

Happy Over There



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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, and welcome to today's episode: Happy Over There. Before we dive in, I want to make sure that you know what I'm doing over on Instagram. On Instagram stories every single day, I share a mindfulness tip or practice or thought to help you keep this work on the top of your mind so that you can really apply it in your everyday life.

I love how on the podcast, it's more of a long form, and we get to talk every single week together. But if you're looking for some mindfulness practices to really help you every other day of the week, head on over to Instagram @nataliebaconcoaching and start watching those stories.

Also, you can send me a DM. I try to reply to everyone to the extent that I can. If you send me a message, say hi, where you're from, let me know that you came from this podcast. I would love to connect with you on the podcast. It's so fun for me to share my thoughts with you. I love all of your sharing and tagging and feedback and all of that. But I think the cool thing about Instagram is that we actually can have a conversation. So you can actually send me a DM. I can put a face behind the listeners. That's really fun for me, as well as hopefully more connecting for you. So I will see you over @nataliebaconcoaching.

With that, let's talk about happy over there. So happy over there is the idea that you'll be happier sometime in the future when your life is different. So you'll be happy when you lose weight. You'll be happier when the kids are out of this stage. You'll be happier when you're not so busy. You'll be happier when you make more money or you get the bigger house. It's you'll be happier sometime in the future when you fill in the blank.

I think that this concept is talked about kind of a lot. It's probably not brand new. This is probably not the first time you've heard it. But I'm hoping that the way that I'm going to talk with you about it here is a little bit different

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than what you've heard before. I think because of that, it's going to give you some new ways of applying it so that you don't fall into this trap.

Because no matter how true, it feels that you'll be happier when, it's not true. It's a thought error. It's a thought error because it assumes that circumstances create feelings. It assumes that at a lower weight your feelings inside your body change. When you lose weight, you feel happier. The reality is though that that's not true. That's a thought error. Thoughts always create feelings. So over there when you lose the weight, you take your brain with you.

Now, what may happen is that over there, you actually may feel happy about something, but it's still because you've changed your thoughts. If you haven't done this consciously, what happens is that the disapproval or the discontent or whatever you were feeling before in the past just changes outfits.

So let's use the weight loss example. Let's say that you think I'll be happier when I lose 20 pounds. Then you lose 20 pounds, and you are happier. So on default, you're gonna think oh it's because I lost the weight, but that's not true. It's because you change your thoughts. Your thoughts are something like I'm really glad that I'm this weight. I'm really glad that I lost the weight. I'm happy that I lost the weight. Some thought that you're thinking that creates the feeling of happy.

But what also will happen is that whatever feeling that you felt when you were 20 pounds heavier comes with you. So if you felt stressed about your weight, and then when you lost 20 pounds, you stopped feeling stressed about your weight, you will feel stressed about something else. Maybe now it's how your skin looks or how you don't have enough muscle, or it might not even be something related to your body. But your stress is still there because it's created by your thoughts. So it's really an important distinction here. Because when you really understand this, you will likely stop kind of goal chasing or circumstance changing to change your feelings.

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An example that really resonates with me, and I know a lot of my clients is going from being single to being married. So if you think back to when you were single, or in a different relationship status than you're in now. At that time, let's just use the single example. So if you're married now, when you were single, when you think back to when you were single, you had single people problems. Then you got married, and most of those single people problems were solved.

So for example, when you're married, you're not thinking about is the guy going to call you back. Should you go back out with him? How many dates have you been on? Meeting families. You're not thinking about those things. But instead when you get married, you trade and you're single people problems for married people problems. Now you have different problems. So I just like to abbreviate that with once you're single, you have single people problems, and then you get married and you trade in your single people problems for married people problems.

It's important to see this because at no point in the future are you just 100% problem free. The reason for that is because of the human brain. Life is full of contrast, which means that the brain interprets things in the world, facts of the world, of our lives as good and bad. That's a simplified version of it of course. There's lots of different interpretations in between. But there's no point in time where you don't have this part of the brain that is interpreting problems and mistakes and failures and struggles and the “bad” part.

So just like when you go from single to being married, you no longer have the issues of the calling back and the do I like this guy and all of that. You do then have though married people challenges. So the point is to see that over there, you are still human.

That's not to say that some seasons aren't harder than others, but it is to say that it's all because of the brain. So for example, I coach a lot of moms with kids of all ages. For the moms that have adult children, they will often say that they preferred certain stages, and this is normal. Just like we prefer certain weather or certain outfits or certain foods.

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So let's go with the kids example. Let's say that you prefer older kids, and had more fun raising teenagers. You struggled more with parenting younger kids. When they were, let's say before they went to school. Something like that. This is 100% normal, but it's still true that in each phase, there are challenges and problems.

So even when the kids are older and you prefer that stage, there are still challenges. It might be that the challenges with the kids are fewer, and that you have other challenges. The reason that viewing it in this way can be really powerful is because if you're going through a really challenging time right now, and you are thinking that you just need to get past this season, it is a thought error.

That's not to say that what you're going through isn't hard. I want you to acknowledge that it's hard, but then I want you to add on to that thought, it's hard and I was made for this. It's hard and I can do hard things. The stronger you get with training your brain to think how you want to think and feel how you want to feel right now, the better your life becomes because, again, you take your brain with you.

So personally, I find this so helpful to just acknowledge that where I'm at right now, I can create any positive emotion I want. It's okay that I'm creating negative emotion. I just want to make sure that I'm not falling into that thought error and thinking that over there is somehow happier or better because I do take my brain with me.

Another example that I've coached a lot on is with career changes. Thinking that you'll be happy at the next job or going from full time mom to full time working mom to part time working to everything in between. It's kind of changing the job or the extent to which you work thinking that there is a magic circumstance that creates your happiness. It's just not true.

No, there for sure are going to be jobs that you prefer over others. There, for sure, are going to be preferences that you have with respect to how much you work and the type of job that you have. I'm definitely not suggesting that you stay in a job you don't like.

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Just be onto yourself if you're someone, I've coached a ton on this, where you think that you need to keep changing jobs to find the one like as if there is this one job that creates your happiness. What happens is you will just keep changing jobs. Of course the happiness never comes because you're taking your brain with you.

So what I say is clean up your thinking now and get to a place where you like your current job, and you have positive feelings and then leave. You'll be so much better positioned to be happy at the next job because you'll already have created that thought and feeling pattern of happiness.

So happy is a feeling that you feel from what you're thinking. You can get in the habit of feeling happy. I suggest that that's a worthwhile endeavor because why not? Right? You take your brain with you in every circumstance. How fun is that if you just got really good at feeling happy and thinking thoughts that created happy. It sounds so simple, and it really is.

So then I got to thinking okay, this is kind of simple. It's doable. It's not necessarily always easy even though it's simple, right? We have patterns of feeling stress and worry. So we have to override all of that. But what's really going on here? Like, why is it so hard? Why don't we just choose happy now?

Here are the reasons that I came up with that I think will add some deeper awareness to this. I think the first reason that we don't choose happy right now is because we don't fully believe that our thoughts create our feelings. We think that our lives create our feelings. So we think that if we do X, Y, Z then we'll be happy. If we get the bigger house, then we'll be happy. If we get a certain job or we lose a certain amount of weight or whatever it is external thing that we change, then we'll be happy.

Bringing awareness to this in your own life is really powerful. So just notice if you're thinking that you'll be happy when. Like call yourself out on that. Like that's so interesting that I think I'll be happy when. When we have a bigger house, when the kids are out of this stage of fighting. Whatever it is,

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fill in the blank. Just live in the awareness of that because it is a thought error. It's just not true. You will take your brain with you into the next phase, and there will be a next phase where there's something else to be unhappy about. You get to decide what are you going to focus on.

The second reason why I think we don't choose happy more often is that while it is simple to do, you just choose happier feeling thoughts that feel true to you. It's hard to do because of the brain and body. So your brain's job is to keep you safe, and make sure that you survive. A part of that means scanning for danger.

So a very simple example. If you're walking across the street, your brain is automatically scanning to make sure that no cars are coming. You don't have to stop and consciously use your prefrontal cortex to say okay now let's look both ways, kind of like how we do when we teach kids, right. You automatically just do this on default. Your brain knows that it needs to do that to keep you safe and to survive.

Because of that part of the brain, we will find it harder to feel happier often. Because that part of the brain that's really useful when we're crossing the street, there's no off switch. So when you are in your suburban home and your in-laws come over, and they do something, and you don't like it. Then they leave and you're feeling all this drama, stress, anxiety, whatever it is, that's really hard to overcome. It's not impossible. I don't want you to think that. I just am pointing out why it's so challenging because I think this can give ourselves more compassion.

So that part of your brain that scans for danger when you're crossing the street also scans for danger with humans. That means that it's looking for what's wrong with them, what they are doing wrong. Of course, they're doing nothing wrong. They are just being themselves, but our brain can't help itself in thinking that it is right. So bringing more awareness to that.

This is why coaching yourself is so important in the work that we do in Grow You is so important because the default brain just looks for what's

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wrong. It looks for the negative, and that works against happiness and being happy over here.

I also like to think that the skills that we are really good at when overused become our negative traits. So if you are really good at your job, let's say as an attorney, and you're really good at finding what's wrong. Like you're looking through contracts and you can be really critical and critique a contract. That's useful. You need that, right.

Now take that skill home after your in-laws come over. Not so useful. If you use it with people you're going to find what's "wrong" with them their imperfections, and that will create resistance, annoyance, frustration, whatever it is in your body. That is going to get in the way of you practicing those thoughts. So just keep that in mind that our strengths overused become our weaknesses.

The third reason that I think we don't choose happy right now or why it's really hard for us to do is I think particularly for women and for the ambitious woman or the type A woman, we've been conditioned from a very young age to set goals and achieve. I mean even the littlest things that we are asked as kids. What do you want to be when you grow up? It's all about the work that you are going to do in the world or playing sports or activities and winning and the next level or whether it's just in school and doing well in school. We are taught and conditioned to believe that setting goals and achievement are the most important thing.

I don't think this is bad. I like being ambitious. But the problem becomes when we mistakenly think that achievement leads to happiness because we're not asked about how we want to feel, how we want to treat other people, what type of person we want to feel. What do you want your top three emotions to be when you grow up? We would never ask that, right? So fascinating.

So I think what happens is the focus on achievement subconsciously becomes this belief that more achievement leads to more happiness. I'll be

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happy when I graduate. I'll be happy when I get a job. I'll be happy when I get married, etc., etc., etc.

So you have to, again, just bring awareness to the fact that this is a subconscious belief that is a thought error. It's not true. More achievement doesn't lead to happiness. That doesn't mean get rid of the ambitious part of you. It means set goals, have desires, change your life from a place of liking what is, from a place of being happy, not from a place of thinking you'll be happy over there. So this is a huge distinction that I think can be really powerful.

I actually think for a lot of people, and specifically here like my clients, we're talking about women. There may be a point in time where setting goals isn't actually in your best interest because you haven't done the work to feel content and happy with your own life. I can totally relate to this where I would set goals in the past and be really achievement oriented kind of chasing happy. Of course, happiness never came because I was taking my brain with me.

Contrast that with today in my life where I am so happy and grounded and connected and love my life so much, and I want more. And I want to grow. Because that's the point, right? We're all humans on a growth journey. So just kind of know where you're at. Is this a time for you to be setting goals from loving your life? Or have you not done the work of feeling happy and loving your life yet? That's okay. It's just kind of pick your growth journey.

The fourth reason why I think it is so challenging for us to be happy now is that if you are a perfectionist and you think there is some version of perfection, you will be unwilling to accept your current life thinking that you have to accept something substandard or subpar or less than. By doing that, that would diminish your potential. So this, again is a thought error. It's thinking that in order to grow, you have to be unsatisfied with your current life. It's just not true.

If you haven't listened to the episode on perfectionism, I recommend going back and listening to that as well. It'll give you a better sense of whether

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you have perfectionist tendencies. But the crux of it is that you're kind of unwilling to accept your current life and you focus on the negative and you're in a lot of judgment. You falsely believe that changing your life would get you out of that, would lead to feeling better. Of course that's not true.

The last reason that I think it's hard for us to be happy with what is right now, be happy with our lives is that I think on default, our brain naturally romanticizes the past and the future. So it falsely believes that the past was the good old days. It just remembers the good parts. Then it also falsely believes that the future will only have the good parts where we say I'll be happy when, I'll be happy over there. So just notice your brain romanticizing the past and the future.

What I like to say is don't romanticize the past and don't romanticize the future. Romanticize the present. Fall in love and be delighted with your life right now. Then from there grow. Because even if all of your dreams come true, you lose the weight, you make the money, you create your dream family, you have your dream home. It's just better than you've ever imagined. There is no place in time where you don't have a human brain, where you don't make mistakes, where you don't have challenges, where you don't have negative emotions.

This is a good thing. It means that you have a healthy human brain. I think that making peace with this is actually what can allow you to choose happy right now because you've called out those thought errors. You know that all of those things are not true. It is going to be something that you train your brain to do because remember, your brain already is in habits of looking for the negative, looking for what people are doing wrong, making sure cars aren't coming when you cross the street. So you have to retrain your brain to indulge and delight in your cup of coffee.

It kind of seems silly at first, but I promise you, the better you get at this the more it becomes a habit. I do this all the time on our walks. I just like indulge in the aesthetics of my neighborhood and the weather and the trees and the homes and my life, like all of it. I have gotten so much better at this. In doing so, it has made me so much more appreciative of my life. Of

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course, I still have a human brain. So I still wake up feeling anxious. I still get stressed. I still have negative thoughts. But at least I'm balancing that with so much delight and happiness that I'm choosing to feel right now.

Then I set big goals for myself from that place just because why not? If I don't do that, then I know my brain needs a lot of external false pleasure. It's going to need a lot of escaping because I'm going to feel bored with my life and in a lot of discontent. So I want to give my brain something to focus on in the future that just sounds fun to do. So I have business goals. I have health goals. I have family goals. I have life goals, all of those things. That's fun, but it's not because it's going to make me happier.

I want you to think about if someone asked you if you are happy, what would you say? For many of us it's yes, but dot, dot, dot. Then our brain goes to some negative thing of the season. Yes, but it's hard. Yes, but it's exhausting. Yes, I wouldn't trade it for anything, but I also have so many more challenges. I just want to bring awareness to this. What about just saying yes? Yes, I am delighting in my life.

When I was thinking about this, even for myself, it almost seems like arrogant or irresponsible. Like so many other people are struggling that we shouldn't talk about being happy. Like there's a little bit of that. Yet, that isn't useful because what actually creates more happiness in the world is people willing to be happy. So it's just really interesting to think that because other people are struggling, we shouldn't be happy. Because if you follow that logic then it just creates more unhappiness in the world, which is the opposite of what we want.

So if you give yourself permission to genuinely feel good and happy and delight in your life now, it's not arrogant. Because you're not saying ha-ha, I'm happy. You're not. You are genuinely in a state of appreciation where you love your life. When you do this, you will want other people to feel this way too. It's very connecting. It's very much from a place of love and acceptance and appreciation. It's very open.

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I think this takes courage and bravery. I also think it's kind of like learning a new workout routine that you watch on a screen and you're like yeah, I could do that. Then you go and do it and you're like okay, it's gonna take a little bit longer to practice this one.

But how cool would it be if you practiced thinking thoughts that created more happiness and delight and appreciation in your life right now for the next six months to a year? A year is going to go by anyway. How cool would it be if you cultivated this new feeling state in your body? I think it would be so amazing. Like just imagine if all of us listening to this right now did that. We would bring so much happiness to our lives, which in turn impacts the world. Like there is an enormous ripple effect on all of the lives that we touch.

I don't know. I think it's amazing. It's ongoing work for me because of that default human brain, but I'm so much better at it now. As I've mentioned throughout this episode, and I do want to mention again here, is that it's not from acceptance and delight and joy that you go into complacency. You'll know the difference because complacency feels very different than contentment. But once you get into a place of contentment and happiness for your life, then you can decide okay what's my next challenge?

I love a good goal as much as the next type A ambitious woman. I really do. But growth from abundance feels completely different than growth from lack. It doesn't mean that growth isn't hard. With growth, there is going to be failure. There will be challenges, but it's failing and coming up against challenges on purpose because you're putting yourself out there. You're evolving. Like, how cool is that, that we live in a time where this is like a thing?

Growth from acceptance and from happiness feels like wanting something for the next phase of your life, but it doesn't feel like needing it to be happy. So there's a big difference there. That's where that perfectionism comes in.

So for example, I want to grow my family, but I don't need it to be happy.

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I love our puppies. I love my son. I love my husband, and I'm so appreciative of my life right now. And I want more. I want to have more kids. That sounds fun for me and challenging. Either we will or we won't, and I'll be okay and happy either way because I truly believe that my life is happening for me.

I really suggest practicing this thought. It's really comforting during challenges. It's a choice to believe that. I just choose to believe that. I'm like I don't know why this is happening because I know my life is happening for me. So I probably just haven't seen how this is going to work out yet. You can believe that too, my friend.

I promise you this is some of the best and most empowering work that you can do in your life because you take your brain with you. So instead of romanticizing the past and romanticizing the future, you romanticize the present. Then you decide how you want to create and grow in the future. So much fun. You ready? You in? Let's do it. Take care, my friend. I'll talk with you next week.

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.