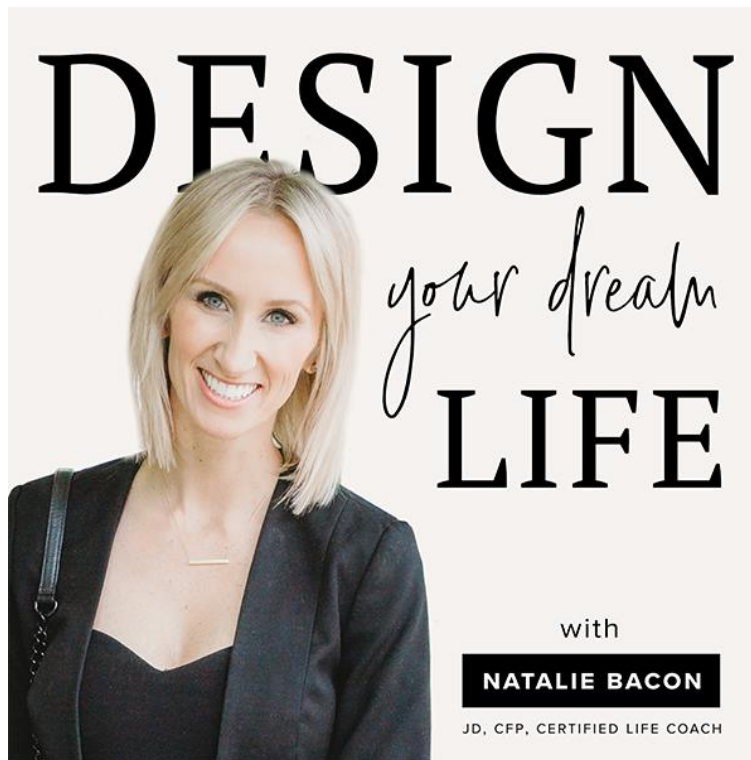


Deliberate Thinking Vs. Positive Thinking



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Natalie Bacon

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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.

Hello my friend. Welcome to the podcast. Today I have some news for you. Steve and I and Penny and our little family, we are moving to Charleston. I know last week I was just talking with you about how much we loved it, and we're doing it. We are moving. Really, it's brought up so many both positive and negative emotions for me. It's been a really good opportunity for me to coach myself. It got me thinking about the difference between positive thinking and deliberate thinking. So I want to talk with you about that today.

I really don't have any other details other than we are moving. We'll move this summer in a few months from the time this comes out. I'm taking my love of Chicago with me. We are going to give it a try knowing that we can always come back. I will probably do an episode sometime in the future about decision making. Particularly for big decisions. Because I used a lot of the tools for making this decision with Steve to kind of come to the decision we did come to.

So that's what's going on. It's going to be a big move. I've been in Chicago about three years. We'll see if we love it there, and we'll stay if we do. I mean we know we love visiting there, but we'll see if we love living there as well.

That is a perfect segue into the difference between deliberate and positive thinking that I really want to dive into with you today. I'm going to start off with a few definitions because I think that we throw around positive thinking, positive vibes. Seeing all the Instagram social media with all the positivity, and it's really meant for good. But we can end up using it against ourselves. So I think some definitions will be really helpful here.

So I'm defining positive thinking as thoughts that create a positive emotion for you. It's important that you have the for you in this definition because if I say money is easy and I feel a really positive emotion, that's positive thinking for me. If you say money is easy and you feel a negative emotion,

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that is not positive thinking for you. So it's a thought that you think that creates a positive emotion. Negative thinking is the exact opposite. It's thoughts that create a negative emotion for you.

Deliberate thinking is being intentional with your thinking. It's deciding on purpose how you want to think and feel about something. Okay. You might decide that you want to think positively. You might decide that you want to think negatively. The point is that you are doing it on purpose, and you like your decision and your reason why.

Positive thinking is something that we see a lot of, as I mentioned, on social media. Kind of with the year that we're in and with the amount of information input that we have access to with TV, social media, scrolling on our phones, on our computers. We're really flooded with information. A lot of it is threaded in positive thinking. I love a good Instagram quote just as much as the next person, but this can become a problem when we think that's how we're supposed to feel all of the time.

So positive thinking is half of it. The other half of being human is negative emotion. So you don't even really know what positive emotions are unless you have the negative. You wouldn't really understand what it means to feel happy and alive and living purposefully and all of the higher positive vibrations unless you had that contrast. You knew what the negative felt like.

I think that a term that comes up a lot when we're talking about positive thinking in a bad way that I want to talk a little bit about with you here is toxic positivity. So if you don't know anything about toxic positivity, you can go ahead and give it a quick Google search. There are lots of articles on it. The definition that I want to share with you is from Verywell Mind. The definition is, "Toxic positivity is the belief that no matter how dire or difficult a situation is, people should maintain a positive mindset. The attitude doesn't just stress the importance of optimism. It minimizes and denies any trace of human emotions that aren't strictly happy or positive."

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Okay. So basically toxic positivity is being positive all the time and eliminating any of the negative thinking or negative feelings. It happens in subtle ways. So one of the most obvious examples that I like to give is silver linings. So if you get news of something and your immediate reaction is to feel a negative emotion, immediately after that if you go to, "Well the silver lining is X, Y, Z," and then you just focus on that, you haven't given yourself any time to process the negative emotion. So what happens is you actually end up avoiding the negative emotion.

An example that's come up when I'm coaching in Grow You is someone's child is about to start daycare or school for the very first time. Ignoring the negative emotions that you have about it and trying to only look at the bright side is toxic positivity. So you deny the part of you that's really sad that this chapter of being a baby at home is over.

Contrast that with what coaching helps you do and what I coached on in Grow You about this is to think deliberately. So I'm so sad that this chapter is ending. I'm also really happy for my daughter. So it's not either or. It's and. It's I'm really sad this chapter's ending, and I'm really happy this chapter's starting. It's both.

I think that culturally we have toxic positivity woven into our society. So from a very young age we teach our children to avoid negative emotions. So you're feeling sad? Let's go get some ice cream. Let's cheer you up. There is a place for that, but that place is after we've processed the emotion.

So if you're married or you have a partner, you may have a partner who is a fixer. Like I tend to be a fixer. So what this means is that I want to fix the problem pretty immediately. So if Steve has a problem, I am more likely to want to problem solve and fix it than I am inclined to want to just sit there and do nothing. It's coming from a really genuine place of love. So when your daughter is really sad, you want to make her feel better. That's coming from love. You don't want to see someone that you love in pain.

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But what this can actually do is that can negate the negative part of the human experience. So you reinforce that feeling bad is not good. We shouldn't feel bad. So we grow up as adults who want to avoid feeling bad. When we're talking about emotions, there's really nothing to be afraid of. When you feel a negative emotion, it's uncomfortable and that's about it. What happens is we are so trained in avoiding negative emotions that we don't process them. Then we end up keeping them in our bodies and building them up, building up that resistance. Then they stay stuck in us and we actually make them bigger.

So if you've tried to feel better about something and you're trying to repeat positive thoughts. And you just have this negative thought underneath that keeps popping up and you wonder why. This is why. It's because you haven't allowed yourself to just feel the negative emotion about it. Because you think that you should be feeling differently, or you should be feeling positive.

So the goal with thinking deliberately is to recognize that feeling bad is part of it and that's not a problem. So the goal is to process and allow your negative emotions instead of trying to layer positive thinking on top of them, which never works.

Now, there is a part of this that you can take to the other extreme. So just like with toxic positivity and wanting to be happy all of the time where you are negating the negative part of the human experience, you can actually take it too far the other way. I tend to see this most when clients fall into a heavy victim mindset. So it's, "Poor me. Bad things always happen to me. He/they/the world did this to me. I can't change my life because of X, Y, Z." There's this apathy and self-pity in having this victim mindset.

Now, it doesn't mean that you weren't a victim sometime in the past. In fact, most people with the victim mindset were victims in the past. But we end up revictimizing ourselves when we keep this thinking pattern. So I'm just talking about the thinking pattern. I have personal experience with this. I used to be really, really well trained, and very practiced at having the

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victim mindset. So it's subtle. It's not like I'm walking around saying oh I'm a victim. It's like, "Oh I can't do X, Y, Z because of my student loans." Right?

I had to get out of having the victim mindset of my student loan debt in order for me to actually solve the problem. Because when you have that victim mindset, you basically are saying that I have a problem, but the creator of the problem is outside of me. When you abdicate responsibility for your problems, it's not just not true but it also makes it impossible for you to solve.

So if I blamed the government, my parents, the education system on my student loan debt, I never would have come up with creative solutions to get out of the student loan debt. Right? It might even be true. There might be some truth to whoever I want to "blame" on my student loan debt, but it's just not useful.

So I see this a lot as well if I'm coaching on divorce or even affairs where you didn't see something coming. You sort of feel like this is happening to you. What we want to shift that thinking from this is happening to me. Not necessarily right away to this is the best thing every. But instead there's this space in the middle for you to think deliberately. So you don't want to go to either extreme. You don't want to be thinking this overly negative victim mindset. You also don't want to be thinking this overly positive everything is rainbows and daisies mindset. You want to be in the middle where you have the good and the bad.

So if your husband had an affair and then he filed for divorce, you may decide after you process the immediate shock and heartbreak that the way to think deliberately about this for you is this is devastating. This is hard. I know I can create my future. I know I was made for this. I didn't plan it to be this way, but this is the way it is. I can do really hard things. I can feel devastated, and I can feel like I have power over my future.

So there's this space for the and instead of this all or nothing black or white thinking where it's either all really, really positive or all really, really

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negative. The space in between is what I call being human. So you're not trying to be positive all the time. You're also not being negative all of the time. You are both. You're deliberately positive and negative.

You're positive about what you want to be positive about. Like, "I can do hard things, and I am looking forward to creating my future. I'm excited that my daughter is going to daycare and school." But you also honor what you want to have negative emotions about. "I'm really devastated I'm getting divorced. I'm sad that the chapter of baby girl being at home is ending." So you're really present with your emotions. When you are present with the good and the bad and you're really honest about that for yourself, you will feel so much more empowered.

So this came up for me with respect to moving to Charleston. I am so happy and appreciative of this next chapter that's to come. And I'm also sad to leave Chicago. I love Chicago. I'm taking this love for Chicago with me. So I can make the decision kind of from my prefrontal clear minded brain, and then I can allow both the happy and the sad. I don't have to push away and avoid the sad, which is typically what we do as humans. We try to avoid that negative emotion. Then that makes it bigger.

So we're constantly able to escape those negative emotions with food or if you drink alcohol or Netflix or shopping. It's really easy to do. If you notice, you're always kind of rushing around and you're not allowing yourself to tap into how you feel. So that emotion just comes with you. So think about your life and think about any area where you may be trying to be really positive in a way that leads to toxic positivity. Where you are not allowing yourself to feel negative emotion.

I remember I had this experience last Christmas when I couldn't go see my grandma because of COVID. I wanted to be happy and enjoy Christmas, which I did, and I also wanted to be sad that we couldn't be with her on Christmas day. So toxic positivity would have said, "Let's just only look at the positive here. She's healthy. She's safe. We're healthy. We're safe."

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We're having Christmas separately." Like I would only have honored the good, and it would have totally dismissed any negative emotion.

You can get in the habit of doing this. So what you get in the habit of doing is running from feeling negative. You can't outrun your emotions. It's exhausting if you try to do this.

So in that example, what I did was I made sure to really honor being sad about it. Now I didn't sulk in self pity all day and think the world is horrible. What I did was I allowed myself to feel sad. I allowed myself to really be present and enjoy Christmas day.

This is a skill that you can practice, but it's not something that comes naturally. It's definitely not something that we are taught. This is why I love coaching so much. One of the quick kind of actions that I think you can take. I've talked about this a little bit before. I definitely talk about it in Grow You. Is to sit in silence every day for ten minutes. So why this works is because you will get out of running. You will get out of the rush and out of your head. I want you to tap into your body when you do this. So notice the feelings and stay connected to your body.

So I don't want you to explain where your feelings are coming from, but I want you to really connect with your body. So if you are feeling sad, where is the emotion in your body? What does it feel like? Really connect with your body and get out of your head. Which if you're anything like me, you are a fast thinker and a little bit of a high achiever. You're in your head a lot. I think most of us as like that.

So sitting in silence every day and getting out of your head and into your body. Even though you're technically still thinking, you're just thinking about your body. It will bring a different level of awareness to your emotions that you may have not had.

So if you're in the habit of running from those negative emotions even if it's just subtly. Like, "Oh, I don't have time to be sad right now. I'm just going to

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go do something else.” This is a way for you to say, “Okay I am going to honor my feelings. I am going to notice that I am sad. I am not going to make it mean anything about me. I definitely am not going to run from it.” If you do this, it will be pretty uncomfortable because it will force you to face the emotions you’ve been avoiding and running from.

So we all have our least favorite emotions. Asking you to sit with them for ten minutes can be very challenging. So just this exercise alone can be challenging if you're not used to just sitting in silence at all. You really can't do it wrong if you do it consistently. So just sit ten minutes a day. Make sure you don't lay down because your brain sort of associates laying down with sleeping. So we don't want to encourage you to fall asleep here.

You just want to sit. I like to sit on the floor. I sit by my window. Sometimes I sit kind of cross legged and either my hands are up or down. I set my timer on my phone and I just breathe. I notice the breath. I just tap into my emotions. Again, focusing on how you're feeling. Focusing on your breath.

The reason that this works is because it's going to bring attention to your feelings so that you stop running from those negative feelings so that you allow the good and the bad. You allow space for you to really be that human being instead of the tendency that we have, which is to cover up the negative emotion, to feel better right away, to beat ourselves up and judge ourselves when we feel bad. Because we open up Instagram and we see the positive messages, which are designed to help us and certainly can in some instances.

We just want to make sure that we are also allowing ourselves space to feel the negative emotion. To be both happy and sad. That space in between going too far positive and too far negative. Coming back to the center and really being steady with our thinking and thinking deliberately so that we feel these positive and negative emotions right in the center there. Which I think is the most authentic and genuine way to live. All right. That's what I have for you today. I will see you next week.

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