

Marriage Seasons



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With Your Host

Natalie Bacon

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Marriage Seasons

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 have a fun announcement for you. Next week on Thursday September 30th at 1:00 p.m. eastern, I am hosting a Creator Program information call that I would like to invite you to. This is where you're going to learn all of the information about the new business program.

So I referenced this before, but there are going to be two offers. One that is what most of you will likely join. It's a lower priced, very affordable option, particularly if you're just starting out or making a few thousand dollars a month. You will get lots of stuff, the coursework, the curriculum, all of it to help you grow your business. Then there's going to be a high end mastermind with me where the spots will be limited. I haven't offered this before.

So I want to make sure that you get all the information that you need. So it's going to open on October 1st. So the day before, on September 30th, I'm going to host a live call. The replay will be available, but you do have to register. So you can head on over to nataliebacon.com/business, and you can register there to attend live and get the replay for that creator program information call.

I'm really excited for this next round of students and this new program, especially for those of you who have just been feeling pulled and called to make a career change or up level your business or grow it. I think there's no better time than right now. We're going to do it, and we're going to have a lot of fun.

That's not what we're talking about today. Today we are talking about marriage and seasons in marriage. So I coach a lot of women in Grow You on marriage. It's one of the topics that I coach most on. What I wanted to bring to you today are life coaching tips that I think can help you when you are in a marriage, and you are experiencing a new season.

[Design Your Dream Life](#) with Natalie Bacon

Marriage Seasons

Whenever I'm talking about a term, I like to define it. Here I'm simply defining season as a change. It could be a change in your circumstance like one of you is having a really hard time at work or loses a job. You have a child who is struggling some way. You get a diagnosis, or you have a big birthday like turning 40. You could be pregnant or you're just postpartum or you have small kids at home.

So when you think about when you first met your spouse, that was a season. The courtship was a season, that period of dating. Then there was a change, you were engaged. That period was a season. Then you got married, and that was a change. That season was your newlywed season. So whenever there is a change, I think there is a change in seasons.

It doesn't necessarily have to be a circumstance change like you just gave birth or you just got married or you just turned 40. Instead it could be you have internally changed. It could be you're feeling different. It could be there is a change in your spouse. So I like to think of seasons as contrasted with each other.

So if you think about the weather seasons and you think about summer and spring and fall and winter, the way that we know there are seasons is because of the changes. So if it was constantly one temperature and the weather was one way, we wouldn't have seasons. So there's that contrast. We know what winter is because we have summer. We know what spring is because we have fall.

In the same way, I think that relationships, particularly marriages and loving relationships, have seasons. When we don't anticipate there being seasons, I think that's when we can cause ourselves the most pain. Because we want it to go back to a different season. Go back to the way things were, and they're not. They're different now.

Another analogy that resonates really well with my clients and students in Grow You is the analogy of dancing. If you think of different types of dances. You have hip hop and modern and ballet and jazz and tap and

Marriage Seasons

ballroom and Irish and folk and all the other types of dances. When you are dancing one way, that is the habit that you're in for that season. So you alone can decide you're going to change the dance, and that will change the way that your spouse interacts. Because either he's going to start dancing with you in this new way or he's not, but either way there will be a disruption.

I think having this visualization of dancing can be really powerful. Because a lot of times my clients get worried about how to bring up and communicate these changes that they want to make and have for their own lives. I like to remind them that it's a dance, and you can always change the dance again. So if you are dancing modern and you want to try jazz, and then you try jazz and it's not working, there are so many other dances that you can try. So thinking of your relationship and your marriage as seasonal and having seasons and how those seasons can be represented by this dance that you're doing with each other.

If you are in a season where there's a lot of tension in your relationship or it's a particularly challenging season, labeling it as a season and viewing it in that way can be very helpful for you to want to work through it and know that it is just a season instead of wanting to leave the dance all together. Of course there is always that option. I want you to feel empowered to do that, but I like to think of it in this way of seasonality and dances so that the first option isn't always, "Well, this is just too hard. I can't do this." Wanting to leave when it's the hardest.

So I have a few steps for you that I think will really help you for how to handle different seasons in your marriage. The first step is to notice that there's been a shift. Whether it's in you, your partner, or your circumstances. Let's say that you have a baby. That is a big change. That is a new season. I think what happens is that our brains are so used to being in the pattern of the old season that we want to carry with us the same dance in this new season, and it doesn't work.

Marriage Seasons

If you try to do what you've always done pre-baby, well, you have the baby. That isn't going to work. I remember experiencing this when I first got pregnant. I talked about this in the mom-to-be mindset tips episode where my capacity changed so much. Just noticing that, noticing that my physical capacity had changed allowed me to change how I saw myself during that season of that first and second trimester. That was really powerful because instead of expecting myself to operate how I used to operate pre-pregnancy, I decided to change my capacity for myself and really do that intentionally. So I had a new level of 100%.

So step two is to create new expectations for yourself during this new season. So let's say you just had a baby. Start asking yourself questions like now what? Who do I want to be right now? How do I want to show up? How do I want to take care of myself and my baby and my marriage? What do I want to do differently? How do I want to think and feel about what's happening?

So in the example of just having a newborn, you probably want more support than ever to make sure that you're taken care of so that you can take care of baby. I think that the more you bring awareness to this being a specific season, the more you'll feel empowered to get the help that you need instead of thinking that it should be how it was before.

One of my girlfriends had a baby recently. She was, I think, two or three weeks postpartum, and she did a peloton ride. She was talking about how that was such a bad idea. She kind of learned her lesson and isn't going to do it anymore. What she noticed was how she was trying to go back to how she was before instead of redefining this as its own season that's really worth defining and honoring and creating new expectations for yourself during it. Right?

A lot of times we want to rush out of the season. We want to rush out of summer, for some of you, right? Whatever season you don't like, you might want to rush out of. If you're still in that season and you can't rush out of it, right. There's a new baby at home. You want to bring awareness to that

[Design Your Dream Life](#) with Natalie Bacon

Marriage Seasons

fact and get really grounded in deciding how you want to show up, and how you want to take care of yourself, and how you want to make sure you're taken care of.

I think the next step is to give up this idea of fairness. I see fairness as this concept that means well. Wouldn't it be nice if everything was just fair all the time? Of course. But that isn't actually how it is. So when we think it's supposed to be a way that's different than it actually is, we end up causing us so much pain. So I think thinking everything should be fair is a marriage killer. If you think everything should be fair all the time in your marriage you can end up in a lot of scarcity in that push/pull tit-for-tat thinking. Instead what I like to think is it's not fair, and it's not supposed to be fair.

Now that said, that doesn't mean that you carry this load where you're doing everything all of the time and not even asking for what you want. I'm a proponent of giving up fairness and asking for what you want.

So particularly when I was sick in the beginning of my pregnancy, Steve took on so much more of the role of taking care of the dogs. Pre-pregnancy we split it pretty evenly, and we liked splitting it evenly. When I got pregnant and got sick, gosh for a few months, he really decided that he wanted to show up and take more of that responsibility. I was so appreciative of that. I was grateful for it.

In that way, that's not fair, right? In lots of different ways. It's not fair that I'm sick. It's not fair that he's doing more of the dog caretaking. We never have this idea that it's supposed to be fair. Instead we're thinking about how we each want to show up in the marriage, and also we're thinking about how we want to communicate and talk about what we want and need.

So let's say that Steve hadn't done that, and I really wanted him too. I am all for asking your spouse. It sounds like, "Hey spouse. I love you so much, and I am going through this hard time right now. Could you do this for me knowing that it's going to help me out, our marriage out, our family out?" They may say yes. They may say no. We don't have control over them. We

Marriage Seasons

never do. When you ask from this place of love versus this place of entitlement or expectation of the other person, it opens up communication and there's a vulnerability and a connectedness that can become really powerful.

The next step is to talk about the change with your spouse. So talk about the season that you're in, that he's in, that you're in together. Whether it's you turning 40, your child getting a diagnosis, you are just a few weeks postpartum. Whatever that season looks like, talk about it. See what you can do to help your partner. See what they're willing to do to help you out.

Lots of times throughout marriages, we each have different needs. What I teach is for you to get really good at fulfilling your own needs. What that doesn't mean is that you never ask for help. So you want to fulfill your own needs, but you also want to ask for that help. It sounds like, "Hey, husband, I'm really missing that romance or that connected time. Can we go out on a date next week and get out of the house because while we're in the house, it's hard for me to feel romantically connected. We have little ones and so much going on. I would so love it if we could connect on a romantic date or whatever that is."

It's coming at the communication from this place of genuinely wanting to work with your partner, work with your spouse, through that season so that you're both on the same page and can do your best, whatever that looks like. The next step is to normalize seasons. So it's so normal to go through new and different seasons in your marriage. I want you to expect them. I think really just step number one.

If you just notice the season, it can help you so much because you can start fresh, and you decide okay, what does it look like for me to be a wife during this season? How do I want to show up? How do I want to think and feel and just asking yourself all of those powerful questions from this place of, "Oh, this is a new season that we're in." Instead of expecting it to be the courtship season for your entire marriage, which we know is really not the case.

Marriage Seasons

So really this step is about allowing the seasons. Knowing that nothing has gone wrong, and it's not supposed to be summer all of the time. It's supposed to change. You're supposed to change. Your spouse is supposed to change. Circumstances are supposed to change. You always have authority over who you want to be. How you want to think, how you want to feel. Recognizing seasons can help you feel better in your marriage regardless of what's going on.

That brings me to the final step, which is not to compare your season to someone else's season. Easier said than done, but if you think about this it can be really helpful. Because what we tend to do is we tend to look at someone else's season in their marriage. Let's say they've been married the same amount of years, or they have the same amount of kids or there's some commonality. Well, then we expect our marriage to be the same. Or our marriage to be like that other person's marriage.

So if you have friends who are married and they have kids and they have a full time nanny, and they travel a lot, and that's not the season that you're in. Looking at their life and their season and their marriage can cause a lot of pain if you think that they have something that you can't ever have. So what it takes is redirecting your mind back to your marriage, and deciding intentionally how you want to think and feel about it. Knowing that there is no right way to do marriage or wrong way. There's only your way and the way that you want to be in your marriage. I think making up your own rules for what works in your marriage is the key to navigating new seasons, particularly over time.

I think back to law school when I was a mother's helper for this amazing family. Thank god for Facebook and Instagram, I can follow along as the kids grow up still to this day. At that time, I remember the couple preferred never to have nights away from the kids. I can't remember the exact amount of years it had been, but that was their preference. It worked so well for them. Now as I'm in my 30s and most of my friends are married and

Marriage Seasons

have little ones, I see how that is so different for each couple and each family.

So for her and her family, it was if we vacation, we vacation together as a family. Mom's not going to spend any nights apart from kids at all. For other couples, for other families, the opposite is actually better for them. They think that they need that time away to vacation as a couple. Or it might be the mom goes on a girl's trip or same with the dad. Whatever the case may be. It's doing that from this place of knowing what's best for you. So neither of these examples is healthy or unhealthy or right or wrong.

I don't want you to aspire to have the exact same marriage as someone else. Instead, I want you to look within and decide what would really serve you, your spouse, and your family during this season of your marriage. That's where you get to make up the rules and have fun, even if it's a challenging season. It's as simple as asking yourself where can I find a little bit of fun today and make this more playful and lighter?

So as we wrap up today, I want to encourage you to think about the season of marriage that you're in. If it's a hard one, know that it's going to end and transition one way or another. If it is an amazing season that's one of your favorites, enjoy it. Indulge in the pleasure of that enjoyment, and know that how you decide to think and feel about each season is going to determine how you show up. You have so much control over that, and not a lot of control over much else.

So with that, know that seasons are normal, and you get to be the creator of the rules for what works in your marriage over time. That's what I have for you today. I will talk with you next week. Take care.

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[Design Your Dream Life](#) with Natalie Bacon

Marriage Seasons

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