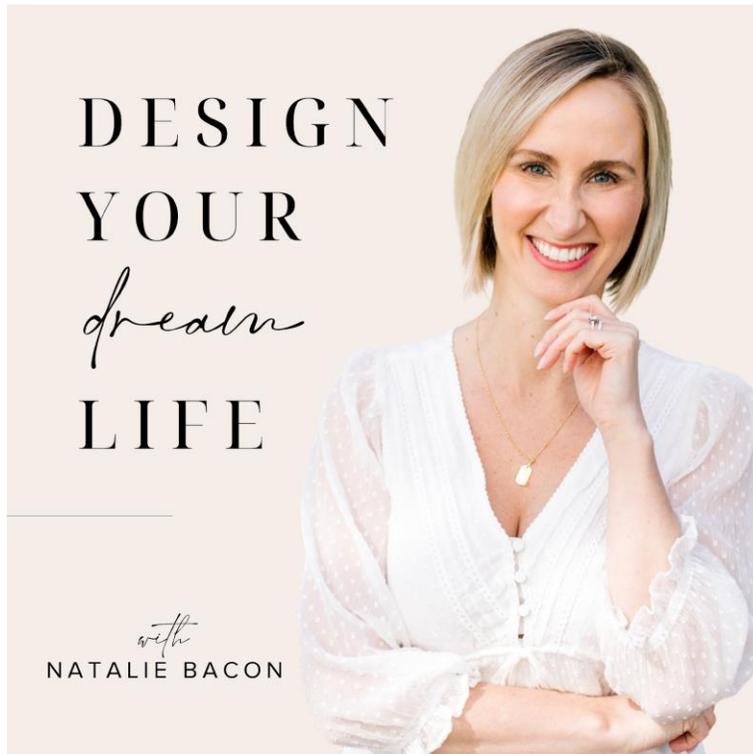


# The Nervous System And Feeling Triggered



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Natalie Bacon**

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Hi there. Welcome to the *Design Your Dream Life* podcast. My name is Natalie Bacon, and I'm an advanced certified mindfulness life coach as well as a wife and mom. If you're here to do the inner work and grow, I can help. Let's get started.

Hey friend. Welcome to the podcast. I'm so excited to be here with you today. I have a really fun episode for you. I think you're going to really love it. Before we dive in, a few housekeeping things. I launched a brand new Instagram. Are you over there? Are we connected yet? The handle is @nataliebaconcoaching.

I created this because my old Instagram handle was created when I first started out online. It was my personal account. Then it was all about money and finance. Then it was about online business. It's really just kind of a hodgepodge of everything. I found it more challenging to connect with the core group of women who love connecting about mindfulness.

So I started this new page. I would so love for you to join us over there if you haven't already. It's specifically for you. So you get this podcast lesson on Wednesdays. Then the rest of the week, you get little tips. You can kind of see how I'm using these tools in my life. I'm sharing my personal life with you a little bit as well. That is all going to be @nataliebaconcoaching. So if you head on over there, say hi. Come to my DM, introduce yourself. Let me know that you're a podcast listener. I would so love to get to know you more.

Another thing is we have another Ask Natalie Anything coming up. What I am teaching you today is directly from what came up during the last Ask Natalie Anything. So during the last workshop, I was asked how it is even possible to not feel triggered, to not overreact, to not get flustered when your child throws a fit or has a tantrum.

I came up with this podcast topic because so many people were asking that question. They didn't know it was possible. So what I want you to know, it's 100% possible. We're going to talk about it today. If you have a specific example, if you would like to hear other clients and other listener's

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examples, come join us at the next Ask Natalie Anything workshop. It is happening tomorrow.

So if you're listening to this on April 20, then come on in. You are not late to register. It's the perfect time to join us. It's tomorrow on April 21. You can register and reserve your seat @nataliebacon.com/asknatalie. It's all one word. You'll just get the Zoom link. You can listen on the go as well. So I know a lot of you say, "Oh, I'll be in the car or in this situation or whatever it is." I can't see you on video, which is really cool. That only happens if you raise your hand and volunteer.

So you have no reason not to join. It's a really great way for you to take what we're learning here on the podcast and see it applied in real life examples. So it's a lot of fun. I would so love to see you there.

What else? I think that's it. Let's talk about your nervous system and feeling triggered. So I taught a little bit about this in the podcast called mindfulness. I talk about how mindfulness is really the solution to being in an activated state. When you are in survival mode, it's so important that you use mindfulness tools to get back to this state of calm.

In this episode, I want to expand on it in more detail. So your nervous system exists to regulate your body, almost like a thermostat does in your home. So it's designed to keep you safe, and that is its primary function. That means it's always scanning your body and your environment to see if it's safe or not. If your brain perceives a threat or danger, whether that perception is real or not, it will go into survival mode.

There are two main ways that this happens. Either in activation, which is this hyper arousal state, also known as fight or flight, or it will shut down, also known as freeze or fawn. I'll talk more about those in a minute. But just to kind of repeat that so it's not lost. I know there's a lot of information I'm going to be throwing at you today, but it's so important.

So if your brain perceives a threat or danger, whether that's an actual threat, like someone is about to hit you or you're about to get hit by a car.

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That's a real threat. Or if it's just a perceived threat, like you get a phone call, and you find out that your kid's school is going to be closed tomorrow, right. Your survival isn't threatened there, but your brain perceives it that way, potentially here. You will go into one of two different survival states. One is where you're activated, and the other is where your body shuts down. The activation is the fight or flight, and the shutdown is the freeze or fawn.

Anytime your brain perceives a threat or danger, it will throw your body into a dysregulated state. When there is no perceived threat, then it's in a state of calm. This is also known as the rest and repair state. So you're either in one of these states. You're either in survival mode, where you're activated or in shutdown mode, or you're in rest and repair mode. You can't be in both.

So when you are activated or shut down, when you're in one of these survival states, it shows up as fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. I think for purposes of this episode, it will be helpful for me to go through some examples of each of these four states. If you're anything like me, you've heard of fight and flight and maybe even freeze, but you probably haven't heard of fawn. So I think it'll be helpful for me to go through all four pretty quickly, but just so you can see how this might be showing up in your life.

So when you are in the fight mode of being activated, you'll find yourself nervous, anxious, unable to relax. You'll probably also notice you're having obsessive thoughts like your brain can't relax. It's overthinking. You can also have a lot of frustration. It's that anger that you would associate with a fight, but it's turned inward. You can be very reactive and have rage or hostility or find yourself combative.

This is the hyper arousal state, where your brain perceives some sort of danger. In your body, you might find yourself really tense in your shoulders, potentially in your jaw or arms. You might notice that you have some sort of like aggressive posturing, and you will not feel calm.

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Another one of the signs that I find really interesting is that you focus a lot on unfairness and injustices. I'll talk about this later, but you can identify some of these states as personality traits. So I used to identify as someone who was always focused on injustice and always wanted things to be fair. I didn't realize that that was actually me being in this activated fight mode, which is a survival state.

The flight mode is where you're also activated because of a perceived danger. But instead of kind of sticking up for yourself and fighting, instead you go. You are doing all of the things. When you're not doing, you're thinking about doing. I can relate to being really jumpy. I've described myself as really jumpy before. This is one of the signs of being in this flight mode. You're always busy. It's very hard for you to slow down and connect with your body. Kind of this idea that you always have more to do and there's never enough time to do it.

So to recap, the fight and flight mode are two ways that you will find yourself activated in a survival state when your brain perceives any sort of threat in the environment. Now, you might also be someone who goes into freeze or fawn mode. I think at sometimes we all do this, although we have tendencies and preferences to go into one or two out of the four more often.

The freeze and fawn mode are where you go into shutdown. So your brain thinks, "I can't fight this or outrun it. So the thing that's going to make me safest is to shut down." When you are in freeze mode, you'll often feel disoriented, disconnected. You'll hide, withdraw, space out, disassociate with your senses. You'll have feelings of abandonment and unwanted like you're not good enough, and you will likely numb to feel better. Watching TV, eating, sleeping, sort of have no energy, feel a little bit more lifeless.

The last state is the fawn state. Again, this is where you perceive it as best to shut down given the perceived threat. This is really interesting. I can relate a lot to the fawn mode. It's giving up your own needs and complying in order to feel safe. So it's people pleasing.

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You want to be the peacemaker at your own expense. You feel like defending yourself or saying no would create more problems. So you just agree, even when you don't believe in what you're agreeing with. You find yourself over apologizing, and you don't have good boundaries. The one that I really resonate with is being hyperaware of other people.

So are you someone who walks into a room and scans everyone else's states? Whether they're happy, whether they're sad, where they are. You're sort of looking at all of their cues.

So those are the fight, flight, freeze, and fawn survival states. Anytime your brain perceives a danger, it will put you into one of these states, or more than one. This is useful if you are really in a state of danger.

The problem is that as humans, unlike other animals, we are able to think about the past and the future. So this means we can keep ourselves in a constant state of survival because we can have regret about the past and worry about the future. So if you think about a lion or any other animal, they're not worried about last year or next year. They're either worried about a predator coming right at them. So they're doing what they need to do to survive. Getting into one of those fight, flight, freeze, or fawn modes. Or they're relaxing under a tree.

As humans, we can keep ourselves in this state of survival for extended periods of time. We can identify as having personality traits that are actually just how we are in survival mode. We can think that doing nothing is a waste of time. It's actually so important. When you do nothing, you're allowing yourselves to rest and repair. You're allowing your body to restore.

This is so, so important to your mind, your body, and your long term health. I used to think that, you know, being calm or relaxed was sort of either a luxury or a little bit lazy. Like I definitely did not see it as a priority.

I want to share with you just some of the benefits of allowing yourself to spend more time in a calm state. You will have increased immunity,

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increased digestion, increased connection because you'll have increased oxytocin.

You will have increased functioning of your parasympathetic nervous system, an increased capacity to think consciously and on purpose. So you'll have thoughts like I'm safe. I can relax. I'm enough. I deserve this. You'll feel playful, creative, inspired, connected, present, curious, expansive. You will have access to your intuition. Very practically speaking, you will have fewer things that bother you in your environment.

So think about the last time that you were in a state of ease and calm and flow. What were you thinking? How were you feeling in your body? I'm telling you. If this is foreign to you, this is normal. Nothing has gone wrong. It's not too late. You can start a practice of getting into a calm state.

It will be uncomfortable for you at first because your brain will not think it is safe. Like we should be doing more. We should be, you know, fill in the blank of whatever your preferred state of survival is. That's what your brain wants to go to because it's in the habit of doing that. Speaking from experience, this last year I have practiced getting into a calm state so much, and I have to say it has been the biggest transformation and identity shift of my entire life.

You may notice that I have a different tone. If you go back to some of the earlier episodes, my tone of voice is very different. So your tone of voice indicates what nervous system state that you're in. Isn't this fascinating? So if you noticed in some of my past episodes, my voice sounding really intense. That's a sign of being in a more activated state. Now I sound much calmer.

Now I'm a human being, of course, I'm still activated. I've given you the example before of when I have had a canceled flight and how that kind of sends me into survival mode. That's a good point too that I want to mention. It's not the actual thing in your environment. It's your brain's perception of it.

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So Steve gets a flight canceled, and he does not get activated at all. My mother-in-law is a flight attendant. So he's very comfortable with flight changes because he grew up flying standby all the time and navigating airports, and I did not. So when a flight is canceled, my brain goes into oh my gosh, we're gonna die. It's basically what your brain is doing. It thinks that a survival state is the thing that's going to keep you safe.

99% of the time that is not necessary in today's world. So let me give you an example. If you are, you know, in an abusive relationship or you walk across the street and you see someone coming at you, it's so great that we have this nervous system that will put us into survival mode, right?

If any of you grew up in a household where you were sent into survival mode, you probably look back on it and think that that was a good thing. It's amazing. It was so helpful to get you to survive whatever was happening at home, whether it was big or small, right.

I was never a victim of abuse, but my dad was an alcoholic. So I was often in the fawn mode. Often reading his cues. Like I can read someone's cues so well. I'm so proud that I can say now that I don't go into a room and like scan the room to see how everyone else is feeling. I actually just go into a room and feel safe and can enjoy myself and feel connected without that survival brain state.

So think about your life and think about examples that may be triggering you. I wrote down a few that often come up with my clients. These may resonate with you as well. So I want to go through them because I know a lot of what I just talked about was the math of it. Like the science, the facts, but this applies to our lives.

So let's say you have a toddler who is hitting or biting your eight-year-old. You feel triggered. You feel activated. You go into fight, flight, freeze or fawn. Let's say your husband gets into a disagreement with you. So you're activated. It could be someone cuts you off in traffic. Do you get really frustrated?

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You get an email from your son's school saying that, you know, it's going to be canceled next Friday, and you don't have childcare. You have a meeting, and so you're all worried about that. You find out that you or one of your family members get a diagnosis. You find out that you're being transferred across the country. So your brain goes into survival mode. How are we going to survive this?

Consciously you won't be thinking oh my goodness, I'm going to die. How are we going to survive this? But subconsciously, that's what's happening. That's why you go into these survival modes. Your brain thinks that the best chance you have at making it through this is for you to go into fight, flight, freeze, or fawn.

But for all of these examples that I've listed, and a few more I'll go through here, that's not the case. You will actually be so much more successful in navigating these challenges from a state of calm because they're not actually dangerous. There's not actually a predator coming after you. It's just that you have to figure out how to move across the country, which you totally are capable of doing. You're not going to die.

Let's say that you thought you were going to get a promotion, and you don't get it. Let's say that you are traveling and your flight gets canceled. Whatever it is, just think about for yourself when you are triggered.

Like I said on the last Ask Natalie call, a lot of it had to do with being triggered at home when your kids act in a certain way whether they have meltdowns. So then you mirror them and have your version of an adult meltdown. What we want to do is use calm and mindfulness to get into a state where we can show up how we want to show up. It doesn't mean that you just ignore it and say, "Oh, it's totally fine that they are having a meltdown." But it just means that you're not activated in this constant state of survival every time they're having a meltdown.

So if you want to regulate yourself more, which means you want to get out of that survival mode and get to a state of calm, some of the things that I recommend doing would be 10 minutes of silence every single day. This is

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an easy form of meditation. Any other form of meditation that you prefer. Getting enough sleep, using your creativity.

So if there's anything that you like to do that gets you out of your mind. So I actually feel this way when I cook. It's so fascinating because there are so many times when I tell myself that there's not enough time for that, right. That's such a scarcity way of thinking. I'm probably in a little bit of survival there. When, in actuality, when I really start cooking, I feel very much in a flow state, which is that regulated calm state.

But for you, it might be something else. Maybe you like dancing. I like dancing as well. Or creating some sort of art or music or anything like that. Touch is a great way for you to regulate. What I teach is putting your hands on your heart, taking deep breaths. Similarly, giving a long hug, 20/30 second hug.

Some people do tapping. I don't teach tapping so I can't really speak to that, but it is known to be a way of regulation. These are just different types of mindfulness tools. Thought work and body work, the work that we do in Grow You is all going to help you because it's creating more awareness of what you're thinking and how you are feeling.

I think that one of the most profound takeaways for me with all of this work is how important that state of calm really is. It's not the luxury that I used to think it was. It's not something that people do who aren't ambitious or don't have goals. It's not something that you should plan on doing after your kids are older. It's foundational for your health, your mental health, your physical health, for your wellbeing.

So I hope I have sold you on the importance of getting into this calm state. My hope here is that every week on the podcast and over on Instagram @nataliebaconcoaching, I can help you practice these mindfulness tools that will enable you to live from a state of regulation and calm and get out of that survival mode where you're constantly worried and going and overwhelmed. All right, my friend. That's what I have for you today. Take care.

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If you loved this podcast, I invite you to check out Grow You, my mindfulness community for moms where we do the inner work together. Head on over to [nataliebacon.com/coaching](https://nataliebacon.com/coaching) to learn more.