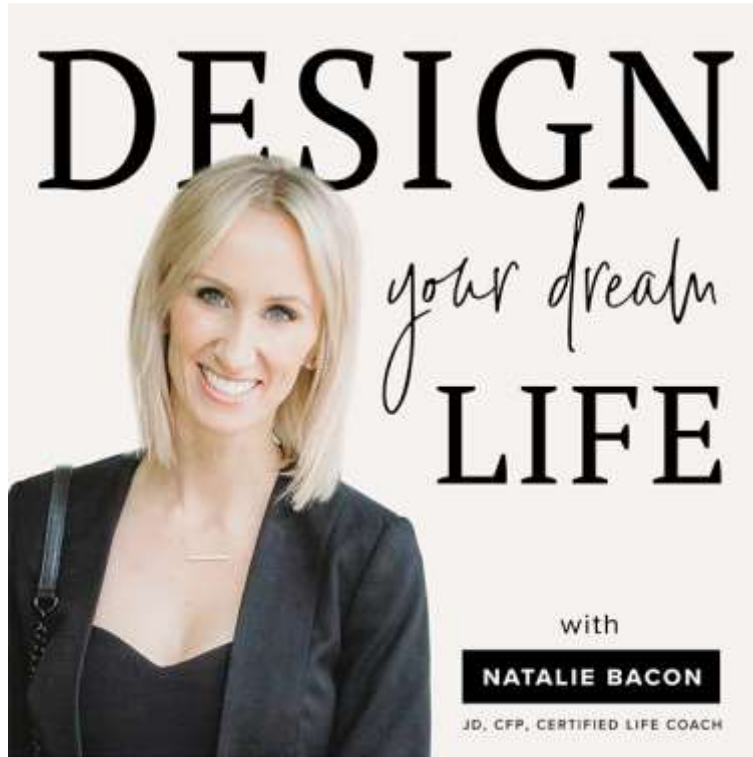


## Disagreeing with Family



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With Your Host

**Natalie Bacon**

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## Disagreeing with Family

Welcome to the *Design Your Dream Life Podcast* where it's all about designing your life on your terms and now your host, Natalie Bacon.

Hey there, friend. How you doing? I can't believe it's already November. We are working on relationships in Grow You right now and I have to say it's been a lot of fun talking about family and the holidays that are coming up and really kind of deep diving into strengthening our relationships. So, if you are not in there, come join us. We're having a lot of fun doing the hard work.

In my personal life I am also having a lot of fun. Steve and I sent out our save the dates and next up is working with a wedding planner to do some more things for our spring wedding. We've also been looking at houses and homes and figuring out whether and when we want to buy. Just all the things that are coming up in our lives in the next year or so, I'm looking forward to that.

So, I hope that even in the day-to-day, in the busyness of your life in whatever season you're in you create some space to think about and really put some intention behind and purpose behind the next year and beyond because, of course, as you know, you are the creator of all of it.

Today, I want to talk with you about disagreeing with family, particularly every year around the holidays there's a lot more coaching coming in inside Grow You about disagreements, arguments, fights, difficult family members, all of that, and I think it's just because the holidays are a container for seeing all of the issues that already existed. It's like putting a magnifying glass on them. I kind of think the same thing is true with any specific thing like planning a wedding, something like that.

But the holidays come around every single year and you might be thinking the same for your family. There might be that one family member who it's harder for you to connect with or relate to or get along with and I want to give you some really good tools to help you not just survive the holiday season, but really thrive and enjoy it regardless of who you're with.

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Sometimes we choose our family and that's our immediate family, our spouses, our kids, our friends, but that immediate family that we started, that nuclear family we didn't choose and how to still love them and enjoy ourselves in the process even with people who are very different from us.

So, I want to start with talking about how your brain wants to be right always. It really just goes around thinking that you're right and that other people are wrong and that being right is the most important thing. This is a survival mechanism. If you think about being around a family member who has a different political view than you or who is making life choices or parenting in a way that you don't agree with or just really giving some strong opinions that you don't like and don't agree with your brain is going to default to, "That's ridiculous. How could you even think that? That's obviously wrong." Things like that.

What your brain is doing is it's judging that circumstance. So, you're having a thought about whatever that person said. Any time your brain is going to this place where I'm right and you're wrong it's self-righteousness. We immediately judge someone else for being different and we create so much separation from that other person and we think that we're right and what we believe is true.

Now, that's not to say that you should all of a sudden change all of your beliefs and agree with everyone, but there's this subtlety that's really important here and it's the awareness that your beliefs are beliefs and they're not truths that exist outside of you.

So, we generally tend to believe that there's a truth that is separate from our beliefs and that what we believe is the actual truth and what that other person believes is not the truth. You can believe this, but just know that it's a choice. So, you're choosing the self-righteousness if you want to believe that. All along the way it's always just our opinions and our beliefs.

I always like to go back to the example of if a tree falls in the forest and no one's there to hear it does it make a sound? And the answer is no because sound is relative to your ears being able to hear it, so you need the human

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ears and the brain to process that sound. How that applies here is that opinions and beliefs and truths don't exist outside of your brain. That doesn't mean change your opinions and beliefs, it just means recognize that they are actually optional beliefs that you have and someone else has different beliefs. Just because they're different doesn't make beneath you. That's kind of what happens with self-righteousness. It's, "How could you think that? You're wrong and I'm right." You put yourself above other people.

What we do when we do this, and by we I mean myself included this is such a natural human tendency to do, so I'm not above this either where it's a tool that I use in my own life. How that works is I notice when it's happening and I slow it down and I make sure I'm not using that as a reason not to love someone.

So, let's say that you and your sister-in-law disagree about politics, you have very different beliefs. Most often, without getting coached or coaching yourself, you will use that difference in belief as a reason not to love her. So, you probably don't even want to hear her conversations or her opinions or her beliefs and you create this separation from her all while promoting your beliefs as if they're the truth and you lose that connection with her because you think that she's wrong and so you want her to be the same as you.

This is something else to notice how much we want people to be the same as us because we think that we're right. So, if we're right and everyone else or the people who it's hardest for us to be around if they're wrong then if they were just the same as us and believed differently then we could love them, then we could hang around them, then we could enjoy ourselves and enjoy them.

The truth is that you can actually enjoy other people who have different opinions and beliefs from you. It's just a skill that you probably haven't practiced before because on default your brain will judge. Because on default as survival it wants to be right. Without doing this what you end up doing is you end up hating people who don't believe what you believe and

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you end up negatively judging people for their judging. In coaching we call this mirroring. So, it's like hating the haters and judging the judgers.

For example, I was coaching someone in Grow You about her mom and she said that her mom is always talking about her sister and what her sister is going through behind her sister's back. She really disagreed with her mom and she didn't like how her mom always brought it up and was handling it. She totally disagreed with what her mom was saying about her sister as well and she thinks that her mom is wrong. What I helped her see and for you to see here in this example is that she's judging her mom for judging her sister.

So, when we do, it's very natural and normal, we're mirroring. We're judging the judgers. It's easier to do. It's really just taking on the other person's emotion and doing to someone else what they did to us and it doesn't even have to be an action. It, more or less, can just be the thoughts and the attitude, right? So, if someone's hating a certain group of people and then you hate that person for hating the group of people you're hating the hater. It's easier to do that than to slow down and choose your reaction intentionally, but it's so much more worth it because you fall into a place of feeling so much better instead of creating so much frustration and resistance in your relationships.

Really the solution to this desire to be right and creating so much more separation particularly with political beliefs or religious beliefs or anything else for you in particular that kind of pulls at your heart strings is for you to notice the thought that you're having about them. That's probably something like, "She's wrong," or, "They're wrong," or, "Other people are wrong," to notice that thought and to choose a different thought.

The thought that works really well for me is, "Other people are supposed to have different beliefs and opinions. They're not supposed to think and act just like me. That would be boring." It's such an ego thing to subconsciously think that the rest of the world should think and act like we do, but we all sort of do this, right? We see it in our judgments.

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If you've ever talked to a stranger or an acquaintance and just assumed that they would agree with you, that's an example of this. So, I can't really think of when I've done this recently, but it's definitely something I try to catch myself when I do it. It's connecting with someone just assuming that they're going to have the same beliefs as you because, again, the underlying belief there is that we're right and there's one universal truth outside of us and that's just not the case. When we remember that we can actually connect and love more even when people disagree with us, they have different opinions than us.

So, again, I like to kind of remind myself, "They're not supposed to think and act like me. That would be boring." Another one that works really well for me is, "Who am I to judge?" Or I like to bring it back to myself and say, "I get to choose my beliefs and my feelings and my actions not anyone else's. I can believe what I want and I can love them." It brings it back to self instead of worrying about what other people are thinking, feeling, and doing, and trying to control the world, and trying to control other people, and doing this from a sense of safety and desire for control so that there's more certainty.

It's really just your brain trying to do this to protect you. It thinks that it's really useful if it would do this, but it doesn't work if you've ever tried to do this and tried to control from that place of thinking that you're right and they're wrong. It feels terrible. It's disconnecting and it doesn't work. So, it's not really going to be useful for you.

Instead, what you can do is you can get out ahead of it and you can think, "Okay, I'm going to this family event. I'm going to be around people who have totally different opinions than me." You can ask yourself, "What kind of family member do I want to be? How do I want to show up? How do I want to connect with people who are different from me?" You can acknowledge their differences and be curious and open and accepting instead of trying to change them and thinking that they're wrong and that your belief is the universal truth.

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Now, this doesn't mean that you change your beliefs, but it does mean that you don't use differing beliefs as a reason not to connect and to love someone. You'll know if you're doing this right because you will feel more open and connected and curious. You won't feel tight and restricted and controlling and self-righteous.

I like to think of my friend who for a little while was on a meat-only diet and was so curious about it. I was talking with her about it and asking her questions and I genuinely wanted to understand it. I just as easily could have disagreed with her and told her I thought that was terrible and what that would do to her cholesterol. I could have been totally closed off and disagreed with her and what would that have done for me and for us? Right? Instead, I just really opened up to it and I still decided I didn't want to change my diet and my beliefs, but I was really open to hearing about how she was doing things and how they were different from me.

I will say that sometimes it's easier to do this. So, if you are not particularly passionate about food then this might be an easy area if you're talking with someone about their different diet. But if you are particularly passionate about politics then that's the area that it's going to be the most challenging for you. Now, this doesn't mean that you avoid politics, but it also doesn't mean that you have to beat yourself up about it if you do react.

Any time that you react or you feel a little bit self-righteous or you go into mirroring and judging, what you can do is you can just notice it and watch yourself. Watch yourself do it and have compassion for yourself as well and know that there absolutely will be another opportunity for you to use this work.

Now, I want to give a caveat. I talk about this a lot in *Grow You with Boundaries*. Just because you're choosing to love and connect and to accept differences doesn't mean that you have to say yes and spend all of your time with people who are different from you. That would probably be exhausting and harder for you to get on that energy level where it's easy for you to really connect.



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But if you are anything like me and a lot of the women I coach a lot of times around the holidays you do want to be around people, specifically your family, and that they do have different opinions and beliefs than you. So, if you're around someone who always swears around your children, you can still ask them not to swear and you can disagree with their language and even how they parent, but there's a difference between respecting them and loving them and disagreeing and coming from righteousness and thinking that they are wrong and that you're better than them, basically. So, what I want you to do is the former.

It's like I respect you, I love you, I see you, and I disagree with you and that's okay. This is a skill that's totally worth practicing. It will be new and different because we're just naturally trained and it's biological to mirror and to judge and to stay with our own pack without accepting other people intentionally and knowing that we can say no and disagree.

I like to think of RBG, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Antonin Scalia, former justices on the US Supreme Court who were great friends. So, if you haven't watched the RBG documentary on Amazon Prime I highly recommend it and they touch on this in there. These justices, one right wing, one left wing, had completely different ideologies and most often were writing opinions that were very different.

So, they were not together in the majority. They had very differing opinions and yet they enjoyed each other's company. They went to the opera together. They laughed, and were really great friends. Just to think about two humans in such great power and authority serving in such respected and important roles, in the Supreme Court of our country and knowing that they took that so responsibly when they were in the court and they still didn't let that get in the way of loving each other and being friends. That's what I mean. They were not married, but from a place of loving another human and deciding that they could still be friends.

I think it's just such a great example of how we can do that on a much smaller scale with our families and in our day-to-day lives and not use the differences to separate us. So, for you as you go into the holiday season

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think about the people who you'll be seeing who it's the most difficult for you to be around. So, that might be your sister-in-law, it might be your mother, it might be your uncle or an extended family member, but the person or maybe a couple people who really kind of "get under your skin" think about them ahead of time and assume that they're going to be exactly who they are.

They're going to say what they normally say, they're going to do what they normally do, and knowing that, can you get to a place of feeling really open around them? Can you change your thought from, "They're wrong and they're doing it wrong, they're doing life wrong," to a place of, "Oh, they're supposed to be that way. They're supposed to have different beliefs and different opinions from me and I'm so interested in how they got to be that way and what their thinking has been over the years and what their experiences have been, and their friends and job and all of the environmental circumstances that play into them forming these totally different opinions than I have" and seek to understand that. Kind of just like I did with my friend who was on that meat-only diet.

I talked about this before, the what if I'm wrong? What if I'm totally wrong? Even if you can't get to that place, if it's something you're more passionate about like politics or something else, you can still love them and respect them and disagree with them and be fascinated by their thoughts and opinions from their own brain. When you do this you end up respecting other people and they end up respecting you and you feel better because you're not trying to control the world. And you feel like you have stronger relationships because you're looking for that connection instead of looking for that separation.

If you haven't listened to that episode, the separation versus connection, listen to that. It will help you. I talk a lot about how our brains are always looking for danger and part of that is looking for what's wrong and we do that with people as well and what happens is we end up creating separation from them and missing what is right. You know what I'm talking

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about? If you ever think someone is so different from you and you have nothing in common and it's just so not true, it's just our brains.

You might both be women, you might both come from the same family, you might both come from the same state or even live in the same town now and both have kids and we tend to look for these little nuances and differences because maybe we have different political beliefs and yet there's so much we have in common that our brain isn't trained to look for.

So, you get to be the decider and I just want to encourage you to have your opinions and beliefs, but from a place of openness and curiosity, not from a place of self-righteousness. I'm telling you not only will you connect more and feel better in your relationships, but you're just going to feel better personally. You won't feel so frustrated or exhausted and you won't have such anxiety in the anticipation of being around people who it's traditionally harder for you to be around, particularly with family.

That's what I have for you today. Use this work and of course use it even if it's not around the holidays, any time you are disagreeing with anyone you can use these tools and get out ahead of it so that you're the decider of how you want to think and feel and not necessarily reacting or mirroring other people. I'll see you next week.

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