

Perfectionism in Motherhood



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With Your Host

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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.

What is happening, my friend? Welcome to the podcast. I'm so happy to be here with you. I want to talk with you today about perfectionism in motherhood. This is something that I have been studying a lot, thinking a lot about. I have been coaching a lot on this topic inside Grow You. It is going to be part of the curriculum, the course and coaching and workshop class inside Grow You for June.

So I wanted to bring you a podcast on the topic. I think that you will hopefully find it really useful and can apply it to your own life. Before we get started, I just want to talk with you about how I'm doing in my personal life right now because I like to give you all little updates about that.

My life is amazing right now. I hesitate to say that because I think as humans, we naturally like to connect over our problems. We like to sometimes commiserate over them, but I want to share this with you because I think it's helpful to talk about our lives in really amazing ways and share stories of growth and development and encourage each other in this way.

So that's kind of where I'm coming from when I say that this season of life is just so magical for me. It is the most mundane, day to day, with my family, with my husband, with my baby, with our puppies in our home, doing all of the ordinary things. I just love it.

I love the kind of hustle and bustle of the day. I love holding RJ. I love naptime. I love playing with RJ on his play mat. I love taking the dogs on walks. I love being with Steve and having our one to one time, even though it is so much smaller than it used to be. I'm really just appreciating my life right now. I'm building momentum for that story because I keep focusing on it.

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I think that the lesson here is that you can do that too. You can 100% look at the things that you like about your life and build momentum, so it feels really good for you. I know that it can be easy to focus on the negative, and I know this because people want me to focus on the negative of my life, right? They're saying, "Oh, you must be so busy right now. It must be so hard. You must be so overwhelmed. You've had so much change. It must be so stressful." And I check in with myself, and none of that is true for me. I'm not adopting any of those beliefs. Because of that, I feel so good.

I just have to tell you that I have wanted this life, this ordinary, safe, lovely, calm, home, and family for so long. It is better than I ever could have imagined. I think for me, knowing that, wanting that result for so long and then creating it and living into it and creating more of it in the future and growing our family. It has just been something that I really have been loving. I've really been indulging in the process and feeling good about it.

There's the normal kind of day to day sometimes stress that I might feel or sleepless nights. RJ is not the best sleeper, but it's so wonderful. It really, really is. I think that's in part because I wanted it for so long, but also in part because I am actually applying this work.

So remember that it's never your circumstances that are creating how you feel. It's always the story in your mind that you're telling about your circumstances. That's not to say that you don't want to feel stressed, and you don't want to feel overwhelmed, but I just want you to know that it is a choice, and you are not at the effect of your life ever.

So if you are new or you are not inside Grow You yet, this is a perfect time for you to join Grow You so you can start to apply these tools to your life. Get some coaching, see how you can self-coach as well, and start to change the story. Because when you change your mindset, you change how you feel. When you change how you feel, you change who you are. Like I am so different than I used to be, and I've created this next version of myself so intentionally.

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That's the work that we're doing this month with reinventing yourself identity inside Grow You. So come on in nataliebacon.com/coaching. I would so love to help you, to get to know you more, to see you inside.

All right, let's switch gears and talk about perfectionism in motherhood. Perfectionism is not that you are perfect. It's not that you work really hard on things, and you're really detail oriented, and you have this perfect home, and you are this perfect mom. That is not what perfectionism is.

Perfectionism is thinking that other people's lives are perfect and yours isn't. So there's this sense that your life is lacking. It's constantly thinking that something is wrong with your life. You think that your life should be better from a place of lack, from a place of your worth is tied up in it. Meaning that the reason you want to improve and stop yelling at your kids is because you think that you'll finally be a good enough Mom if you stop.

Contrast that with what I teach, which is self-improvement and growth from a place of you already are whole and worthy and amazing. From that place, you can work on your yelling, or you can work on any other kind of goal or identity shift that you want to do. But the key difference is in the motivation. If you are motivated by wanting to be perfect, if you are motivated by thinking that you will finally be a good enough mom, a good enough wife, a good enough woman, a good enough person, that is a sign that you are in perfectionism.

With perfectionism, there is no room to be a human. You kind of obsessing over how to be a good mom, how to parent well, and how to raise good kids. It's such a blessing that in today's world, we have access to so much information. I think all of that information is well intended, but one of the kind of downsides and negative side effects is that it leaves us thinking that if we don't live up to these standards, if we don't learn everything, if we don't become the perfect mom, the perfect wife, the perfect woman, then we are not good enough.

What I want to offer is that there is no point in time in the future when you will ever reach perfection. There is no point in time where you will have

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read every single book, where you will have implemented every single strategy, where you don't have any negative emotion, where you never get upset. At every point in the future, you are still a human, which means that you are messy, and you're going to make mistakes, and you're going to have failures. That is what makes you perfectly imperfect. This is how it's supposed to be.

So with perfectionism, there is no room for you to be a human. The expectation is that if we try to grow and improve, we will one day be good enough. I want to talk a little bit about what is happening with your brain when it comes to perfectionism. Perfectionism is rooted in survival. It's your brain wanting you to be better so that you can be accepted by your peers.

Said differently your brain is trying to avoid rejection. It thinks when I look out into the world, I see other people who are living more perfectly, and I want to try to live like them so that I am not rejected. So that I am included. So that I am a part of the pack.

The irony is that by being a perfectionist, you are rejecting yourself. You think you're not acceptable. You're literally thinking I'm not good enough, and you feel rejection. It's you who is creating this. It's not your circumstances. It's not because you don't have the right house. It's not because you yelled. It's simply because your brain has the belief that you're not good enough.

Stay with me here because this is where it gets really good. So it's your brain creating the thought, I'm not a good enough mom. I'm not a good enough wife. I'm not a good enough woman. So no matter what you do, no matter what your life looks like, you take your brain with you. It will always have that thought, unless you do this work that I'm going to teach you. But otherwise, on default, the automatic way of thinking is that what you have, who you are, your role as a mom, you are not good enough.

Remember, your thoughts cause your feelings. So regardless of your circumstances, no matter how much you change it, your brain comes with you and will have that thought. So there is no winning with perfectionism.

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One way to kind of think about this and know if you are a perfectionist is to ask yourself if you are always living in the future. If you struggle to stay present, if you struggle to just be and enjoy life right now, if you struggle to enjoy this season and find the good in it, and this is consistent regardless of the season. If you're always future focused, this is a sign that you have perfectionist tendencies. You are probably rooting your desire to live in the future in your worth. So is the reason that you are so future focused because you think that when you create this future, you will somehow be more worthy?

So what we're going to do in June inside Grow You is take a look at a few of our different wants and desires, and then ask ourselves why we want these things. So let me just make up a couple here for illustrative purposes.

Let's say that you want to write a book. And let's say that you want to stop snapping and yelling at your kids. When you think about writing a book what is your motivation?

If your motivation is I just have this desire to write a book, and I think it would be fun. I've always thought I would be an author, but I don't have any writing experience. Yet, it keeps popping up in my mind that this is somehow going to be a part of my journey. I think it would be really fun. These are all really amazing reasons to write a book. Notice that the motivation is not I think I need to write a book in order to be worthy, in order to be good enough.

Okay, so often when we compare something like that where we have no worthiness tied up in the desire to another one of our wants or desires where we do have the worthiness tied up in, for example, let's say you want to stop yelling at your kids. This is when I coach a lot on and there's so much worthiness tied up in it, which shows me that this is coming from perfectionism.

There's so much shame around yelling or snapping. That's not to say that we want to just normalize yelling and say that it's not a problem, but what we do want to do is want to change that from a place of acceptance, from a

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place of seeing that you are a human. Of course you make mistakes, and there's nothing wrong with you. You are the exact mom you're supposed to be. Now let's work on decreasing our yelling, decreasing how often we snap and overreact. Not because we are somehow going to be more worthy as a mom or a better mom, but because that's the growth journey that we want to go on.

Aside from this concept, this idea that how you're motivated to pursue growth determines whether you should go on that growth journey. Aside from that being kind of life changing, particularly if you are someone who has always been motivated by kind of your worthiness, this alone already in the 15 minutes we've been on will blow your mind.

But I also want to talk about the specific results that really come from perfectionism. I think the most obvious one is pessimism. If you are always living in the future, thinking that your life will be better over there and thinking that you are not worthy where you're at right now. There's this pessimism that takes over your life because you are never content in the present.

I can relate to this a little bit in the past, I don't know five or 10 years ago, kind of feeling this way and thinking, I just need to get to that next spot. I just need to get to that next place. Now I don't do that at all. I really like indulge in little moments. Earlier today, I was just playing in petting Penny, and just having this moment of just pure joy and contentment, and I just loved it. I share that because it's not anything in my circumstances. It's always me just connecting in the present. That is what I want to show you is possible for you.

Another one that is a big one for perfectionists is procrastination. You want to do it so perfectly, and that feels overwhelming. So you just don't do it at all. Another result of perfectionism is being hyper critical and judgmental of both yourself and other people. Think about when you meet someone new for the first time.

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After that encounter, what are your thoughts? Are you immediately evaluating that person, wondering if you want to be friends with them, pointing out what was amazing and what was not great about them? This comes from being hypercritical, and the idea that you're measuring up other people against some bar of perfection just like you measure up yourself. When you get out of perfectionism, you can just start to enjoy other people's company without such evaluative tendencies.

You can also become pretty controlling if you are a perfectionist. The reason is because you're trying to control your spouse, you're trying to control your kids, you're trying to control everyone else in your life, so that they can play a role for you that you think creates this perfect family. It's also that you can then feel good about yourself.

I think this can kind of break your brain if you really think about it. I think we all sort of do this before we find this work. What I teach now is that your people, your family, your spouse, they're there for you to love. They're not there for you to control. When you shift out of wanting to control them, you are at so much more peace because you let other people just be them. It's exhausting trying to control other people.

Another result of perfectionism is that you're always looking outside of you. You're always looking for external validation. You're always looking to other people to determine what you want to think and how you want to feel because there's this belief that someone out there is perfect. That other people are perfect.

So you compare yourself to this ideal of perfection that is always changing because it's always based on what your brain is interpreting. Of course, there's no blood test. There's no scale. There's no thermometer that can give us the yes or no is this perfect. So, of course, your brain is never satisfied. It's always looking for bigger, better ways to be perfect. It does not feel good, my friend. You will probably find yourself experiencing a lot of jealousy if you are a perfectionist.

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Lastly, perfectionists tend to feel a lot of shame because there's this belief and oftentimes I think it's subconscious, at least for the clients who are in Grow You and kind of who I am marketing to and working with. It's not this conscious thought. We're not going around saying, "Oh, I'm such an unworthy mother. I'm such an unworthy wife. I'm such an unworthy human."

Instead, it's a subconscious thought that we're just not good enough. It seems like the truth. It seems like you can't show your imperfections, and that it's a good idea to be perfect. So when you do this, you end up rejecting yourself. You end up not accepting yourself and you feel shame about that.

So I think the biggest takeaway is to notice this in yourself. For this podcast, for purposes of us being here together today, if you just start to notice it, that is going to give you a really big window into what's going on for you and with you as you seek out growth and change. As you want to improve, kind of noticing where that motivation is coming from.

Because after you start noticing it, the next steps are to change your beliefs, to accept yourself as you are, to accept all of your imperfections, and see that you are imperfectly perfect. I like to think about babies and how babies do nothing to contribute to our households and to our families. I think of RJ. He wakes up all night long. He needs so much from me. He does not contribute at all. And yet, I love him madly. I have the most abundant thoughts about him.

I point that out for you to see that the truth is that all humans have that much worthiness. The worthiness that we think about when we look at and when we think about babies. That level of worthiness is available to you. You don't have to do anything. You don't have to be better. You don't have to be anyone other than who you already are right now. You are 100% worthy.

I think this part of growth is the most important part. Because from there then like we can have some fun. Then let's go. Let's set some goals. Let's evolve. Let's reinvent ourselves.

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If you're like me, who had been a high achiever for my whole life, my reinvention was to become someone who experienced a lot more calm and peace and groundedness and take naps in the middle of the day. That was a huge reinvention process for me. But it stemmed from wanting to go on that journey to expand who I was. Not because I thought that I was wrong or bad or not good enough the way I was before.

So check in with yourself. The easiest way to do that is to see what your motivation for growth and change is really about. That doesn't have to be some big growth journey that you're on. It could simply be I want to work on not yelling at my kids. Then ask yourself where is that coming from? Why do I want to work on this? Because I want to expand and grow and see what's possible for myself and work on myself? Or is it coming from this idea that I am not a good enough mom until I stop yelling 100% of the time?

That is in the realm of perfection. That's when we want to notice it and let go of that goal and desire for right now and accept us. Accept who you are right now. Because from the place of acceptance then the growth becomes possible. If you beat yourself up into wanting to change, it is a long road and it feels terrible.

I like to use the example of weight loss. It's like if you hate your body and think you are unworthy and you want to lose 50 pounds or 100 pounds, it becomes excruciatingly painful because you're unwilling to fail. You think that you have to do it perfectly and you have to get there in order to be worthy of your body. You end up self-sabotaging anyways. You end up slowing down, taking breaks, quitting.

There's where that procrastination comes in. You feel really pessimistic. You're judging yourself. You're judging others. It's all completely understandable based on what's happening in your brain. Also, it's all completely avoidable. You can change this. You can overcome your perfectionist tendencies. This is the work that we're doing in Grow You in May and in June. I would love to see you there my friend. Join us over at nataliebacon.com/coaching. I will see you there.

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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 to learn more.