

Mindfulness



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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. Today I want to talk with you about mindfulness. I am just delighted to bring you this topic because of how impactful this practice has been on my life. Also because I am going to be sharing so much more of this with you so that you can use it in your life. I think you're going to find it so, so very helpful.

I want to start off with talking a little bit about the nervous system because that will kind of help you understand why mindfulness is even important at all. So when you think about your nervous system, there are two parts. The sympathetic and parasympathetic.

The sympathetic nervous system is what activates the fight, flight, or freeze response. So whenever you perceive there to be something wrong or a threat or some sort of danger you go into the fight, flight, or freeze mode.

So let's say you're snapping at your husband, yelling at your kids, or you're just go, go, go, go without pausing. You find it very challenging to get out of your head. Or maybe you have a really challenging child at home and it's just so hard to manage. Your brain is always trying to fix, and you feel very activated all of the time. It's a very hard season for you. It's likely that your sympathetic nervous system is activated here.

Your parasympathetic nervous system is what restores the body to a state of calm. If you are anything like I was, you are not as familiar with the parasympathetic nervous system because your sympathetic nervous system is activated so often. It doesn't have to be that there is some true real danger. This is just what happens when we perceive there to be something wrong. Like I said, it can be a disagreement with your spouse or a difficult child, something at home. You perceive the danger, and your brain goes into this fight, flight, or freeze response and you go into stress.

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When you go into stress like this, when you're in the fight, flight, or freeze response, you can't experience joy and calm and peace and freedom and feeling relaxed. You also can't access that higher part of your brain and decide how you want to show up. I think this is so fascinating because, of course, what I teach you is how to become more thoughtful and intentional and notice how your thoughts cause your feelings and do all of this inner work. Yet we can't do this if our nervous system is activated and we're feeling so stressed.

So let me give you a recent example. I was travelling, and I had a connecting flight. It was my first connecting flight in years because I'm used to flying out of Chicago where you can pretty much fly direct anywhere, and that's not the case in Charleston.

So I had a connecting, and the flights were delayed during a layover. It was not due to weather or anything. It was due to a lack of the right amount of flight attendants for that flight. There was no sign of when they would know when another flight attendant could be assigned. There was really no update for a while on when we would be able to leave.

My brain started going into this fight, flight, or freeze mode. I saw it freak out because I was going to worst case scenario. I didn't have my bag. I had checked a bag. So because it was during the layover, I wouldn't have been able to get that. I didn't want to stay at a hotel or anything. I wanted to get home to my puppies and my family. I'm pregnant, and I was just so uncomfortable. I had been up since four that day, four in the morning. It was about 4:00 p.m. I felt my face getting really hot and my nervous system started to get activated, and I started to cry.

Now when this happened, it would not have been useful for me to try to change my thoughts and just think something differently. Instead what I did and what's most useful in a situation like this is to calm down your nervous system, which means allowing the emotion, allowing the tears. Releasing all of it so that it moves through me. This will get my nervous system calmed down.

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Then and only then can I go up to my brain and use my prefrontal cortex to decide to think new thoughts. This isn't a big deal. Yes, it's inconvenient, but it's going to be fine. All of those thoughts. If I had tried to think those thoughts without giving myself permission to be sad about it or upset then it would have been like trying to pile on those positive thoughts on top of the real negative emotion.

Mindfulness comes in because it is you allowing yourself to have compassion for what you're feeling in the moment without interpretation and judgement. It's this increased awareness of your brain but also of your body. It involves self-coaching and thought work and breathing methods and allowing emotions to move through you and all sorts of other practices.

The result when you do this is that you relax your body and your mind. And you reduce that stress response, which means you're going to reduce your anxiety and those negative emotions that sort of take over when your nervous system is activated. This makes it so much easier to overcome your day to day challenges, and it also allows space for you to feel joy and peace and freedom and love just in the regular day to day. I think there's so much of this missing.

I think so often, particularly as women and wives and moms, we are living in a state of sort of either this low grade anxiety or this heightened fight, flight, or freeze response. We're saving the moments of peace and joy and love only for the big days. The wedding days, the days the babies are born, the vacations, the days that are actually few and far between in terms of the number of days we have like that in a given year.

So when you practice mindfulness, you will allow yourself space to feel these really good emotions on a daily basis. To get out of that anxiousness and that stress and that overwhelm. It really does work.

There's another example I want to give you from a client in Grow You who I was coaching. She is really struggling with a child, her third, who is really just a lot more challenging than her first two. She found herself yelling at

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her kids more and sort of snapping at her husband more, and she didn't like it.

She didn't like how she was showing up in the same pattern and really could not think about or recall the last time she had felt joy or calm or this easygoing attitude in the day to day. So what we worked together on and what I helped her with was to practice taking these deep breathes and to allow the emotion so that the nervous system would calm down.

In a way, I like to think of this as honoring the body or surrendering the body instead of trying to control it. Because just like I was saying in the example of where I had my face get really hot and started to notice tears when I was in the airport. If I try to really suppress that, I'm sort of trying to control the body and argue against it.

Instead here what my client did was leave the kitchen for five minutes, take some deep breaths, and just allow herself the space to feel the big feelings and to have compassion for herself without judgement.

Then once her nervous system calmed down, then she could say, "Okay, how do I want to show up here? Yes, this is hard. That's okay. I can do this. I can help my kids get what they need to eat. It's okay if it's not what each of them wants. It can be simple. It's okay if some of them are unhappy with it. I can show up as the best version of myself without going into that stress response." So this whole process is practicing mindfulness.

I think for me why this has become so important to teach you and to help you with and to coach you on is because I've had this huge shift in my life. I would say probably it started six to eight months ago. So as Steve and I got married and decided to start our family, at the same time I also decided to enroll in Bev Aarons Advanced Deep Dive Coach Training to help me become a better coach to serve all of you better. What I found was this really deep transformation that resulted in me getting out of my head and into my body.

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So on a day to day basis, I am so much more connected to myself and to my family, even when I have those challenges or those feelings of being tired or restless or stressed or anxious. I know how to allow space for it and have compassion with myself and not go into that flight, fight, or freeze mode. Because of that, I have so much more grounded-ness and space and peace and love for myself, which means I have so much more to give.

Going through that experience has helped me so much in being able to coach at such a higher level and help you at such a higher level. Because now not only can I share my experience with you about it, but I've been trained in how to help you do this. It's something that is so worth it because what I see a lot are these signs that the traditional read some personal development books and listen to some podcasts aren't working.

Here are some of the biggest signs that you probably need more help with this at a deeper level like we do in Grow You. It would be you find yourself really stuck in your head a lot. You experience a lot of this low grade anxiety and worry. You find yourself snapping at your husband or yelling at your kids often. Family life at home just seems like too much for you right now, and it feels like you're waiting for the next season or things to slow down in order to feel happy or joy or calm.

When you think about when's the last time you experienced joy or felt relaxed, you really can't recall the example of that. You have no idea when the last time you felt at peace or freedom, or true joy was. Then you find yourself beating yourself up about it and beating yourself up about what kind of woman and wife and mom you are. You struggle to have that self-compassion. These are all signs that having a mindfulness practice is going to help you.

So the few ways that I just want to give you as sort of to be thinking about in terms of how to practice mindfulness that will help you I think can be the start of how you do this work. So getting outside into nature and focusing on your senses. That will get you a little bit more into your body. Breathing techniques. I think I mentioned on the podcast before I used to take a

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breath class. I absolutely loved it. Doing the thought work and the self-coaching and the awareness practices that we teach inside Grow You.

Same thing with allowing your emotions and not trying to suppress them and stay in your head. So you want to get out of your head and really into your body. Becoming more aware of that mind/body connection and how you want to have a balance of both so that you can know when it's time to allow the emotions and the big feelings. Then when it's time to use that prefrontal cortex of yours and decide how you want to think and show up more deliberately.

Then finally it's accessing your intuition. This is something that the more you practice mindfulness, the clearer your intuition becomes. I think that just knowing that this is something available to you can be really helpful as well.

So if you find yourself really struggling with this right now, I want you to know that I see you big time. I lived in such a fight, flight, or freeze mode for so long. I really thought that it was always going to be the next season where it would feel better. Meaning I would be stressed or just living in this heightened state of brain activity all the time. I would think once I achieve this goal or once I get over there, once I graduate or get the new job or pay off the debt or get married or fill in the blank happens, I will relax and feel better.

Of course, that never happens. When you are always in your head, it's even harder to see that that never happens because your brain is really trying to help you. So it's doing its best. It's thinking that, "Okay, if we just do this one more thing and make it to over there, it's going to get easier. It's going to get better. I'm going to feel better."

While your brain means well, you want to be onto your brain and know that there's nothing in your life that has to change for you to feel better. It's starting to practice mindfulness is a way for you to see these shifts a lot

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more quickly and without needing to achieve anything or do more or be more or have more. It's a way for you to practice this right now.

So there is going to be a lot more help with this topic on the podcast going forward. So if this resonated with you, stay tuned for more. I want to make sure that you get the help that you need in your day to day life for yourself, for your family, for your community, for your work. Because the more that you practice mindfulness and can get out of that activated nervous system, the more you have to give.

That's why this work can end up being the most selfless work we ever do. Because we show so much more compassion to ourselves and to everyone else in our lives, including our family and the world, when we get out of that activated sympathetic nervous system and instead restore our body to a state of calm. I'm telling you, it's so worth it to do this work. So stay tuned for more. I will talk with you next week. Take care.

If you loved this podcast, you're going to love Grow You. Grow You is my virtual life coaching program where I take everything on the podcast to the next level. I invite you to join our amazing community of women and moms and deepen your own personal development. Head on over to nataliebacon.com/coaching to learn more.

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