news. Story ideas came from various sources—newly published research, emerging food trends, and seasonal themes like managing Halloween candy with kids. Sometimes, stories would originate from PR pitches, while others would evolve from print coverage that warranted broadcast follow-up. The key was always finding the intersection of nutrition science and what viewers needed to know.

**TD:** What was the catalyst that led you to found Wellness Intelligence?

**Bannan:** Wellness Intelligence was born from my personal experience with burnout and the realization that many ambitious women were struggling with the same challenges. As an RD and wellness coach who has fallen into the burnout cycle myself, I understand the complexity of juggling career, family, and self-care.





Our emphasis on preventing burnout through proven systems and micro habits sets us apart. We work with clients to create sustainable wellness practices that enhance their lives without overwhelming their schedules.

**TD: How did your “Eat, Live, Thrive” nutrition philosophy evolve?**

**Bannan:** It’s built on three core principles that evolved from years of seeing what does and doesn’t work in sustainable wellness. “Eat” emphasizes nourishing your body while maintaining a positive relationship with food. It’s about viewing food as one of life’s greatest pleasures and connectors, not something to fear. “Live” focuses on creating sustainable habits through small, powerful changes that compound over time. It’s about progress, not perfection, and recognizing that everyone’s journey is unique. We emphasize body kindness and positive self-talk; if you wouldn’t say it to a friend, don’t say it to yourself. “Thrive” encompasses the whole-person approach to wellness, including movement, stress management, quality sleep, and finding joy in daily life. It’s about building a life that energizes you rather than depletes you.

**TD: What’s involved with being a media spokesperson? How do brands connect with you?**

**Bannan:** My PR, broadcast, and print journalism background gives me a comprehensive understanding of both sides of the media equation. I can effectively translate a brand’s key messages while ensuring the content remains educational and valuable for viewers and readers. Most brand partnerships develop organically, with companies reaching out after seeing my work on various platforms. My approach to spokesperson work is always rooted in authenticity; I only partner with brands that align with my nutrition philosophy and values.

**TD: What inspired you to write *From Burnout to Balance*?**

**Bannan:** It emerged from my own burnout experience. The book is a labor of love that combines health guidance with healing recipes, a unique two-in-one approach that addresses both the why and how of recovery from burnout. It features the four core ailments related to burnout—mood, immunity, focus, and sleep—and

specific foods and strategies for each area. It includes over 60 plant-centric recipes and time and budget-saving tips because cooking should bring joy, not stress.

**TD: How do you approach recipe creation and meal plan development?**

**Bannan:** Recipe development is a creative process that varies depending on the context. Brand partnerships are about showcasing their product innovatively while keeping things accessible; think “five ingredients or less.” When I developed recipes for *From Burnout to Balance*, I created a detailed spreadsheet to ensure variety in cuisines and ingredients. I prefer offering meal plans as flexible frameworks rather than rigid prescriptions. My book includes meal plans for specific needs like mood support, immunity, focus, and sleep, but emphasizes that they should be personalized and adapted.

**TD: What is the secret of successful food styling?**

**Bannan:** My food styling journey is a testament to continuous learning. Not growing up in a cooking household, I knew I needed to enhance my culinary skills, especially as social media transformed food presentation expectations. About 10 years ago, I completed a culinary program. But the real game-changer was working with Sarah Powers, a Culinary Institute of America graduate and food photographer who approaches food as art. She taught me that food styling is about creating visual stories. Working with her elevated my presentation skills from basic TV-ready plates to artistic compositions that make viewers want to reach through the screen. Once you understand food styling principles, you can’t unsee them. Every garnish and setup takes on a new meaning!

**TD: What does your typical workweek look like?**

**Bannan:** Every week brings something different, which keeps things exciting! One day, I might be setting up lights and props for a virtual TV segment from my kitchen; the next, I’m onboarding new Wellness Intelligence coaching clients and developing their growth plans. I could be doing a quick turnaround print interview about favorite foods at Costco, then switching gears to create slides for an upcoming webinar on micro habits in the workplace. The variety keeps me energized and creative.

**TD: What do you do in your downtime?**

**Bannan:** Living in Los Angeles offers amazing opportunities for staying active: hiking, walking, biking on the beach path, or hitting a HIIT (high-intensity interval training) class. With a 7-year-old daughter, family time is precious. We love exploring museums and other local activities together.

**TD: What are some of your favorite meals or foods, and why?**

**Bannan:** While I love developing creative recipes for clients, my personal meals tend to be beautifully simple: yogurt with berries for breakfast and a hearty veggie soup for lunch. For dinner, I’m all about sheet pan and one-pot meals. One of my favorites is sheet pan salmon with asparagus and potatoes in a citrus miso dressing. We eat lots of fish and vegetables, keeping things fresh, nutritious, and not overcomplicated.

**TD: What are your favorite hobbies and why?**

**Bannan:** In developing Wellness Intelligence, I originally had five pillars of wellness: nutrition, movement, mindfulness, sleep, and community. Then I realized we needed a sixth: play. I now actively make time for play, such as spontaneous dance sessions with my daughter, catching an improv show with my husband, or trying something new just for fun.

**TD: If we were to peek into your pantry or refrigerator, what would we find?**

**Bannan:** My pantry always has an array of nut butters, canned tuna, various nuts and seeds, healthy salsas, canned beans, and tomato sauce for quick meal starters. My spice drawer is stocked with essentials like cumin, coriander, turmeric, and garlic powder. They’re my secret weapons for making simple dishes pop with flavor. The freezer is stocked with microwavable brown rice, quinoa, peas, broccoli, and spinach. They’re perfect for busy days and never go to waste. In the fridge, you’ll find plenty of leafy greens, carrots, bell peppers, cucumbers, apples, berries, yogurt, cottage cheese, and fresh fish. I’m a big believer in keeping nourishing staples on hand that can easily be combined into nutritious meals, even when life gets hectic. ■

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