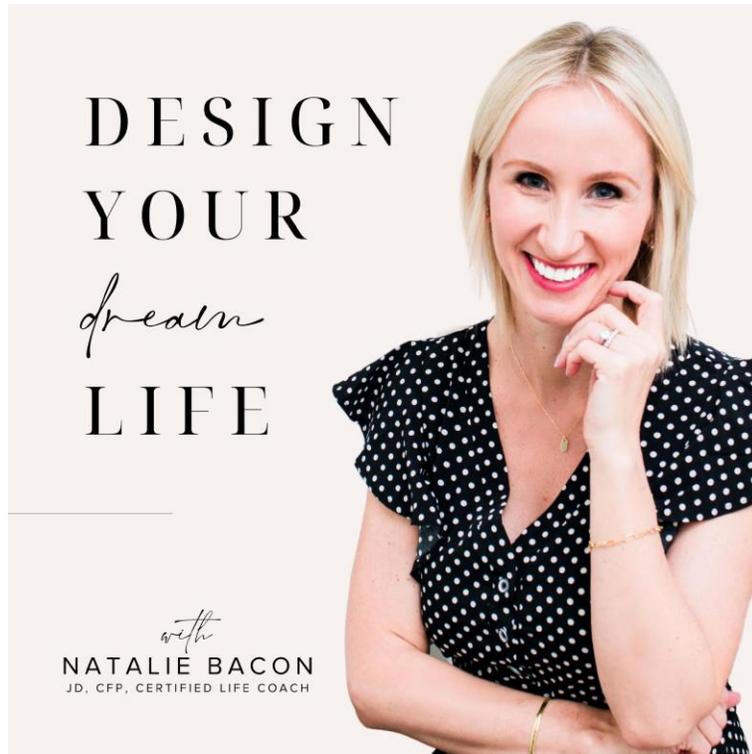


How To Balance It All



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Natalie Bacon

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How To Balance It All

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 friend. Welcome to the podcast. I hope you're doing well. Today I want to talk with you about a topic that is so often discussed, particularly if you are in your 30s and 40s. It's something that comes up so much in coaching. It's this idea of balance and how to balance everything going on in your life.

I want to take a step back and hopefully give you some really different ideas for how to think about balance that will help you move forward in a way where balance actually serves you. It will probably be very different than anything you've heard before.

I want to start off with talking about what balance is. So you know I'm a big fan of defining anything we are even talking about. Balance is an idea. It is a thought. So there's no blood test that you can go and take to find out if you are balanced. I think this is an important point because we talk about, "Oh, my life's really out of balance right now or I really want more balance in my life." We say things like that as if balance is something outside of us. It's this circumstance that you somehow meet, but that's not true. Really balance is so, so personal.

I think it can be helpful if we take a look at the historic meaning of balance and when we really started to even talk about balance. We didn't even do that until women went to work. So if you think about prior to women working outside the home, men worked 8/12/16 hour days, and no one talked about how they didn't have the capacity to balance work and fatherhood. When women started working, we started talking about balancing work hours with home and family life hours.

I think this is the typical definition that we have in society when we're talking about balance. I think there's this idea that there is a distribution of hours spent between the various things in your life that satisfy you. Often, it's between work life and home life. If you get that distribution of hours "right", you'll feel more satisfied. So there's this whole dialogue around

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

How To Balance It All

having more balance, oftentimes it's work life balance. And the sort of meaning that society gives without instructing you to define it for yourself is this distribution of hours between various things in your life.

But there's sort of a lie in this definition because it presupposes that your circumstances will create how you feel. This definition suggests that if you get the distribution of your hours right then you will feel satisfied or happy or whatever the emotion is that you're after. It's never the case that making your circumstances a certain way are going to make you feel happier. We have lots of evidence for this.

I was thinking of examples, and I was thinking about Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the late justice who I had watched a documentary on. I think it was on Netflix. Her husband joked about having to remind her to eat dinner because she would work so much. From what I can tell and from what every historian will say is she just loved her craft so much.

You find this a lot with people who are either in academia or in careers that they just feel very, very called to. They're not feeling out of balance, even though if you looked at their hours their hours are heavily distributed towards this one activity. This work activity.

If you think about the example of men historically working, their hours might be 80% work and 20% family, and they liked that. Some men it's changing for, others it's not. But we've never really questioned that and said, "Oh you must feel so out of balance." What I want to just bring your awareness to is that there is no one size fits all for what balance is. So I want you to explore it for yourself on a deeper level that will actually get you the results that you want.

Back to defining balance. Answer the question do you want more balanced hours, and to what extent? And why? So I went through this personally. My why was that I wanted to become a mom and have a family. I wanted to prioritize my family, and I wanted to work fewer hours. I loved this reason for me, but it was important that I had a reason for myself.

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

How To Balance It All

It wasn't just people outside of me saying, "You work too much. Aren't you out of balance?" Because there was a time where I worked a lot more hours and didn't feel out of balance, particularly when I was first building my business. But then there were other times as an attorney where I did feel out of balance.

Which brings me to the second part of this is defining what balance is for you. For me, it's more about being internally balanced. Not about having this even or right distribution of hours. So I don't need to have the same amount of hours for sleep and work and health and family and self-care. I don't think any of us mean that. We don't need four hours of every single category in our life to make up the 24 hour day, but yet we talk about it as if that's sort of the goal.

So I like to set up my circumstances to make it easiest for me to have thoughts that create the feelings that I want to create. So, for me, I want to be intentional and thoughtful about this season of life and making sure that I choose to have my circumstances set up in a way that makes it easier for me to enjoy it. That means working maybe 30 hours a week whereas before I was working 40 hours a week.

This will change based on the season of life. We don't look at someone who is on maternity leave and say that her life is out of balance because she is taking care of the baby. We also don't look at kids and say that oh, they're so out of balance because they're not contributing or working.

So I think looking at the season of life that you're in and defining balance for yourself. Is that a feeling that you're after? Where is the distribution of hours off that would make it easier for you to think and feel how you want to think and feel?

So I know for me, there are going to be vacations and I'm not going to work at all. Then there are going to be seasons where maybe I'm preparing for a live event, and I work more. Then there are going to be times where my days are evenly split between work life and mom life and anything else in

How To Balance It All

between. Again, I want to sort of encourage you to redefine balance and not make it so much about the distribution of hours. Instead think about what you want to be doing in your life.

What I mean by that is there are so many women who I coach and see that the real problem is that we're spending our time doing things we don't want to do. Then we just say, "Oh, I'm out of balance right now." But really, it's so much deeper than that. So one example is that you might be in a job that you don't like. You want to spend more time at home with the kids. You want to work fewer hours, but you haven't given yourself sort of permission to say that, to think that it's possible, or to do that.

So I think noticing that desire that you have is so important. It's listening to that. It's noticing it. It's honoring it. Sometimes it's the opposite. It's you're a stay at home mom and you're craving something more, like a creative outlet or something part time. But you feel guilty doing anything for yourself. So instead what's happening kind of in both scenarios is this guilt or discomfort that we end up covering up and sort of blaming on the season of life.

I think if you slow down and pause and ask yourself questions about what's really going on internally for you. What are you thinking? What are you feeling? What do you desire for your future? You will create very useful answers and get insights that you won't get if you're just focusing on changing your circumstances to be more balanced.

Another point that I want to make that can be helpful here along with seeing if you are spending your days doing things you don't want to do is noticing that we've all been conditioned to tie our worth to what we do. I think this is particularly true as women. Getting more done, doing more for everyone else, achieving more.

It's going to look different for every woman listening to this episode, but we've all sort of had this underlying conditioning that doing more for others and for society is tied to being good and better. What happens is we can do

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

How To Balance It All

this at our own expense, meaning at our emotional expense. We end up exhausted because we're giving so much without recharging.

I like to use the example of an iPhone. So at the end of the day, I plug in my iPhone, and it charges overnight. That way the next day it's fully charged, has a full battery, and ready to go. I think for a lot of women who either feel out of balance or like something is off with what they're doing on a day to day basis, it's in part due to not recharging themselves.

Because we sort of think of self-care as this fluffy topic that would be nice sometime in the future when I have time. I've really been mindful about this for myself and also, we've been doing this in Grow You. For some of you who got that *Self-Care For The Soul* bonus book, I talk about it in there as well. Where selfcare is you taking care of yourself. It's you plugging in the iPhone at night and recharging. So how are you taking care of yourself? How are you doing the inner work?

I think many of us care for ourselves physically. So maybe we'll do a workout routine, go to the gym, get some movement in which is a great first step. What about that part where you're taking care of yourself mentally and emotionally so that you become more mindful and are living your days in a way that feels more aligned with the life that you want to have? Because the truth is that you really cannot operate on a dead battery. You need to recharge.

So I have a few questions that I want you to consider asking yourself that I think will be helpful on this topic of balance. The first question is what does balance mean to you? Then using that definition that you come up with, do you feel out of balance? Why do you want more balance if you do? How do you think you'll feel if you get in balance?

This is a really important one because, again, going back to the very beginning where I talked about balance being this circumstance that we're trying to get to in order to feel a certain way. Satisfied, happy, amazing,

How To Balance It All

whatever it is. You want to draw attention to the fact that whatever we want is because we think we'll feel a certain way in the having of it.

So if you had the balance that you've decided what it means for you, how would you feel? Remembering too that there's no point that you arrive at where you have no problems, and you have no negative emotions. So when you're visualizing and thinking about your life in a way that is centered and harmonized and in balance for you, there will be negative emotion. There will be feelings of discomfort. Have you accounted for those in your visualization?

Because a lot of time what happens is we tend to idealize this point in the future where things slow down, and life is more balanced, and we are happy all the time. What we haven't done is accounted for the fact that we're human, and there's always going to be negative emotion no matter what. So make sure that when you are thinking about balance for you that you account for that part of it. What are the hard days going to look like when you are living out the balanced life?

That's why, for me, I like to define balance as something internal. The more I grow my family, the more I create more time for that to be the priority and center of my life. I love that. But I don't do it from this place of thinking that my life is out of balance otherwise. I do it from this place of what do I want next year to look like? What do I want this next season to look like? What do I want the next three years to look like? Knowing that as we shift throughout our entire lives, the seasons are going to be different.

If you think of the baby who is solely dependent on the parents and then you think of the child in school who is focused on activities and school and friends and family. Then you think of going to college and then working and then maybe having your own family. It's all a part of growing as a human. We don't look at kids and babies and say they're so out of balance. So just keep in mind that it might not be helpful for you to think that your circumstances are out of balance and that somehow rearranging the distribution of hours is going to create a feeling for you.

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

How To Balance It All

Instead what might be more useful is going through some questions about what your values are during this season. What you want more of in this season, what you want less of in this season. Giving yourself permission to be honest about that. I have coached a lot of women who were working a lot and felt like they had to be producing and working a lot to feel worthy. Really, they just wanted to stop working and stay home.

For you it might be something totally different, but it's getting intimate with yourself in a way that you don't necessarily need to take immediate action. Instead just having that honest conversation with you about what you really want, what balance means to you. Is that even a word that you want to use? I know I use centered and inner-directed a lot because those words feel really good to me. Sometimes I don't even like to use the word balance because it's so triggered with societal expectations that we can really forget our own definitions of it.

So whatever word you do decide to use, create your own definition for what it means. Use the tools and questions in this episode to help you create a little bit more of what you want going forward so that you can create ultimately what is your specific dream life. That's what I have for you this week. I will talk with you next week. Take care.

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