

7 Ways I've Decluttered My Life



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.

Hey there. Welcome to the podcast. I'm so happy to be here with you. I have so much going on in my life in a really good intentional way. But it feels like this rebirth right now. I get married this month. We're moving in a couple months to Charleston. Just a lot of really amazing things that feel really big for me. So I've been allowing myself to have those feelings of anticipation and nervousness. So it's been really fun. I'm just excited about it, happy about it. Feel really good and intentional on how I made these decisions. I love sharing that part of my life with you here.

What else is going on? So I want to invite you to apply to the creator program. It's now open to applications. So head on over to nataliebacon.com/creator-program. We recently updated that page with so much detailed information that you can find. This program is specifically for you if you want work with me closely in a mastermind for learning how to build your online business.

So it's all about how I built my online business. There is an entire program that I teach. Also you work with me very closely on coaching calls and in a private community. You will join the other amazing students in there as well. If you have any questions about this, I'm actually going to hold an open Q&A. I will be there answering all of your questions. It is happening Wednesday April 13th. You can find all the information at nataliebacon.com/webinar. You can register there.

Again, even if you're on the fence it will be a really great place for you to come and listen in to other people's questions and ask any questions that you may have if you're not sure. We get a lot of questions into email, which is fine. If you want to ask me anything directly about online business and about the creator program, this is going to be the best place to do it. So that will be a lot of fun.

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What else is going on? We are into April. In Grow You, I am teaching a brand-new class called declutter your surroundings. It is amazing. It's brand-new content that I've never taught before. I think it's one of the best courses I've ever created. The workbook that goes along with it might as well be a book. It is so thorough.

It really walks you through how to declutter your home, your clothes in your wardrobe, the food you consume, and information input. Like TV, social media, all of that sort of information input. Books, podcasts. Decluttering your time and decluttering your money. So in those six areas, I am helping you declutter all month.

I think that part of living intentionally includes that productivity and goal setting and knowing how to get it done. But the other part of it that's equally as important is understanding how to declutter and simplify because you create so much space to live intentionally.

So up until about 25 or 30 years ago, we lived a lot more simply. Then imports into the United States increased and stuff started to really take over. So if you google images about what homes looked like in the 40s or 50s, they looked very different in terms of the amount of stuff that was in homes. You may have had grandparents or great-grandparents or even older parents who kind of follow this rule. Where their amount of stuff was really a lot less because they grew up in a different era before stuff sort of started to take over.

So as time's gone on and the laws and regulations have changed and technology has improved for the better in so many ways, it's become easier and easier to have more. I want to offer to you that having more stuff isn't always better. More without less is actually much worse. What I mean by that is if you're constantly purging and letting go of the old and bringing in new, that can be really amazing.

But what most people do before they declutter is they simply just bring in more. They don't let go of. They don't declutter. They don't donate, simplify,

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and have an organized system so that when more comes in, they're removing some of the items. If we're doing it numerically, let's say there's always ten of something. So when three more come in, you want to let go of three so that way ten remains. Instead of going from 10 to 13 to 16 to 19 and so on. That's kind of the habit that we get into really unconsciously. We don't even know that we're doing it.

When you add so much to your life, you actually end up stacking your circumstances against you. So it's so much harder for your brain to operate when there's stuff everywhere. You know this, right. You may find yourself going into overwhelm or anxiety or even a lot of hurry because there is so much around you. Your brain is just in that overload. Like there's too much of everything. You haven't given your brain the space, the simplicity, the peace that it really needs.

I was doing research for this upcoming research for this episode. I was taken to a YouTube video. One of the videos that I watched talked about how at childhood, we take naps, right. All the babies and the little ones, they take naps. And how you can be so overwhelmed as a child right before a nap or you might have a tantrum, or your baby is throwing a fit. As parents, we don't really worry. We just say, "Oh, it's naptime." We put them down for a nap, and we know that an hour later they are going to be in much better spirits.

The same is sort of true for adults except we don't give ourselves that space. So we plan events. We go to meetings. We work. Then we have family. Then it's go, go, go, go, go, go. We don't create space for either a literal nap or our version of a nap, just creating some space for nothing. So what happens is we end up having adult tantrums or adult meltdowns, which is usually insomnia or anxiety or overwhelm. Kind of some of those buzzwords that you may be familiar with yourself as well.

I think that decluttering on purpose is one of the best solutions that you can use to really take some control back of how you are feeling and living. This doesn't mean that you're sacrificing. This doesn't mean that you all of a

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sudden were going to go from having stuff and living in abundance to living with nothing and living in a box with nothing in it or something like that. I don't mean that at all. What I mean is to live deliberately so that the stuff that you have and keep is stuff that you truly would rechoose if you were in the store.

So many of us just add to what we have without removing what no longer is serving us because we have some old thought patterns about waste or attachment. We haven't done the mental work to realize that we can keep the love and we can keep the connection to the item. We don't actually have to keep the item.

So, again, if you are new to this and you want to take it a lot deeper, I really invite you to join us in Grow You at nataliebacon.com/coaching. I can help you do this. I am really passionate about it, especially as I simplify a lot of my time in this season of life. Sort of reinvent myself and grow. It's been really fun for me to do. I've done this a lot in the past as well in other areas, which is what I want to talk with you about today. I'm going to talk with you about seven areas of my life that I've simplified and that I've decluttered, and how it's made such a big difference.

The first way that I've decluttered is in our home. We recently, a few months ago, redecorated. We decided that we wanted to do the full process of decluttering, which meant taking inventory of everything, deciding deliberately would we rebuy these items? Or are they not sort of rising up to meet us where we are this phase of life? The truth was that for us our home sort of felt like a hodgepodge of a lot of my stuff, some of his stuff, and sort of a collection of our old apartment lives separately.

So what we wanted to do was create a really sophisticated home that actually was very warm and approachable at the same time. So we redecorated. It sounds like it would be so fun, and a part of it was, but the other part of it was actually really hard. Letting go of things, selling things, removing items, choosing the items we wanted. That whole process we did on purpose, but I have to tell you that it took about six months all in all for

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us to really remove everything. Rebuy, get some things made, donate. There was this whole process we went through.

It was full of it's ups and downs, but I have to say it was so worth it. Our home is such a reflection of us as a couple now. It doesn't just reflect the beauty of the design, but it also just feels like our home. We really took some time and intentionality into each room and into our living space. We did this in our current home.

So initially we had the thought we'd wait until we bought or moved. We decided why would we do that? Why wait when we can do this now and bring it with us? So I'm so glad we did that. We're so happy with the results. We're going to bring everything with us to Charleston. It will all fit beautifully in our new home. That's really fun and exciting.

So I think what's made the biggest difference is that we created the mental space to do this. Right down to the very silverware we have. We got new silverware. It sounds like such a small thing, and it is, but it's made such a big difference. We used to have all of this hodgepodge silverware from our different walks of life. Just that little change. So it doesn't necessarily have to be that you do some big change, but for us that was one change that made a really big difference.

So when we're eating, we're eating with this heavier, nicer silverware. We are basically setting up our environment, our circumstances, to make it really easy for us to love the space that we're in.

Some of you may have seen that we've teased a little bit of our home on Instagram and shown some areas of it. A lot of you love it and say how beautiful it looks. We agree. We really love it as well. I also want to mention that we've consciously decided that it doesn't need to look perfect. Everything doesn't need to look put away. Do we keep it clean? Yes. Are toys around for Penny? Also yes.

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So we never want to have too many toys. We have a basket for Penny's toys, and they stay in there. So whenever someone gives us toys for Penny, she gets a lot of gifts. She has a lot of dog friends. They give her gifts. That's lovely. So typically what we do is we add in those gifts, then we donate those other gifts. If they're kind of older toys, we throw them away if they're not suitable to sort of donate.

So it's not that we don't ever have anymore coming in. It's just that we let go of the toys at the same time. There's often toys all around. I kind of like that. I like my house to be lived in. I like my house to feel like oh, this is our family enjoying the home. Okay.

So that's kind of how I think about it as well when we have kids for the future. It's not that all the toys have to be put away and everything has to be perfect. Maybe there's a certain time of day where as a family we clean up. Or maybe I want to clean up sometimes. Maybe anytime there's new toys that come in, some toys go out.

Recently I was following someone who on Instagram shared about how at Christmas when Santa comes and bring X amount of toys, ahead of time we decide with the kids that same amount of toys that we have we're going to donate. So Santa's going to bring you three toys. So what we get to do ahead of Santa coming is choose three toys that we're going to donate to another little boy and girl and their family. I love this idea. I think that this is something I'll definitely keep in mind for my future, right.

Another example of how we really want to keep our home the way that it is is that we decided not to register for our wedding. Instead, we choose a charity so our guests can donate kind of in our name. It's a way for us to kind of maintain the simplicity of our home. We did this particularly because we don't need anything. We have a home together. We pretty much have it furnished. There's really nothing we need to register for.

Now, is that to say I would do the same thing if I was having a baby? Probably not because I don't have closest of baby stuff. So there's not

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necessarily a one size fits all. I'm sharing sort of what I do so hopefully that can just inspire you with different ideas for how you might think of how it applies to your life.

Okay. The second way that I've decluttered is my wardrobe. I've been doing this for years. I only wear neutrals. So when I first decide this rule for my life, it's a constraint that I put on. It was full of discomfort because I went through my entire closet and donated everything that didn't fall into what I considered neutral. It was a really big purge at that time. Since then I have to say that this rule in my life has been life changing.

What it's meant is that even as my style evolves, I stick within the neutrals so that anytime I bring something new in, I donate something from my closet. So I never have a closet that's packed full of stuff that I can't see. Or the hangers are all smushed together or there's bags of clothes around. I don't want to live like that. I want to know that if there's something that I want in the future, I can always get it. I can always find a way to get it. It's not serving me to hold on to something that I haven't worn in over a year.

So typically whenever I bring something new into my wardrobe, I let go of something else. I donate it. I'm constantly having this flow. I compare it to money. So you're always creating more and making more money, and you're spending more money. You don't want to do that at either extreme. There's just this sort of flow. Money comes in, money goes out. Same thing with clothes. Clothes come in; clothes go out.

So think about rules that you have for your clothes. You already have some. Maybe you don't like to wear long skirts, something like that, or heels. The key here is to now do it a little bit more consciously. It doesn't need to be neutrals. It can be whatever you want. Just to simplify your life and declutter it, I'm telling you there's so much freedom around this. Because I like clothes. I like style. I like to dress in a way that makes it really easy for me to feel good. I want to do this in a way that's really quick and easy.

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So I don't want to spend a lot of time on it because it's not something that I value that much in terms of where I want to spend my time. I want to spend my time creating content for you and running my business and being with my family. I don't want style to take up a huge amount of my time. So how can I put some intentionality behind it while also minimizing the amount of time I spend? Create some rules ahead of time. That's what I've done, and it's worked so well.

Another way that I've decluttered my life is through not drinking alcohol. So typically when we think of decluttering, we think of stuff. We think of your closet. We think of the sock drawer. I want you to take a much broader approach to this. Now think about the food and drinks that you put in your body. So, for me, I decided to quit drinking alcohol almost a couple years ago. It has served me so well. I have no mental chatter about it.

This is something that I feel really empowered by. I love that I created the rule. Since I'm the one creating the rule, I can always decide. So if in a few years I decide that I want to bring alcohol back into my life, I absolutely can do that. So there's no alcohol has power over me. There's none of that. I am the one with the power. I'm the one who decides. I've decided right now I don't want to drink alcohol.

So are there certain drinks in your life that you want to just cut out completely and sort of declutter? What happens is all of that chatter that I used to have about, "Oh am I going to drink tonight? Am I going to have a few drinks? What does that mean for the morning? Should I get this alcohol?" All of that chatter, gone. So what it does is it creates more space for the true desires that I have.

So when I used to think about my highest self, I would really just envision someone who didn't drink. So I thought let's give this a try. If you haven't listened to the two episodes I've done on becoming a conscious drinker and my year without alcohol, listen to those. It really stems from being intentional about what you let into your life. Whether that's physically in your closet, in your home, or whether that's into your body. I think that

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when you simplify your food and you declutter your food, your body actually feels so much better.

The next way that I've done this is with meat. I haven't eaten meat in years. For some of you who don't like meat, this doesn't seem like a big deal. I used to be a big meat eater. I loved steak. I loved really good meat. My dad was an excellent cook. My brother and brother-in-law are excellent cooks. It was really challenging for me at first. It's so interesting because now I will not even have a bite of it. I do not like meat at all.

It's fascinating that my brain's done this because I don't feel that way about alcohol at all. If it's around, I have pretty much no feelings about it. Like I don't care. I keep it in the house for other people. When we have guests over, Steve drinks here and there. But with meat, we do not have it in the house. I don't cook it. Steve doesn't eat it. It's just not part of our life. That doesn't mean that I think meat is inherently bad. So maybe down the road I change my mind. Maybe we reintroduce that. It's been really useful. I've just loved the results that it's created in my life to not have it.

Now, we do eat seafood. Typically limit most some animal products, but not as strict as we do with meat. So this is just a way to be more conscious about what is going into your body. If it feels a little bit overwhelming, I don't want you to kind of just avoid it because of that. Just take one area. What's one food that you can eliminate and declutter from your life? You already do this in so many ways. There's already a group of food that you don't eat. There is already groups of drinks that you don't eat.

I was just talking to one of my best friends about making guac and how I use cilantro. She is one of the people who hate cilantro, right. You guys know there's people who it just tastes really bad in their mouth. Like iron. Like it's a totally different taste for them. So that's a category that she just doesn't eat at all. There's no drama about it. She's not like, "Should I put cilantro on this or should I not?" There's just no cilantro.

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We do this in bigger ways as well. We don't drink certain types of alcohol. We don't take prescription drugs or other drugs. So you already have these rules. The key is to look at what you're eating now and drinking now and see if there's anything that you can just eliminate. Particularly if you're having a lot of mental chatter about it. So if you're someone who has a lot of mental chatter about alcohol, imagine what your life would be like without that. Or maybe it's fried food. Pick a category, create that rule for yourself, and you will find that it can be so, so helpful and empowering.

Again, you're the creator of these rules. So you can always change your mind. I don't like to ever go into one of these rules and declutter with the intent of bringing it back because then I think you don't really go all in. Like that's why I don't like the 30-day cleanses because you're just counting down the days until you can reintroduce that.

Instead what I like to do is okay, for the foreseeable future I'm going to cut this out. Then I can redecide. Every few months maybe I'll check in with myself. Do I want to start drinking again? No, definitely not. So that's kind of how I think about it and like to help you all think about it.

Okay next up is television. I've decluttered TV from my life for several years. Now not all TV. I have a TV. We have a TV in our home. We have one TV. I love watching shows with Steve and I love watching movies with Steve as a family. I don't have cable or regular sort of TV channels at all. So we only have apps. This works really well for us because it allows us to watch the types of shows and movies that add value to our life and how we like to spend our time and our relationship. But it doesn't cause a problem for me.

So I love the housewives. If I had Bravo, I would probably get sucked into watching housewife after housewife after housewife episode. It would require so much more mental chatter and strength for me to limit that in my life if I kind of dabbled. So I just don't have Bravo. I kind of think of the housewives as eating cake. So I can eat cake here and there. It's not a problem. If I have a constant flow of cake in my kitchen and I am eating

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cake every day, even though it feels good short term it's going to have a really negative long-term effect on my body.

The same is true for those shows that really you feel a pull to and you get that dopamine hit from. That's how I feel with the housewives. Pretty much all of them. I enjoy them in a way where I know that long term it's really not good for my brain. Like I don't want that to be the 90% of information input that I put into my brain.

Now, that doesn't mean that I don't want to watch any housewives or that there's a problem with the housewives. I still watch them when I go to someone else's house or if they're on or somewhere else. But in my home, I don't want that to be a temptation. So I declutter my TV in that way. I sort of have a rule about the input that flows through the TV. It works really well for us.

Next is the news. So I don't watch the news regularly on TV. So there's this idea out there that watching the news on TV makes you more responsible. In fact, I will sometimes hear people say, "I know I should watch more of the news." That is not true. What may be true is that you want to be more informed about what's going on in the world. That is very different than binge watching the news. The difference is in how it feels.

So in the last several decades, the news has really been commoditized. Now it's one 24/7 with the sole purpose of ratings, which are at it's highest when the news is showing dangerous and scary information. You will have so much more anxiety and worry about stuff that you can't and won't change simply by watching more of the news.

So what I do instead is that I find other ways to be informed. So if I want to know about COVID rules, I'm going to go to my state's website and I'm going to go to the CDC website instead of streaming five hours of the news on repeat. Because all that's doing is programming my brain for worry and danger and fear. So I want you to just think about this and thinking about how you feel after you watch the news.

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I will never forget one of my lawyer friends. She was having a baby a few years ago. Her OB-GYN asked her to stop watching so much news and limit it to half hour a day because it was stressing out the baby the amount of news that she was watching. Because it was causing my friend to not be able to manage her brain that easily. So this is what I mean by setting up your circumstances for success. It's not the news that makes you feel a certain way. It's just that it's so much harder to manage your brain when you have six/seven hours of the news streaming.

When you understand the business of the news, it's nothing against the news. It's just that too much of it is a problem. I think that socially we've not been taught this. Socially we think that there is this status. Like if you are always watching the news, you're more responsible and a better contributor of society in some way. Sort of generalizing here. Just think about that and think about how much of the news you watch. Do you need to limit it?

The same would be true for something like social media. If you're constantly scrolling, it's making it so much harder for your brain to think deliberately and intentionally. Before you know it, you're sucked into a rabbit hole. That's really where my work is. In the next level would be probably some sugar constraints and some social media, particularly in decluttering in those areas.

Okay. The last area that I want to talk with you about is my bank accounts. So I have had decluttered bank accounts for, I don't know, a decade. It's been lovely. So I highly encourage you to take inventory of your money. The way that I do it is I have one checking account. I have one savings account. Then I have business accounts. I have one business account, and I have one business savings account. So personally one checking, one savings. Business, one checking, one savings. I have one credit card. That's it. Okay then I have investment accounts, two. That's it. That's all I need.

Now at a certain point, you get so wealthy that you want to diversify. If your bank account is only insured up to \$250K, and you want to have multiple

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bank accounts to make sure that it's FDIC insured, do it. That is typically not the problems that we are facing. Typically the problems are, "Oh, I used to live here so I have this bank account. Then I used to live there so I had that bank account. Now I have this one. Now I have six or seven."

We went through this together actually as a couple with Steve. We simplified a ton of his because it was just too much clutter. There wasn't a need for it. If you have a reason for these bank accounts and you really like your reason, that's one thing. Typically what happens is we just add more bank accounts because a circumstance in our life changes like we move. So we're not by that bank anymore. So we add one. What we don't do is we don't go close the other one.

So, of course, I'm not giving you specific financial advice. I want you to do that yourself with your financial planner if you have one or do some research on your own. What I want to invite you to do is to think about are all of these bank accounts and credit cards really necessary? How much mental space are they taking up? Or are there just so many that I'm not even giving any attention to them? Like I love that I just log into one place and I see my banks accounts. It's amazing.

If I had seven bank accounts at four different banks, I wouldn't be able to give all of my financial attention to each of them. It would be split up at four different logins for seven different accounts. I want you to just question are all of these accounts really useful? Do you love them? Are they helping you? Are they adding value to your life or is it just making it harder, and you just haven't taken the time and been deliberate about closing them down?

I know that the bankers and the people who have sort of a stake in you having multiple accounts will try to convince you that you need multiple accounts. Often it is just not true. So just question it. Just think about it for yourself. Really think about what feels right to you. I love just having the simplicity of a checking and a savings. That's it.

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Kind of a final note that I want to bring up here is that you may find you confuse being productive with being busy. So the key is not to do more all of the time. The key is to do more in less time. So yes, you want to produce at an extremely high rate, but then you want to balance that out with a luxurious amount of space in your life for simplicity and rest and recharging. It's like getting those baby naps in.

Typically we've sort of glorified busy. We don't do this for ourselves. We don't create the space for the adult version of a nap. Whether it's reading a book or just hanging out or going for a walk or just not having anything planned.

So what I want to do personally and as your coach is empower you to see that you can have both. That having both is actually harder, but it's so much better. To be able to produce and set goals and create in a specific designated amount of time that you want to designate that to. And to have this space for you to simplify and just be. To rest so that your brain doesn't go into that "to do list overwhelm".

That is the part that we are focusing on this month. I invite you to join me in Grow You. I think you're really going to love this content and this new class. Head on over to nataliebacon.com/coaching. I would love, love, love to coach you on that. I will talk with you next week.

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