

Anxiety In Motherhood



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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.

Hello my friend. Welcome to the podcast. I'm so happy to be here with you today. I just got back from some travel and coming home, getting unpacked, getting things organized and ready for the week. Then the next day coming on here onto the podcast is my grounding space. I am so refreshed and connected when I get to chat with you because I've been doing it every week for years. I will continue to do it every week for years. So thank you for being here.

What's going on in my world? Grow You this upcoming month is going to be about how to relax and unwind. So for the month of July, I am teaching a new workshop course where you get a class, workbook, and coaching call on how to relax and unwind. What we are unwinding is anxiety and worry. So if you find yourself worrying, if you find yourself experiencing a lot of anxiousness, this is the perfect time to join.

I know for a lot of my clients you find that summertime is a time where you want to have this fun, playful, connected summer where you're spending quality time with your family. Yet in the day to day, it can feel like stress. It can feel like anxiety. It can feel like worry and like there's never enough time. It's not going how you want it to go. It's very much getting things off the to do list. It's out of alignment with what you want. Even if you may not have articulated it in that way. This class, this work we're going to be doing, is going to serve you so well.

I'm also going to be doing all of the coaching in Grow You in July. How fun is that? So for the last year plus, I have had other coaches who helped me on my team. I have gotten so much feedback that you want more of me. So I'm testing out doing all of the coaching this upcoming month. That means that if you have any challenge that you are facing that you want help with, you are going to get direct coaching and feedback and help from me. That means this is the best time for you to join.

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So you can head on over to nataliebacon.com/coaching. You can read through all of the information about Grow You. If you have any questions at all, you can always email us at the team at nataliebacon.com. I am so excited to do this work. It's work that I've been doing over the last two years, I would say, and I continue to do because of what I'm going to teach you and talk with you about today in today's podcast. How our brains are always kind of leaning towards being wound up.

This is particularly true if you grew up in a home or an environment where anxiety really served you. So let me back up and just say that I am not speaking to those of you who have a diagnosis and need medical help. Although, I will say that I have clients who have generalized anxiety and supplementing adding to their treatment thought work and mindfulness is actually really helpful. I just want to be clear that I am not holding myself out as a medical expert.

I am a firm believer in medication if you need it. If you have a chemical imbalance, kind of think of it like I've been wearing glasses and contacts since I was a little girl. I wear them every day. They help me see every day. If I did not wear them, I would not see very well at all. I have a very strong prescription. The same, I think, is true for anyone who needs some help, some assistance with medication. I'm very pro-medication if it is what you need.

What I'm speaking to here, though, is anxiety as a feeling. That feeling that is caused by your thinking. So most of us think that we are anxious because of fill in the blank. So we think we're anxious because of what's happening outside of us. We think we're anxious because we are starting a new school year, and we're not sure how our kids are going to do. We're anxious because we're moving to a new neighborhood or we started a new job or something that is outside of us in our circumstances we think is causing our anxiety.

But what's really happening is that our brain has to interpret that circumstance. How our brain interprets it determines whether we feel anxiety. So it's not actually the thing outside of us. It's our brains. We know

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this because other people will go through the same exact thing and won't experience anxiety.

So that doesn't mean that you shouldn't feel anxious or you shouldn't experience the feeling of anxiety. In fact, it serves you and it has served you so well to this point. I don't even just mean you. I mean back in caveman days really anxiety helped us survive. It's a primitive function of our brain that has been very useful.

So I like to think of it as this feeling that yes I am creating, but also that is the default way that my brain has been programmed. It's been very useful for evolutionary purposes and even can be useful in some instances today. But I want to also notice and know that in so many instances in my life and in most of my clients' lives, and perhaps your life, it's not as useful as it once was.

So if we are anxious about whatever it is, fill in the blank, your baby's starting daycare, right? It's usually something in the future. There's this element of fear plus uncertainty about the future. So we're kind of worried, we're kind of afraid about something that we are uncertain about in the future.

So let's say that your babies are about to start daycare. That is not a very useful circumstance to experience anxiety about. Why? Because anxiety was really designed to help you survive. Your children starting daycare, your little one starting daycare, isn't a threat to your survival. We're not talking about life or death here. We're talking about how they're going to experience it. We want them to have a good experience.

When we really slow it down, we can see that okay, yes. Our survival is not at risk here. So calm down brain. But I think particularly when you're just starting out doing this work, and even if you have done it in a while, depending on how much you coach yourself and get coaching, how often you need to remind yourself of this will vary. So if you have a tendency to think that your anxiety is coming from outside of you, this would be a really good episode and tool for you to use.

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The way that I want you to think about it is to separate out what's happening in the world, so the facts, the circumstances, from how you are thinking, from how you are feeling. So it's always your thoughts creating your feelings. Anxiety is a feeling. It's sort of like this buzzing vibration in your body.

The feeling of anxiety isn't a problem. None of our feelings are problems, I have to get better at this. I've been practicing it, but so often with RJ even at his young age I will say things like it's okay. You're okay. You're fine. What I'm doing there is I'm shutting down his feelings.

Instead, what we want to do is really teach ourselves and our children that all feelings are okay. So you may have seen on Instagram reels, I posted a script you can find over there what to say instead. But ultimately, what we want to do is open up to the feeling. It's okay to feel uncomfortable and to feel upset and to feel sad. I feel that way too.

So the same is true when we're experiencing anxiety. What I see most often is not that we are processing and experiencing anxiety. I say we because I'm including myself here. So do not beat yourself up or feel bad if you do this. It's something that you can learn and get really good at. Processing, allowing, accepting the feeling. That is something that is a skill that you can get good at. It's so worthwhile because there's no point in time where we don't have this part of our brain. Particularly if you did grow up in a household where that anxiety part of your brain was activated more often than not.

So I think of my own upbringing and being in the survival mode stress response state often, the fight, flight, freeze, or fawn state where I was constantly reading whether my parents were happy or my dad was drinking or anything like that. That served me so well to have that little bit of anxiety and kind of be on edge a bit. Now in my adult life or have a very safe, calm, amazing home, it doesn't serve me as well. Right?

So I'm not saying that you should never feel anxiety or fear. So if you have a circumstance where you walk in somewhere and you see someone who

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has a weapon or who appears to be threatening in some other way, you don't want to be calm. We want to, as humans, have this part of our brain that can activate the fight, flight, freeze, or fawn response. The survival mode is useful.

However, 99% of the time for most of us, we are not in those circumstances. We're talking about we're moving to a new neighborhood. I'm worried about my kids grades. I'm afraid I'm gonna mess up my kids. We're going to be heading into the season of high school or my kids aren't making friends. It's this worry about something in the future coming from fear that isn't a good use of anxiety because there's actually no threat to our survival.

Just having the awareness alone can help you manage your anxiety so much more. So if you notice that you are feeling the feeling of anxiety, you want to practice allowing it, breathing into it, welcoming it to be there, not reacting, resisting, or avoiding it.

So what this might look like in a very real way, I'll use myself as an example. If I'm feeling anxious, if I avoid it, what I might do is say do we have any chocolate? Is there anything on TV? Even personal development, anything. If you are using something to feel good to alleviate a negative emotion that is escaping your pain. Now, of course, would it be better to escape a negative emotion with something that doesn't have a net negative consequence? Of course. Is it better if I go for a walk than go online shop when I'm trying to avoid anxiety? For sure.

So, again, we don't want to beat ourselves up for doing any of this. If you're like me, you were not taught this growing up. We're sort of just talking about here what's the best way to process anxiety? It's to allow it. In the Grow You bonus vault, we have a course that you get right when you join called how to process your feelings. So if you're in there, go through that and apply anxiety to it.

The way that it works is you're really getting in touch with your body and getting out of your head. This sounds really simple. Like there's some

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breathing exercises. We want to name it. Just naming it like oh, I see you anxiety can be really, really helpful because you get authority over it. You're not trying to urgently get away from it and go online shop or go eat or go have a glass of wine or whatever your escaping of choice is. If you allow it to be there, there's so much freedom in that.

The real problem with anxiety isn't feeling that feeling of anxiousness. You can feel any emotion and be okay. The worst part of anxiety is when we reject it, when we avoid it, when we make it so much worse because we're resisting it. That feels 10 times worse. We sort of end up, I don't know if you're like me, kind of acting a crazy because we're trying to escape this feeling. Of course, we can't escape our bodies.

So instead, what you want to do is go inward. Anytime you are feeling a strong emotion, in this case we're talking about anxiety, you don't want to go outward and try to fix your circumstances to change how you're feeling. Instead, you want to go inward. The simple practice of naming the feeling in your body can be powerful because your brain will interpret that as having some control over it. It's like you're welcoming it.

So think of any feeling that you're feeling, here we're talking about anxiety, as coming into your body as a guest that you are welcoming into your home. So it's like high anxiety. I see you here. You're a little uncomfortable. but you're welcome here. When you acknowledge that, you will notice it, pay attention to it, and not try to push it away, wish it away, where the resistance comes in and where it makes it so much worse.

Anxiety can turn into panic attacks and really become debilitating if you resist it. Then if you continuously resist it, it can become a really big problem. It's all just one big misunderstanding of how to allow and process feelings.

Something else that can be really powerful here as you work on processing your anxiety is to make sure that you take emotional responsibility for feeling it. A lot of times what can happen is we blame our emotions on something external to us. So it's I'm feeling so anxious. I have so much

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anxiety because I'm worried that my kids aren't going to make friends. Or my daughter has anxiety so I'm anxious about her anxiety. Or some other variation, usually it relates to the kids in some way.

What we want to make sure that we're doing is taking emotional responsibility for how we feel. All that means is that we say I'm feeling anxious because I'm thinking my daughter may not make friends at her new school. Or I'm feeling anxious because I'm thinking my kids are starting daycare soon. I don't know what it's going to be like for them.

The difference in how I'm articulating it and why this can be useful is you add in the word thinking. What that does is it reminds your brain that the anxiety you're feeling, the vibration in your body that you feel is coming from your brain. It's coming from what you are thinking. It doesn't mean you're wrong for thinking this. It doesn't mean you should try to stop it. It doesn't mean that it's not real and that it's just made up.

All it means is that you're not blaming your feelings on what's happening outside of you. This will have a profound impact on your life because if you just do it in this one area, you'll notice that you could do it in every area. It'll sort of pour over, and you'll start to see oh my goodness, a much more empowered way of living is to take responsibility for how I'm feeling.

Now, just one caveat here, not to judge yourself when you still feel anxious. Remember, there's no point where you get rid of your brain. You still will always have that survival part of your brain. I say this because I coach a lot of you in Grow You. I can include myself here because I've for sure I've been guilty of this where I know this now. What I do then is judging myself for still needing to do the work.

So you now know that anxiety is a feeling created by your thinking. You may be thinking well, I don't really want to think thoughts that produce anxiety. So some point in the future when you find on default that's what happens, don't beat yourself up or judge yourself or think oh my goodness, I thought I was over this. I thought I knew better. I thought my brain wouldn't do this. All you want to do is remind yourself oh yeah, this is that

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survival part of my brain. It's good that it's still there. Also I can manage it. Also it doesn't have to be debilitating, and I don't have to escape my feelings.

Instead, what I can do is name that feeling. Hey anxiety, I see you there. Get some control over it and remind myself that I'm the creator of it. I'm feeling anxious because I'm thinking I don't know what's going to happen in the future. Right? Anxiety is usually this fear combined with uncertainty about the future. The reason that your brain thinks you're going to die if you don't know what's happening in the future is because it wants to protect you from anything that could threaten your survival.

So if you're going to do something that you've done in the past, your brain doesn't freak out about it and get anxious about it because it can pull from your past experience. It knows I've done this thing before. So if I do it again, it's very likely this will be the outcome. When you haven't done something before, your brain kind of spirals because it has trouble making sense of what's likely to happen. So it doesn't know if you're going to survive.

My brain right now is immediately going to all the coaching I did during the pandemic. So many women experienced a lot of anxiety. We coached a lot of it inside Grow You at that time because our brains, what was happening was we had never lived through something like this. So our brains on default could not come up with a very likely positive outcome. It was sort of in this freakout mode. You may or may not have experienced that.

If you didn't, you, for sure, have had other instances where you're trying something new, whether it's because you want to or not, whether it's because you want your kids to go to a new school or it's because there's a pandemic or whatever else. It's something new, which means it's uncertain to your brain. So there's this fear of the unknown, and that creates anxiety.

We have this all the time in motherhood because it is all so new, right? No one has been a mom before until they are actually a mom. Then at every stage there's just this sense of almost like a lack of control. What we want

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to do to kind of live empowering lives is to shift it back to what we can control, which is what kind of mom do I want to be in this circumstance? If your child doesn't make the team or if your child is graduating and going off to college, what kind of mom do I want to be here? That's what you have control over.

You have to redirect your brain away from worrying kind of and thought looping and ruminating about things you can't control. Are they going to make friends? Are they going to like it? Is everything going to be okay? All very normal, all very primitive, automatic thoughts. What you can do is just remind your brain. It's okay brain. We can't control that. What we can control is how we show up.

Who do I want to be in this circumstance is such a useful question if you're a mom. If I could teach you how to control the world and control other people, control your kids, I would definitely do that. But, of course, we can't. We just forget that. We forget that because we have these new circumstances, and we have this default brain. The default is I want to control everything so that I can feel safe. We can all be safe and everyone's happy. Of course, that's not the way the world works.

So when you're feeling anxiety, remember to name it. Remember to take responsibility for how you're feeling. I'm feeling anxious because of a thought in my head, because of a sentence in my head. I'm feeling anxious because I'm thinking I don't know what's going to happen with my kids at this new school.

Just adding that word thinking helps you take responsibility for your feelings, and that is everything. It's going to help you process your feelings instead of avoiding them. It's going to help you live a much more grounded present life where you're someone who experiences the feeling of anxiety here and there. Instead of someone whose anxiety compounds and you resist it, and it's made so much worse in a way that can feel almost like you have to fix and control and change the world in order to be happy. Of course that is not true.

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So if you want more help with this, if you have specific circumstances that you would like me to coach you on, I really encourage you to come on over to Grow You at nataliebacon.com/coaching. This would be the perfect a month for you to get a handle on any of the worries that you're having, on any anxiety that you're feeling, and really help you not only to process the emotion but also to have a more empowered mindset for how to go forward beyond the month of July. All right, my friends. That's what I have for you this week. I will talk with you soon. Take care.

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.