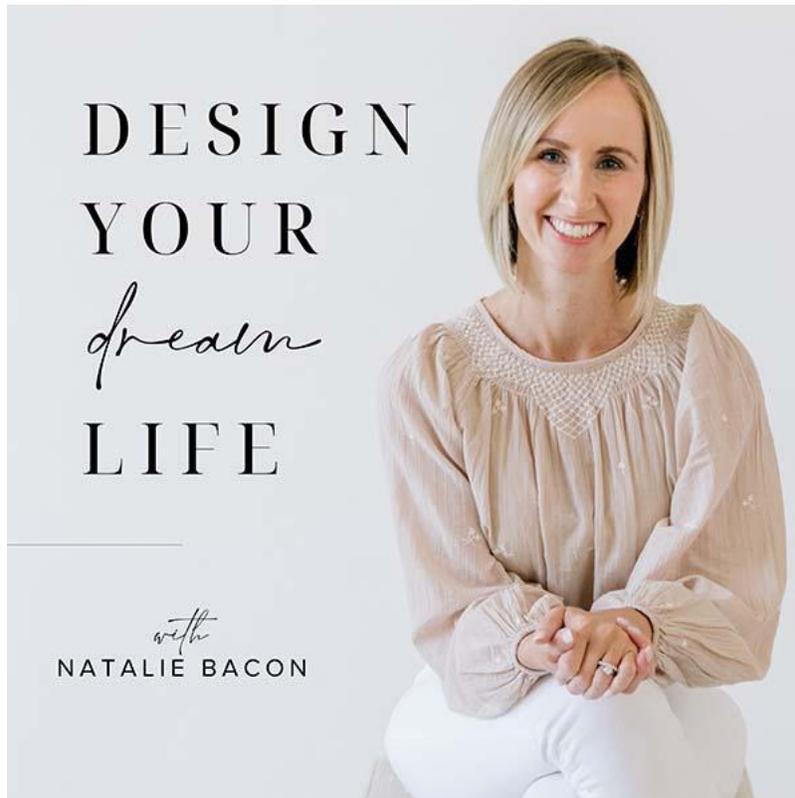


Building A Connection Bank With Your Kids



Full Episode Transcript

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Natalie Bacon

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Building A Connection Bank With Your Kids

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 back to the podcast. If you are new, welcome. Hey, if you are a returning listener, would you do me a huge favor and write a review if you are enjoying the tools and the practices that I'm teaching here. The reviews makes such a difference, and I read all of them.

The reason that they're so important is that the podcast platforms actually use reviews to determine whether this is a good show, meaning whether the podcast platform should recommend the podcast to more people. There's nothing I am more passionate about and grateful for than getting this work out to more women who can use it in their lives. So it would mean the world to me if you would write a quick review. I know it takes a little bit of time and effort, but I so very much appreciate it.

With that, let's dive in to today's topic. I want to share with you a tool that I've been using with myself and my clients called building a connection bank. Think of a connection bank as something that you are filling up. When it's completely full, you are feeling really fully connected. What's amazing about feeling really connected is just first of all, it feels amazing. But second of all, your actions are so much better. You're more likely to cooperate. The same is true for other people. Wouldn't we all like more cooperation from everyone in our family? Yes.

So this is actually going to be a tool that is very helpful if you are struggling right now with kids who aren't "listening". So I want to talk about that for one second because it's coming up a lot in my coaching recently inside Grow You. If you have kids that aren't listening, what's actually happening is that they are not doing what you want them to do. They hear you.

So think about this for a minute. If you yelled that they could get their favorite thing by coming into the kitchen, whether it was ice cream, or pizza, or a new toy, or an iPad, or whatever it is for them. You had their

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favorite thing in the kitchen. If you yelled that, would they come running in? Yes, of course. So the problem or the challenge that you're working on isn't that they're not listening. They can hear you. The problem is that they are acting in a way that isn't what you've asked.

So you made a request of them hey, would you take this action, and they are deciding no. We tend to just call that not listening in layman's terms. But if you think about it in terms of what's actually happening and going on inside their bodies, so their inner work, their thoughts, their feelings that lead to their actions, you can have so much more compassion and understanding for what's happening.

Because what's important to them is not to sit down at the dinner table or get their shoes on to go out the door. What's important to them is, whatever else is right in front of them or what's kind of pulling them away. So seeing this, you can then decide who you want to be because that's what you have control over. You don't have control over their agency. So the solution here is to decide who you want to be in this situation. This might include setting boundaries and expectations and other parenting strategies.

But the part that I want to add in here today is something that you can control, which is you. One of the best ways that I've come up with how to do this is thinking about having a connection bank that you have yourself as it relates to each person in your family. So your kids, if you're married, your spouse, or whoever you live with. Let's take that family as an example.

The connection bank is you showing up thinking thoughts that create connection and then taking action where you're showing up with your kids, with your spouse from that place of connection as the mom you want to be. I suggest doing this out of the moment.

So if you're in a challenging moment where you're experiencing something like your kids aren't doing what you want, you're thinking they're not listening to you. This isn't the tool to rely on. Instead, it's a cue that this is the tool you want to use out of the moment. How it works is you decide that you want to create more connection with your child, but you do it for you.

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So for example, thinking about what connection is, it's a feeling that we feel created by our thinking. So if you think thoughts like I want to get to know my kids more. I want to get into their world. I want to pour into them, and you feel connected. Then you decide to go into their world and take action to spend time with them on their terms, and you're playing, and you're having fun, and you're being silly, you are increasing that connection bank. This is you spending quality time with your kids from a feeling of connection.

So it's really important to understand the inner workings of what's happening behind the actions. Because if you don't, what can happen is you can think that all you need to do is take the actions of hey, I need to spend some quality time with my kids. If you just take the action, but you don't have thoughts that are creating connection, this won't work. So it's the thoughts that you have and the feelings that you're generating when you take the actions that make the biggest difference.

So sometimes the actions might look like screen free time, play, silliness, having fun, getting into their world, whatever your kids like a lot, finding a way for you to play inside their space. Thinking about it in terms of wanting to get to know them on a deeper level.

So I like to use the analogy of when you first started dating someone and you wanted to know everything about them. Think about that energy for your kids. I think so often we can get caught up in the day to day. We think we know our kids better than they know themselves. So much of the time, that's true.

But if you approach them as humans who are growing and evolving, and you respect them, and you have this hat on of curiosity and connection, and you're thinking thoughts like I wonder what it's like to be them. I wonder what new skills they're developing right now. I wonder what they're enjoying the most right now. I wonder how we can have moments of laughter and play and silliness and lightness. That I wonder is curiosity, which is getting to know someone.

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So when you approach your kids like this, and you focus on feeling connected with them, and you get into their world, this builds up your connection bank for you. The result is that you're going to feel more connected to them. So your requests of them will have a different tone. They will sound different. You will just be coming from a more connected place, not from a place of control, which I'm 100% guilty of.

So this is, again, something that I'm using in my life as well. It's been serving me so well for that kind of recovering type a control enthusiast as I would totally identify as. This can be very grounding and helpful.

Now, an added side effect of this is that your child, your kids, also have thoughts, feelings and actions that they're taking. When someone shows interest in you, you likely feel more connected to them, and you're likely to take action that's more cooperative. The same is true for all humans.

So an added benefit of this is that when you show up and build up the connection bank out of the moment, they will likely feel more connected as well. Because they'll be thinking thoughts like oh, my mom wants to be in my world. My mom wants to play. They're not consciously having these thoughts, but they are feeling connected, and they're feeling respected. The result of that for them is that they are more likely to take the action that you are requesting.

So will this work 100% of the time? Absolutely not. Every child is different, every situation is different, every human is different. But if you just think about it in terms of human behavior, aren't we all so much more likely to do something for someone else when we feel connected to them? Of course.

I like to give the example of say your spouse comes home from work and neither of you is feeling connected. You haven't spent time together in maybe a week, and you have been feeling busy and maybe even irritated. It's unlikely that either of you wants to cooperate with what the other asks of you.

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So if your spouse comes home, and you're feeling irritated. And he asks you to go do something, you may or may not do it, but you're certainly not going to be jumping up and down excited to do it. You're certainly not going to be doing it from a place of connection. That's because of that feeling that you are feeling which is driven by your thoughts.

So, feelings always drive actions, and your thoughts always drive your feelings. If you think about how you normally act in the world, if you are feeling really connected. So if your spouse came home after work, but you had felt very connected the last week, then you're texting and you're sort of like flirting, and you have that sort of dating energy even though you've been married for a long time. Or you're just in a habit of being very kind to each other and having moments of connection and you're in a really good place. You're so much more likely to cooperate or do something that they ask, even if it's something you kind of don't want to do.

If your spouse comes home and is like hey, can you run to the store and get this, if you're feeling connected to your spouse, you are so much more likely to go do it. The way that they ask and the way that you ask is going to be so different because it's coming from a place of connection. There might be silliness and lightness and play added in there, and that can be very powerful.

Now I was coaching someone using this tool. She said, "I have a child who is highly sensitive, and I do spend a lot of extra time with her. I do make an effort. You know, anytime that I need to run to the store or go do something, I invite her to come along instead of all of the three kids." What I explained to her was that yes, extra time in that way can be beneficial.

But what I'm talking about here is you going into their world. That was an example of bringing the child into your world, which of course can be done. That's the action that we're talking about from a place of connection, and you can make it fun. But to make it even more powerful, go into their world.

This doesn't have to be something that takes a lot of time and hours every day, but what if for 10 minutes every day or 15 minutes every day, you

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have the mindset or the goal of I want to build up my connection bank with each of my kids and do it in their world. Just 10 minutes of that time where you are learning and wondering and curious and laughing and playing and coming to their space and in their world from a mindset of I want to get to know them. I want to see what's going on for them. I want to be totally enveloped in their world without my phone, without distractions, and be silly with them.

So often we are teaching our kids and helping our kids and parenting our kids so that they can be sort of “good members of society”, right? We're teaching them. You go to a restaurant, you can't throw food at the next table or put your feet up or whatever it is. We're teaching them how to be members of society. So much of that requires that we're teaching them how to be in our world.

So much of the time, if we can just take a few moments to get into their world, it goes a long way. It is so fulfilling when someone wants to get to know you and come into your world. Just think about that in your own experience. Imagine if a sister or a friend or a parent or just anyone in your life said hey, you know that thing that you do? That's not something that I do at all, but I'd love to hear more about it.

Like I think about this for myself, right? If someone who wasn't interested in mindset work or coaching or anything, if they said, “Hey, I don't really know what that's all about at all, but tell me about it.” Even if they just wanted to hear about it just to get to know me more, and they weren't asking because they were interested in it for themselves, but they just wanted to know about it more.

I would be having thoughts like oh my goodness, they really care about me. That's amazing. That's so thoughtful. That's so kind of them to ask. It would make me feel more connected because it would influence my thoughts.

So our default thoughts are pretty predictable. When someone is nice to us, our default thoughts are nice, right? When someone is not nice to us, our

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default thoughts are typically not nice. We mirror right. So oftentimes, that's what will happen with kids and spouses and family members as well.

Now the work that we do is you can always choose intentionally what those thoughts will be. But again, if you want more cooperation better, "listening", a great thing to focus on out of the moment is to build up this connection bank.

I will mention too that you can do this in the moment. It just depends on what you are trying to get your kids to do. So if you are in a rush, getting out the door, and you're already late, it might not be the time to do this in the moment. But let's say that you are trying to get everyone to sit down for dinner and stay in their seats. I was coaching someone on this recently who said, "My kids are just always getting up from their seats at dinner."

I said, you can use the connection bank tool during dinner. So how this would work is you're thinking okay, I want to get to know them and be in their world and feel connected to them. How might I think about their experience at dinner? Well, it's probably hard for them to sit down for an entire dinner. So how could I make this more fun? How could I connect with them more?

I gave her the idea of okay, every so often, whether it's every five minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes. Depends how long your dinner is, depends what age your kids are. But in this example, it was every seven minutes, let's get up and let's dance and like run in a circle around the table, and then everyone sits back down. So it's coming up with ways to add in more play and fun in a way that is appropriate and helpful for both the parents and the kids.

So it's coming from this place of connection. When you think from a place of what's going on for them, how can I make this easier and more fun for them, and you approach them with connection and respect, I promise you. Your brain will come up with ideas and solutions to add in strategies that work.

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Of course, are they gonna work 100% of the time? No, but they will work a lot of the time. The reason that they will work a lot of the time is because you know, your kids and your family best. When you put your brain to work on an empowering question like how can I connect with my kids more and get to know them more? How can I make this easier and more fun and add in more play and still get the result that I need to get? Your brain comes up with solutions.

Contrast that with the question that I think all of our brains go to on default is how do I get them to listen to me? That question is very disempowering because it focuses on trying to control other people's agency. So then there becomes this power struggle. We're going to talk about on another episode kind of having the mindset of being on the same team.

You'd want to have that mindset here. Like we're all on the same team. How can we work on this together? What does my teammate need from me? How can I make this easier? How can I make this more fun? How can I add in some connection and likeness and play?

I love that this requires so much growth on the side of the parents as well. For me, specifically, I can say that being more grounded and present and connected and incorporating more play has been such a journey that I would say is not, or was not, my natural default nature.

As someone who was trained as a lawyer and a certified financial planner and then built my own business, it was very much in that harder, productive energy that I still like to go to. I'm still ambitious. But being able to shift into the energy that I want to have in my home with my kids, as a family, and to choose that on purpose, to choose connection and play and lightness and silliness and fun, and still be able to get out the door and still be able to have meals together.

It's possible, but it requires a different thinking brain. It requires a different mindset it requires putting your brain to work on how do I want to think about this? How do I want to feel? What actions do I want to take? How do I want to show up here? Those questions are going to be much more

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empowering then how do I get my child to listen to me. Very disempowering because it focuses on what you can't control.

So think for yourself how you can build up your connection bank. It might just be with one of your kids. It might be with all of your kids. It might be with your spouse. You can use this with any relationship, of course, but put your brain to work on building up that connection bank. I suggest doing it out of the moment, but then also you can do it sometimes in the moment when there is space for it.

Like how can we have more connection and fun at dinner and get the result of okay, most of the time everyone's sitting down. Maybe we have little breaks where we get up and dance for two minutes, put the music on, and then sit back down or whatever it is. Your brain will come up with the best solution for your family.

Just remember to ask the best question, which is how can I increase my connection? What do I need to think? How can I feel connected and confident and loving and hold the boundaries that I want to hold and get the result that I want to get? Those questions are much more empowering than focusing on what you can't control, which is someone else's agency.

So to recap here, a connection bank is the amount of time, energy, and resources that you put into connecting with your child outside of the moment. It's just you and them. All your attention is on each other. Phones and screens are typically away. It's fun and light and playful. You're in their world. These actions come from feeling connected, and that feeling of connection comes from the mindset of I want to get to know my child. I want to be in their world. I want to connect with them.

From that place, you show up, building up that connection bank just you and them. That will lead to more cooperation from you and from them because they will then probably feel connected. The reason that this works is because when we feel connected to someone, we want to cooperate more with them. We want to do what they ask because we're feeling connected. The feeling of connection leads to cooperation as an action.

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Again, will this work when 100% of the time? No, nothing always works. But will it work a lot of the time? Yes. So give it a try. Build up your connection bank for you. Also start to notice the impact that it has on you and your family and for your family as they also too might start feeling more connected. That's what I have for you today my friends. I will talk with you next week. 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.