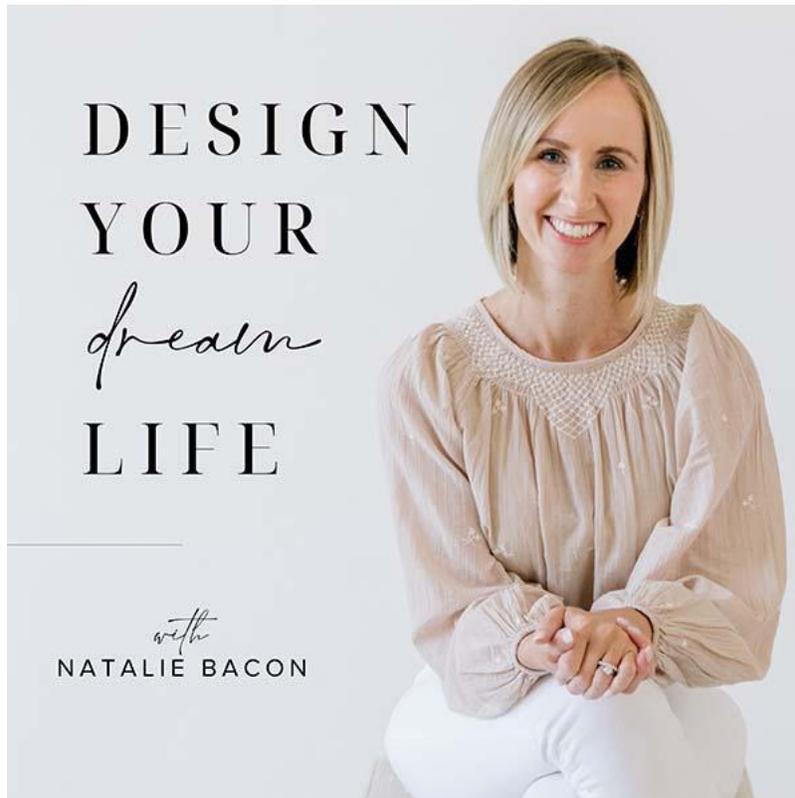


The Mental Load Of Motherhood



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.

Hello and welcome to the mental load of motherhood episode. This topic was so highly requested. I am delighted to bring it to here, hopefully to provide some new and different ways of thinking about the mental load of motherhood and offer some suggestions and tips to help you navigate the mental load and all of the challenges that come with it from the inside out.

I want to start off first though with a huge thank you. Thank you for being here. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving in the United States. It is not lost on me how much I appreciate you being here, giving your time and allowing me to do what I do. It is only because of you that I get to have this podcast. If no one listened to it, I wouldn't do it.

So many of you listen to it and share it and send episodes to your friends. You reach out to me, and you let me know, and you've given me such amazing feedback. I really want you to know how much I genuinely not only just look forward to this time that we share every week, but I'm so very thankful for you. You on the other end listening to this. Thank you and happy Thanksgiving.

With that, let's dive in to this topic, the mental load of motherhood. So I like to start off with defining terms when we're talking about something that typically creates a feeling. So whenever you think of the idea mental load of motherhood, it's very likely that lots of thoughts and feelings come up.

So I'm defining it here specifically as it relates just to the mental part of it, which is what we're talking about today, as all thoughts in your mind as they relate to motherhood. So anything that you're thinking about motherhood, and everything that comes with it is included in the mental load of motherhood.

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I reached out to our Instagram community over at NatalieBaconCoaching. I asked you all what comes up for you? What are your biggest challenges with respect to carrying the mental load of motherhood, and I want to read through some of the examples. What really struck me was the variety of examples that came in. There was not a one size fits all with respect to what affects each of us.

I think that's really important to keep in mind. We all have different minds. What's easy for some of us may be harder for others of us. So there is no right way to think about the mental load. So I want to offer to first and foremost that whatever your experience is of motherhood, starting by looking at what you're thinking about it can be very powerful. In fact, I think it's the best first step. What are your thoughts? Answering that question. We'll talk more about that in a little bit.

But first, I want to go through the examples that came in. So these are examples of what really is challenging about the mental load of motherhood. One member of the community said, "As a mom of a five year old, I'm always doing a lot more for her than I do for myself. Then I reach burnout. I'm always having more output than I am input.

"Between work, coming home, cooking dinner, taking her to t-ball, doing bath and bedtime, packing lunches, getting ready for the next day. I'm moving from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. By 9:00 p.m., I'm wiped out physically and mentally. These are all the things that have to get done. By Thursday night, every week, I'm worn down and exhausted."

Another person said, just generally speaking, the mental load for her is that she has so much to do, and it's just hard to find any time for herself.

Another person said, "It's challenging for me to emotionally regulate myself while managing my toddler's meltdowns at the same time." Someone else said, "I constantly am thinking that I need to be a good parent, and this creates so much pressure for me, and it runs my mindset." Another mom said, "I feel so much pressure to do more when I just want to unplug."

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Another example was, “My kids are grown up now. When I get together with other moms, it's a competition to see who is helping their kids more and to what extent.” Someone else said, “I carry so much as a mom that my brain feels overwhelmed, especially at the end of the day. That's when things need to get done like dinner and homework and getting everyone ready for the following day. I think it's just feeling overwhelmed, and yet feeling responsible for so much. It's a lot as a mom.”

Some other examples of topics that came in, I put into categories. So just daily care logistics of what needs to get done for food, meals, school, bath time. Just that day to day experience and responsibility that we do as moms. Another category of things that came in was caring for the health and safety and making sure that physically our kids are protected.

Emotional wellbeing came up a lot. So supporting kids through their emotions, not taking on their emotions, and being able to regulate ourselves. One woman wrote in about how every time that her college daughter calls, she feels anxious about her daughter's anxiety. Or if she's having a hard time, she feels that. So it's those instances where we also have the thoughts about our kid's emotions and what effect that has on us.

Kid's activities, all of the extracurricular activities. Thinking and planning and doing everything that's included with that. Holidays, birthdays. I know, for me, I'm thinking about this in particular as we're heading into the holidays. Both Steve and RJ have birthdays towards the end of December. So there's a lot on my mind mentally with respect to not only Christmas that we celebrate, but also both of their birthdays.

The ongoing learning and education. Whether it's sleep training or potty learning or emotional regulation or schools, or for older kids helping them with college applications. All of the learning and ongoing education that we do ourselves as parents, that takes up that mental space. That's part of the mental load.

Then there is the part of the mental load that I think we get into that we maybe wish we didn't, which was the comparison trap. So looking at what

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other moms are doing and making it means something about whether we're doing enough. Someone wrote in and said that she went to a moms group, and it was an affluent group of women. All of the women had their babies in music class already. She didn't. So she had a lot of thoughts about what that meant about her as a mom, and if she was wrong, and she's beating herself up about that. That we carry with us in our minds as part of that mental load.

Another area that came up a lot was noticing our kid's behavior, and making that behavior mean something about us. So this is what I call performance based value. So if kids do well, we make it mean we're doing a good job. If kids do poorly or are struggling in some way, then we make it mean something about us. Their performance means something about how good of a job we've done. That's kind of this mental load that if we're not paying attention to we can take that on. It can cause a lot of negative emotions that aren't helpful for showing up.

Then the last one that I want to mention here that definitely came up as a thread throughout most of the submissions was the overall mental load of not feeling good enough and looking outside of ourselves to determine whether we are good enough. This goes beyond the comparison trap and includes questioning our decisions, questioning our worth and value as a mom. Ultimately, how we navigate that in our minds determines whether we feel good enough.

So there are so many parts to this because, again, all of our brains are different, all of our minds are different, all of our lives are different. So when we're navigating coming up with solutions for lightening the mental load, I think it's important to just notice that all of our experiences are different in that the mental load of motherhood is real. Yet there are things that we can do to help ourselves, and that's really what this is all about.

Before we get into some of the solutions that I think will be really helpful, I think it's worthwhile to mention where a lot of the mental load of motherhood comes from. So first just having a brain, it's normal to think about whatever you care about. This is true for every healthy human.

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So if you work outside the home, for example, you have a mental load of what your thoughts are related to that job. You may have been in various types of jobs or careers and know that the mental load varies depending on the job and the career and how your brain interprets it.

So for example, I would say that my experience as an attorney carried a much greater mental load than my experience as a certified financial planner. Now, that's not the case for everyone, but that was definitely the case for me and how my brain interpreted everything that I was doing in each of those careers.

So I bring that up here because I just want you to know that it's not just motherhood where we carry this mental load, but it is motherhood where the mental load has sort of been hidden for so long. The reason for that is because we've been taught from birth that moms do most of the caretaking and homemaking. So we grew up thinking some form of this is how it should be.

This translates into thinking I should be able to do more. I shouldn't need to ask for help. My value as a woman, as a human, as a mom is tied to how much I give and how good of a job I do at caretaking and homemaking. This mindset leads to thinking that mom should take care of others at her own expense. That she shouldn't ask for help. That how well her kids do and “perform” is a reflection of how good of a mom she is.

This leads to self-sacrifice in a really harmful way. The cycle just repeats. Its equating how much we do and how well we take care of our kids and our homes, and what their actions are as if we can control that to our value. We equate all of that to how good we are.

So it's really interesting because you have to understand this to be able to grasp the solution because part of the solution isn't doing more. It's not going for more walks or having more girls nights or anything where you're sort of just taking action that people suggest that sounds like self-care.

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The solution, in large part, is caring deeply about yourself and your life in the same way that you care about other people's lives. So if you are feeling burnout, this is especially important for you. You want to start by getting curious about you and your thoughts about yourself and going inward to discover what it is you need. Taking a look at the thoughts you have about yourself and what your thoughts are about motherhood, What thoughts you want to let go of.

For example, you may decide you want to keep the part where you are teaching your kids, but you let go of the part where you say that their grades determine your value as a mom. So unchecked, left on default, your brain will interpret your kids as an extension of you. But really, they are their own humans, and they can use their agency however they want. This means we don't take credit for the good either.

So I always find it interesting. If RJ does well on a flight, people will tell me what a good job I'm doing after the flight. I find it almost fascinating. I really don't take it as a compliment to me at all because I know that I can't control how RJ acts on a flight. In fact, there have been many flights where that is not the case.

So I thank them, of course, and I'm polite, but I don't take it personally. I don't make it mean oh yeah, I did a really good job on this flight. No RJ did a good job or he didn't. It's okay either way. It doesn't mean anything about me as a mom. That takes really coaching yourself, taking a look at those subconscious thoughts, and deciding on purpose what you want to think.

So now we're going to dive into the actual steps that I have for you to lighten the mental load of motherhood. That is sort of one of them That we're going to start with, which is the mindset work. I'm going to give you several steps here, but the mindset work is number one. It's the most important because what we're talking about is the mental load. So it's what's happening in your mind.

I never want you to stay in circumstances that aren't supportive or think that your life is happening to you. So I do want you to take different action and

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make the changes that you want. But the first step, I think, is to take a look at your mind and change your mindset. Then from there take whatever actions you want because you always take your brain with you.

So if you change a circumstance, what happens is on the other side of that new circumstance, you still have the same brain and thoughts create feelings. So if you want to feel more empowered and more equipped to navigate the challenges of motherhood, starting with your mindset will lead you to making changes that are long lasting. Because if you change your mind and then you take action, you take that new mind with you. It really is so beneficial.

So what does this look like practically? How do you work on your mindset as it relates to the mental load of motherhood? I have a few things that I want to offer to you. The first is the input that you expose yourself to. I think that if you are in a particularly challenging spot and you are feeling really burned out, this is incredibly important.

What it is, is it means getting off social media, turning off the TV, not scrolling, not exposing yourself to input that makes it harder for your brain to manage. I think that the more you're struggling, the more important this is for you. So if you're doing pretty well, and you're fine when you check social media then this might not be one that you need right now. But I do think the more burned out you feel, the more exhausted you feel, the more it's hard for you to manage the mental load, the more important this step is.

So instead of just doing your normal scroll and doing the normal TV and doing the normal kind of zoning out and checking out, which can sort of feel good in the moment with that little dopamine hit. It actually has a negative impact on your mind. So it adds to the mental load that you are carrying.

It's not going to be the mental load of motherhood, but it's now the mental load of whatever it is that you saw. Maybe it's the comparison trap, or if you watch the news, and now you're feeling however you're feeling from watching the news. You will just have negative mental chatter from

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negative input. It's very hard to have positive mental chatter around negative input. So just make it easy on your brain.

Be really, I would say strict with this. I call it a constraint. So if I'm ever going through a really challenging time, this is one of the first things that I do is queue up the positive podcasts, the positive audiobooks. I'm a member in coaching programs. I listen to the Grow You replays and all of the resources. I'm using these tools in my life.

I make sure that if I am going through it, and that I'm feeling the mental load of anything, that the input in my ear or that's coming in visually, any of that media input is positive. This is such an easy one to do because it really doesn't require you to take more time. You're already using input. I just want you to change it. I want you to make sure that the input that you are consuming is positive and supportive of the mindset that you want to create.

The next part of this is to coach yourself. What I mean by that is to identify the subconscious thoughts that you have. Notice if they are helpful or not. So I really want you to find the thoughts that are causing you the biggest problems. So we all have thoughts that we think that we believe are facts.

The key to really changing your mindset and changing your life is to reveal those thoughts to yourself. We do this through running models and mindful journaling and ask a coach and all of the tools inside Grow You. So if you're not in there, this can definitely help. But I want to give you an example.

So if you have thoughts like I can't ask for help, I should be able to do all this. I see someone else doing it. Why can't I do it? This is so hard. Those are all thoughts. In no way am I saying that you shouldn't have those thoughts. But it's really important to see that they are thoughts. Because on default, our brain just thinks that they're facts, but their thoughts. They're how we're interpreting our life. They're either helpful or not helpful.

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So instead, if you bring these thoughts to light, what you might find is the thought I can't ask for help. Huh, oh, that's interesting. I wonder why I'm thinking that. What we do with coaching is we really get curious around our minds. We think okay, is that thought helping me? If it is helping me, let's keep it. But I know personally when I think the thought I can't ask for help, it doesn't help me. So it's coming up with a better feeling thought that still feels true.

It might sound like this is really hard. It's okay, I can do hard things. Asking for help is out of my comfort zone, but I know it's in the best interest for me and my family. So I'm going to ask for help. So it's about thinking on purpose. It's not about toxic positivity or thinking in a way that feels fake and inauthentic to you. Instead, it's noticing what the thoughts are that you're thinking that are creating the feelings that you're having that aren't helping you, and deciding on purpose what you want to think instead.

I know for me, another example, is when I get into self-pity, which is where I think that my life is happening to me. I think we all, or at least most of us, are familiar with this. This thought is sneaky. It feels very true. So you want to be able to call it out and do some self-coaching around it so that you can think on purpose.

Instead of thinking poor me. It feels like all of this is happening to me. You're noticing that oh, this thought isn't helping me. What are some other thoughts I might think? It might just be I'm feeling really tired. This is really hard. This was an unexpected challenge. What's also true is that I can do this. I will get through this.

Even that just subtle shift with the living in the and that I teach can be very helpful. So all we're trying to do here with this step of lightening the mental load is to bring awareness to our default way of thinking that isn't serving us and then to talk back and come up with more purposeful, helpful thoughts.

The next part of this, the last part of this with respect to the mindset work is positive self-talk. Give yourself praise for everything that you're doing. This

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might be in a way that you write it down. So you just do it for yourself. Or it might be that you share it with your partner or spouse saying I'm so proud of myself for organizing that birthday. I got all of the laundry done today. That dinner I made tonight was delicious. I do a great job with making the grocery lists and meal planning. Did you notice that I'm very intuitive with the kids and can tell when something's off? I didn't even know I had that skill till I had kids. I'm so proud of myself.

Whatever it is, these are just random thoughts, but they can be anything you want. But I think that a lot of times we want praise from other people to feel like we're doing a good enough job. So just notice that about yourself. Notice if you feel uncomfortable with positive self-talk.

I was coaching a client recently, and she noticed, and these were her words, that she kind of liked playing the martyr role. So this really jeopardize that identity. She noticed that she found being the martyr comforting and self-care and praise for herself really threatened that. This was just incredible awareness on her part. I can totally relate to this. I think a lot of us probably can. But just notice that about yourself. If it feels uncomfortable for you to say the really good things about how you're showing up as a mom like what's that about? Just kind of explore that with curiosity.

Okay, aside from the mindset work, the next part of this that I want to offer to you that might help with lightening the mental load is question the have tos. So often we say we have to do things. From feeling like we have to, we feel trapped, and we feel like we're victims of our own lives. I just want to offer to you that the words that you speak, they matter. It's not just semantics.

So when you say I have to do all of these things, that creates a feeling in your body. Your body will not feel open and free and expansive and energized when you think that. So it's not that you're going to just stop doing all of these things. But instead, I just want you to notice and stop saying that you "have" to do things.

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So here's how you do that, you take a pause, and you just tell yourself you're going to quit. You don't have to do any of it because that's the truth. So if you just think of physically you have agency to think, feel, and act however you want. No one is forcing you to do it unless you are somehow kidnapped or brainwashed or something like that. So if you're listening to this podcast, that's not the case. No one is forcing you to do it. You could quite literally not take care of anything.

Of course, there would be consequences. But it is within your agency to not do it. It's not unheard of, actually. We've heard of stories where moms leave their families entirely. I know that this sounds so extreme, and you're not going to do this, and I'm not telling you to. I'd never tell you to do that. But allowing yourself to go to the place where you genuinely feel it in your bones that you don't have to do any of it will be so freeing.

Because, then the second part of this. This is just a mindset, mental exercise. The second part of this is asking yourself okay, what do you want to do. You will find in your mind and in your body that there are so many things that you want to be doing.

I did this recently, with planning the holidays and birthdays, with RJ's birthday, Steve's birthday, the holidays all happening within like two weeks of each other. My brain immediately went to overwhelm. I sort of felt like a victim of my life. It just wasn't useful. So I just quit all of it. I just said in my mind, I don't have to do any of this. I genuinely just could not do any of it. I let myself go there.

Then I asked myself what do I want to do? I slowly started adding things back. I was like well I definitely want to get Steve a birthday gift and RJ birthday gift. So I just started there. It was so interesting because that built momentum for me to continue to ask myself what else I wanted to do. Before you know it, I was doing all of the things.

So I offer this to you as an exercise to try on and see if you can get to the place where you see that everything you're doing is optional, and then deciding intentionally that you want to do things because that's kind of what

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mom you want to be. So instead of I have to do X, Y, Z, tell yourself I'm doing our evening routine the way that I want. It's hard and sometimes I feel tired, but I was made for this. It's who I want to be. That is the whole truth. That can leave you in such a more empowered place.

Also in this exercise, you may find that there are some examples of things that you don't want to do. So for example, it's questioning all of the have tos. Like maybe if it's by Thursday night where you're just extra exhausted from the first few days of the week, you might decide you know what? On Thursdays, that's going to be our leftover night, or our takeout night, or you're going to come up with some other solution for dinner. Because on Thursdays, you're just not going to do dinner.

It's not so much as you should or shouldn't do things. It's more about questioning all of the things that we've been taught that we “have” to do. Just asking yourself is this something I want to do? At what expense? It's a good question for you to think about for your own capacity.

Okay, the third tool for lightening the mental load specifically relates to activities and time commitments. So if the kids are in so many activities that there isn't a space in the week for you as mom to have a single slot of time for self-care. Just question whether that's how you want your calendar to go. It can be very beneficial to reduce kid's activities so that mom can have an activity too. Aside from just getting space to really take care of yourself and pour into yourself you're also showing your kids that hey, Mom matters too.

What I often teach my clients is to have a rule that everyone in the family gets the same number of activities so that we're valuing each person. Now there might be an exception to this if a child has different needs, and so maybe they need a couple more activities. But generally speaking what I see as most often being the problem is kids are in three to four activities. The weeks and weekends are so full mom has no space to do anything that she cares about to take care of herself and really rejuvenate herself.

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So again, it's falling into that trap of my worth as a mom is determined by how much I give and how well my kids do and how many activities they're in and all of these things. So this may or may not apply to you. I offer it to you as something that has been helpful for my clients. Take it if it works for you.

The next practice is to be really open to the idea of more help. Sometimes it can feel like the help available to us is limited. So it might sound like I don't have childcare. I can't afford it. I don't have help. Or my family lives far away. There's no one to help. We don't have help.

The underlying subconscious thought here is I want more help. I don't think it's available to me. Whether or not we think help is available to us is a choice. Emphasis there on think. So what I would suggest to start practicing is thoughts that help you open up to being helped and supported. So practice thinking thoughts like I'm open to more help in the future. I'm available to be loved, taken care of, and supported. I don't have to do it all. I am worthy and good enough just as I am.

So you might come up with your version of that as a mantra that you repeat. I've just found it particularly helpful for myself even to say phrases like that to really be more open to help. I think that I'm not always open to help. Sometimes I'm really open to help. Other times, I'm not. It's not going to hurt to have the mindset that even if you don't have the help you want right now, you are mentally rehearsing that you're open and available for more help.

The fifth practice to help you lighten the mental load is to talk with your spouse or partner if you have one. This might be something that you do for the first time talking about the roles and responsibilities that you have in the household and with parenting. I will say that if you've never done this before, the first conversation around it may be challenging or clunky or hard. But it can be so well worth it if this is an area where you're really struggling.

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I think that after you have that first conversation, continuing to have conversations and check ins to review how things are going can be very powerful. Particularly I think this is true with kids because they change so much.

So I remember in the first months of RJ's life, he was up so much during the night. Steve struggled a lot with the waking up. So I did most of that. I did better with less sleep than Steve did. Now, RJ gets up between five and 5:30 every day. Steve does so well getting up early. Now Steve does that part. This has evolved and changed. I'm sure it will continue to do so as RJ grows.

So it's not about keeping score and kind of paying attention to who's doing more, but it is about caring about your needs being met. That includes talking with the other person in your home who is also contributing to the household and to parenting. I think having regular check-ins can be really helpful.

The next practice to help with lightening the mental load is to identify what your needs are. What is it that you specifically need more of? Is it sleep? Is it help around the house? Is it time to journal and meditate? Is it verbal validation? So often it can feel really defeating and overwhelming to have unmet needs that are vague and not identified. It feels big and unsolvable and kind of icky. Like there's no way out, almost like you're stuck. So clearly identifying what the specific need is, is very powerful because it gives you authority over it.

For example, if you are feeling overwhelmed, and you notice that you need a break. On default, what your tendency is, is to take a break and go scroll, scrolling social media, for example, this is actually going to cause more harm than it is good. Because that extra stimulation is going to add to the overwhelm. So instead of feeling rejuvenated after the little break, you're going to feel worse. So just paying attention to what it is that you need and deciding on purpose. It'll get you out of those default habits.

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The next one for you is to redefine on purpose what being a good mom is. So from our cultural upbringing, there are a lot of subconscious thoughts about the way we tie our value as women to doing more and being productive. Practically, this means that we think on default we have to do it all in order to be good enough. A good enough woman, a good enough mom, all of the roles that we play.

So if you can define for yourself what being a good mom means, as a human being, then I think it's going to help you navigate those challenges. Meaning when your kids get bad grades or when they decide to do something that is not what you would have chosen for them. How can you think of yourself as a good mom?

I think this sort of breaks your brain a little bit if you're used to thinking of your kids as an extension of you. But if instead you change the way that you think about kids, and instead of them being an extension of you, you separating yourself from them and seeing you as the guide, the mentor, the teacher, the mom of a separate, capable human being who has their own agency.

You can decide okay, being a good mom here means showing love and support and caring and being present. I'm just giving you ideas here, but it'll be different for every situation. The key though is for you not to think about what a good mom means and is defined by when everything is going great. What about when mistakes are made by you or your kids? Then how can you be a good mom?

I think it's interesting. We sort of have this idea of what a good mom is that's really vague. I like to call it the robot mom. Right? She's perfect. She does everything right. Her kids do everything right. No mistakes are made. No one feels bad. Everyone's happy all of the time. Everyone follows the traditional path.

Of course, when I say that out loud, it's so glaringly obvious that that is not the human experience. Yet, we often have that as the standard by which we hold ourselves, which, of course, is a losing game. This is why I like to

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say I'm not a robot mom. I'm a human mom, which means I'm half mess and half amazing. That's okay. I'm still a good mom.

So when your brain wants to go to the comparison trap, when you see other moms have their kids in music class, and you don't, it's asking yourself do I want to put my child in music? But it's not using what they do against yourself. Again, on default, our brains will always use it against ourselves, but we have to train our brains. No brain, we're not going to judge ourselves. We are good enough.

Okay, the last practice that I want to mention here is the spectrum of caring and not caring. Think of a spectrum. On the one side of the spectrum, the far left there is not caring at all. On the other side of the spectrum, there is caring too much. In the middle there's caring, but focusing on what you can control.

So let me grow on this in an example. I was coaching a client recently, and she was worried about her son filling out all of the college applications and meeting college application deadlines. She found herself going back and forth between each end of the spectrum. Also known as a little bit of all or nothing thinking.

Either she was going to hover over her son, try to make sure that she controlled when and to what extent that he filled out these applications. She found herself worrying about it and asking her son all of the time when he was going to get to it. This is when she was doing what I call caring too much from a place of control. On the other end of the spectrum would be her not caring at all.

This is what she was struggling with. She was saying I don't like that I'm so worried and trying to control him, but it seems like I don't want to stop. I don't want to just say okay well, you just do it all. I don't care at all. What I showed her was what I want to teach you now, which is to think about the spectrum.

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So the options are not I try to control my child or I do nothing. In the middle, which is where I want to encourage you to get to is deciding to care, but focusing on what you can control. So in this example, what she did was decide to think okay, what kind of mom do I want to be here? Well, I'm really good at planning and making deadlines. So I'm going to have a conversation with my son out of the moment to see if there's a way that I can work with him to add deadlines to our family calendar and kind of work through this with him outside the moment so I'm not asking him about it all of the time from this controlling place.

Instead, I can show up from a supportive, loving place where I am helpful, but I'm not trying to control. If you find yourself having a lot of thoughts about trying to control your kids, this is one that I definitely recommend trying to get to that middle place of focusing on what you can control, which is you and getting to that place of empowerment.

The last part of this episode is asking yourself some questions that I think can be really powerful to help you navigate the mental load of motherhood. Question one, are you physically tired or emotionally drained? So the next time that you find yourself kind of overwhelmed or in that space where you're feeling exhausted, ask yourself am I physically tired or emotionally drained?

For me, this has been really helpful because what I've found a lot of the times is I'm tired. When I notice that, I can go to much more empowering thoughts. I can say something like oh, I'm feeling tired. That's okay. I can do tired. This keeps me out of spiraling into thoughts like I'm overwhelmed. I can't do this. This is too hard.

All of those thoughts that feel very vague and true like our life is happening to us, but don't serve us at all. So checking in with yourself. If it's both, emotions come from your thoughts. That's when you want to take a look at okay, what am I thinking here that's creating these feelings?

The second question is to ask yourself if you are thinking that what is hard right now is hard but rewarding, or are you thinking that you're a victim of

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your life? There is a huge difference. One feels like you're getting stronger, and you're learning lessons. You're here for it. The other feels like self-pity and will keep you stuck. So you just want to notice. I don't want you to try to change any of it. You just want to live in the awareness of what your brain is thinking before you ever try to change it.

The third question is do you crave being able to talk about how much you self-sacrifice? Do you have the idea that motherhood does equal martyrdom? Do you like that identity? Is it comforting? Does self-care threaten it? For me, this has been huge in my own self-discovery.

So I just want you to ask these questions from loving curiosity, not from beating yourself up, wanting to change it right away, righteousness. Curiosity is your best friend when you are trying to get to know yourself and grow and make real change.

The next question is do you think that your value comes from how much you care for others? If so, how will you ever make space to take care of yourself? What are your thoughts and feelings about taking care of yourself? What is self-care for you? Are you interested in your life and in taking care of yourself?

The next question what do you want to keep the same about this season? What do you want to change? For the things that you want to change, if there's anything where your brain immediately says oh but I can't, just allow yourself space to think about that question. So if you want childcare and your brain immediately says oh well, that's not possible for us right now. Just allow yourself space to want that without blocking it.

It might sound something like yes, I do want childcare right now. I'm not sure how that's possible, but it is a desire that I have. Just saying that really opens you up to looking for possibilities. By you, I mean your brain. If you practice thoughts like that, your brain will look for solutions even subconsciously. The last question is do you have a daily practice for managing your mind when thoughts come up that don't serve you? Why or why not?

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All right, my friend, my goal with this podcast episode is to hopefully empower you within your role of motherhood. I know that looks different for all of us. I truly believe that cleaning up our minds and our thinking and being fueled by emotion intentionally, whatever that emotion is that we want to be fueled by is so helpful. Because then from there we can take action to make the changes that really serve us and create the future that we want to create.

I believe that the best way to show up as the mom that you want to be is to take care of yourself. It is a practice because I think it's been ingrained in us to take care of others at our own expense. So we're fighting against that subconscious and cultural narrative. But bringing consciousness to it is a huge first step.

I think that the more you care about yourself, the better equipped you are to live the life that you want. That includes your role as mom. Taking care of yourself is not like college where you learn it once and you graduate, and you're done after a few years. It's like showering and getting ready in the morning. You do it every day to clean your body.

This is what we do with our minds, with the emotions that we experience, with all of the work that we do here to do the inner work so that we are taking action from a clean space. This can help so much with lightening the load of motherhood, whatever that looks like for you. 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.