

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Feelings



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Natalie Bacon

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Welcome to Mom on Purpose, where it's all about helping moms overcome challenges and live their best lives. My hope is by being here, you are more inspired to become the mom you are made to be. I'm Natalie, your host, a wife, boy, mom, dog, mama, Chicagoan, and former lawyer turned professionally certified coach. If you're here to grow, I can help. Let's go.

Hello, my beautiful friend. Welcome to today's podcast on feelings. I have so much to say about feelings that I think is going to make a huge difference in the way that you show up for yourself and for your family. And I want to start off by really just diving into what a feeling even is. A feeling is a vibration in your body that you experience and it's caused by your thinking. You may or may not already know this, but I think it's so important to just pause and remind ourselves of this.

I'm always fascinated by the contrast between what I make a feeling mean after a workout versus what I make a feeling mean after you know, something happens in my life that I don't like. If I feel sore in my body from my muscles after a workout that is kind of uncomfortable and kind of painful and I don't like it, but I don't make it mean that something has gone wrong, that it's a problem that I should never out again. In fact, I make it mean something positive that my muscles are breaking down and changing and growing and that was a really great workout and I know that the feeling is going to pass and my body's going to recover. And it's all great, right? And yet when something happens in my life, some circumstance that I don't love and I feel upset about it, I don't have the same mindset about that feeling.

And I think that is some of the most important work that I and you and we can do together around feelings. That is really what I aim to do. And I do think it's a skill and I'm so much better at it now than I used to be. So the more you practice this, the better you'll get at it. And there is a huge upside to getting better at the way you relate to feelings. Getting better at normalizing all feelings. The benefit is you don't need escapes from your life. So at the end of a long day when you feel overwhelmed or stressed or just exhausted, you validate yourself. You say, of course I'm feeling exhausted. Of course I'm feeling overwhelmed. It's okay. My feelings, my

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experience is valid. And you take some deep breaths and you ask yourself what you need and you give that to yourself.

That is very different than if you don't have these tools and you don't know what to do with that feeling. Most likely what you're going to do is what the natural human brain does. It seeks some pleasure. What is pleasurable to you? Might be online shopping, might be reality tv, I love me, some housewives. It might be, um, a glass of wine, it might be ice cream. We all sort of have our escape of choice. And once you become aware of it, it's just life changing in and of itself because you can see the connection between, oh, I feel a negative emotion. And then I go and I escape it by shopping or by overeating or by over drinking or by whatever it is. Fill in the blank. Just start to pay attention to what your preferred escape is and know that you're only escaping a negative emotion.

And the solution to this is just to get better at normalizing feelings and allowing feelings. We are all born all of us, me, you, everyone listening. And our children are all born with the full capacity to feel our feelings and zero skills to process them. This is why toddlers have tantrums. This is also why we as adults have our version of tantrums. Whether it's you or your spouse or someone in your life, we all know those people. And maybe it's us who really struggle to process a feeling without reacting to it, without resisting to it, without avoiding it. Um, maybe it's yelling, maybe it's storming out. You know, we all have our different ways of, of responding to a feeling and knowing that you can change this, you can improve how you respond to a feeling will change your life because then you can handle anything that comes your way.

I'm always trying to increase my capacity to allow feelings, all of them. And I think, again, this is hard because it, you know, kind of contradicts how we, most of us, at least how we mostly grew up, and a society that said, you want to feel happy? It's good to feel happy. And if you're sad, let's go have some ice cream. Now, I'm not saying that you shouldn't comfort your kids when they're sad and upset, but we just want to be mindful of the message that we are sending. Are we trying to fix their feelings or are we saying it's

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okay to feel how you're feeling? One shorthand phrase that really helps me remember this is feelings are feelings to be felt, not problems to solve or said differently. You can just say that last part. Feelings are not problems to solve. They're feelings to feel.

It's such a reminder because I think especially just as mama bear, we want to help our kids. And the way that we do that is we tend to try to change the circumstance and then we send the message that it's not okay to feel sad. So let me give you an example. I was just coaching someone on this inside Mom On Purpose and she said that her child was struggling with friends and specifically one friendship where he really felt like the friendship was one sided. And the only time that this kid wanted to play with him was when her son invited the other kid and he really felt like, you know, I don't really know if I'm getting back what I'm putting into this friendship.

And it just seems really one sided. And the mom wanted to do what we all want to do on default, which is to try to fix it. We want to either call the kid's parent and you know, tell them about this to try to change the circumstance. We want to, um, tell our child how they should be different to change the other person's actions. We think that this is helpful and we're doing it in the name of loving our kid, but what we're actually doing is sending the message that it's not okay to feel sad.

So I actually think there is a way for you to help support your child, but it's not through fixing and changing the circumstance and the order to this is so important. Okay? Number one, validate their feelings. Number two, normalize the whole thing including challenges and feeling sad. And then number three, offer new thoughts if they're open to it. So let's go through this example. Step number one is to validate how they're feeling. So in this example, it would sound like this, you are feeling sad. I hear you, it's so hard to feel sad. It's okay though. And then you would kind of transition into step two, which is to normalize it, normalize friendship challenges and normalize feeling sad. So it would sound like you are learning great lessons right now about navigating difficult friendships and that is something that you're going to deal with for the rest of your life.

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Even mommy deals with that. Sometimes I have challenges with my friends too. And then you might share a story and then you might say, it's okay to feel sad. It's totally normal. We all feel sad from time to time. And when I was coaching this client, she said, so I'm supposed to normalize that someone treats him like this. And I said, no, we're not normalizing how we don't want to be treated. We're normalizing challenges, we're normalizing feelings. So that's a really important distinction. You want to normalize having a rough time with friends. Just imagine, like take a step back and imagine if your child learns how to feel their feelings while living with you and how to approach challenges in relationships because there's no point in time where they graduate from that. It's not like you turn 30 and you're like, oh, I never have a challenging relationship.

Of course not whether it's in their job, in their marriage with their in-laws or their friends, it could be anything. We all have challenging relationships and that's why it's so important to normalize the feeling. It's okay to feel sad about this or confused or upset, and you are learning some great lessons right now. I know it's really hard and you might share some experiences as well. Just normalize that challenges with friends doesn't mean they're wrong. It doesn't mean someone else is wrong. We're not going to blame the other person. You're not going to blame your child. It's just normalizing that challenges in relationships are okay. And then after they really feel seen in their feelings, after you've normalized all of it, then you might offer some new thoughts if they're open to it. And this is typically what I see my clients wanting to rush to do because they know, okay, Natalie taught me thoughts, create feelings.

So when my child is sad, I want to quickly help them change their thinking. And it's not a, it's not a bad step, it's just not the most helpful first step. So you can offer new thoughts, but after they feel validated, if you offer them new thoughts too soon, they will make their feelings bigger because they don't feel seen or heard. If you just pause for a second and just imagine that you're really struggling and you're really feeling stressed at work and you tell your husband, you know, I'm just feeling so much stress and this is what's going on and my boss and these projects, and you, you're telling

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him about it and explaining why you're stressed. And imagine that your spouse, the first thing your spouse says is, well, you know, you're thinking about it in a way that's creating a lot of stress for you.

What if you thought about it like this? I don't know about you, but for me, I would be thinking, wait, no, didn't you just hear what's going on? This is very stressful. And I would try to make my point even bigger because I wouldn't be feeling seen by my spouse. I want to feel validated and seen. And that is the most important part really. You don't even have to do step number three at all offering new thoughts. I just know that for those of you who are doing this work and in the membership, you want to take that work to the next level to show them that their thinking creates their feelings. A hundred percent you can do that. Just don't do it first. So I like to remind myself as mom, right? 'cause my kids aren't my clients as mom or my spouse or anyone else.

My role is to sit with them in their feelings, not solve their problems. And this seems kind of kind of counterintuitive, but when you really see that when we're trying to solve their problems for them, it's actually more controlling than parenting. It's so much easier to sit with them in their feelings. And also when you sit with them in their feelings, you will get a much better response from them because they will feel seen and validated. It's kind of like, again, in that example, if you were sharing how stressful you feel to your spouse about work and they validated you and said, wow, that sounds so stressful. I'm so sorry you're going through that. I would be so stressed too if they said that you would feel seen and it would almost feel like a little bit of a relief because you wouldn't be so alone in that feeling, in that experience.

That is the greatest gift that you can give yourself and your kids validation of your feelings first before you do any other work. So validate their feelings, sit with them in it, don't try to solve it. And then after they really feel validated, if it's appropriate, when it's appropriate, offer them other thoughts like, well, the way I see it is you're a pretty awesome friend. Do you think that about you? Or how are you thinking about this? How do you

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want to think about it? Right? You're not sort of trying to tell them what to think. You are asking questions to empower them to think about it in a way that's helpful for them. I love this as just like a parenting tip, hack, whatever you want to call it. Ask questions that encourage your kids to think. So if my son is trying to stand on top of a counter, instead of saying, don't stand on that counter or don't do that, I might say, what do you think's going to happen if you stand on that counter?

And I've done this so much that now he knows hurt boo boo, I get hurt, right? And so I'm asking questions in a way that helps him think. So in this example, it might be, do you like how you're showing up as a friend? Do you think you're a good friend? What do you think about you? Now again, asking those questions to encourage them to think comes after the validation. So let's talk about validation for you. Because if you are used to validating yourself in your feelings, it's so much easier to validate your kids because it's sort of second nature. This is just what you do with feelings when you feel overwhelmed, instead of trying to talk yourself out of the overwhelm, which sounds like I can't believe I'm overwhelmed, I know my thoughts create my feelings, I shouldn't be feeling overwhelmed. You're either blaming yourself or maybe you're blaming your to-do list.

You're saying, I have too much to do. This isn't fair. Someone needs to help me. And you sort of feel like almost like a victim of your life, like poor me, that self-pity, which I am so familiar with doing this work on self-pity has drastically changed my life. And so I really encourage you to do that. You can come on in the membership, I'd be happy to coach you and help you on that. Just notice how you talk to yourself about your feelings. If you say, I feel overwhelmed and I'm mad about it, I feel overwhelmed and I shouldn't feel overwhelmed, I'm so frustrated, I'm overwhelmed, then you have overwhelm and frustration. So don't do this, just let yourself feel overwhelmed. Yes, it came from your thinking. No, it's not your fault. Don't blame yourself. You are a human being. Don't resist it. Don't avoid it.

Just allow it. Validate yourself. I'm feeling overwhelmed and that's okay. My feelings are valid. Now, what I'm doing here when I'm kinda teaching you

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how to validate yourself, and just I want to take a minute to point it out, is that I am also detaching the feeling from identity. So you are not an overwhelmed mom. You are not an angry mom. You are not an irritated mom or a frustrated mom. You are a mom who feels overwhelmed. The difference is everything. You get to decide who you are. Don't let your feelings dictate who you are. Separate out who you are from your feelings. Tell yourself, I'm an amazing mom, I'm a really great mom, and my feelings are valid right now. I'm feeling overwhelmed. This alone will change your life because you're detaching your identity from your feelings. You can feel any emotion. And the better you get at feeling those feelings, the better your life becomes because they don't become problems to solve.

Instead, they're just feelings to feel. So how do you do this? How do you feel the feelings? Well, validation is the first step. It's naming the feeling in just a one word emotion. I'm feeling overwhelmed. I'm feeling, I anger, I'm feeling disappointment, I'm feeling frustration. Inside the membership, we have a feelings list with hundreds of feelings. I like to think of it as like paint swatches. There's red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple. But then there are a hundred different shades of red and a hundred different shades of blue and a hundred different shades of yellow. So just notice the vocabulary that you use with respect to feelings.

Like what's the difference between stress and pressure for you? It really matters. Start to just notice your emotional vocabulary and aim to get better at that for your own sake, because you will have a such a different experience. You will increase your emotional wellbeing if you really get a sense of what different emotions are and how they feel in your body. So after you name the feeling and you say, this is anxiety, I'm feeling anxiety in my body, it gives you some control over that feeling, just by naming it, by detaching your identity instead of, I'm an anxious mom, it's no, I'm an amazing, incredible mom and I'm feeling anxious right now.

And that separation from identity and feeling will help you feel more empowered and better and allow you to process that feeling. So there are four ways to respond to any feeling. You can react to the feeling that's like

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yelling. You can avoid the feeling, which is basically like escaping it, going on social media, online shopping, drinking, eating. That's avoidance, resisting it. So you feel it coming on and you think thoughts like, oh no, I don't want to feel this way. Oh no, here's the overwhelm and you're resisting it. Or number four, you can allow it. So on default, because of the way the human brain is wired, the motivational triad, we want to avoid pain. And your brain does this automatically. You don't have to teach it to avoid pain. It will do this on default. It will want to avoid pain and seek pleasure. This is why little kids don't have to be taught that it doesn't feel good to feel sadness, and it feels really great to feel happy.

And this is why even as a little kid, if you offer them ice cream when they're sad, they're going to take you up on it because the brain is seeing, oh, ice cream is pleasurable. Let's do that instead of sadness. What the brain doesn't know that you can teach it, which is a lifelong gift, that you can give to yourself, is that negative emotion isn't harmful. In the same way that doing a hard workout and feeling like your body is uncomfortable afterwards, in the same way that that is actually beneficial for you, you can teach your brain to understand that negative emotions are harmless. And the benefit to that is that when you grow up, when you're frustrated, you don't need to go have a drink, you don't need to overeat, you don't need to over shop or scroll social media. You can simply allow the feeling and allowing the feeling is an art for sure, but I want you to think about it as something that's so doable.

It's like a tool in your tool belt. Inside the membership, we have a Processing Feelings course where I teach you how to go through really breathing through and allowing an emotion that you can just do at any time. You can have kids all around be at work. You don't have to go meditate or you know, travel across the world to be on some retreat to learn how to allow feelings. It is so doable in the kind of regular, ordinary, daily life, and it will change your life because then when your kids are fighting at bedtime and you feel angry, you don't yell, you don't have to leave the room, you say, oh, I'm going to just do some anger right now. It's totally not a problem.

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I'm an amazing mom and I'm feeling anger and that feeling is valid. I'm not going to blame my kids for fighting and causing it.

I'm not going to blame myself for having the thoughts that caused it. I'm just going to do some anger. I promise you. Again, this is a life changing skill. Just like any skill, like riding a bike, the first time you do it, you might fall off, it might not work, you might yell, you tried, you're going to try again and try again. And eventually it becomes intuitive. Just like if you haven't ridden a bike in a year, you can jump right on that bike and ride because you learned how to ride a bike when you're five years old. It is a lifelong skill.

The kind of last thing that I want to talk about with respect to feelings is creating feelings on purpose. I like to think of the feelings that we create on default. Stress, overwhelm, anxiety, sometimes not being that helpful. And so we want to learn how to validate and process and allow those feelings. That's mostly what I've talked about up to this point. But there's also the part where we get to decide the fuel that we have, the feelings that fuel us in specific situations that are predictable. This might be at work, it might be, um, towards a goal. I like to say that the feeling fueling you on your journey, whatever that journey is, determines whether you'll be successful. Because if you decide to be fueled by motivation, by excitement, by commitment, by feelings that are really helpful to achieve your goal, then you're going to keep going.

Even when you fail. If you are fueled by emotions that don't serve you towards your goal, it's going to be much harder not to achieve the goal, but just to keep going because it feels so bad on the journey. This is why people slow down, take breaks, quit. I call it self-sabotage. It's just because the feeling fueling you is a negative emotion. That's not enjoyable. So what feeling do you want fueling you on your goal? I was coaching a client recently. She is a CEO and she was talking about how when she has board meetings and, a lot of just other meetings for her company, she wants to feel calm. And I said, why? Calm? Like I, I like calm, but calm doesn't strike me as the feeling that I would particularly choose. And again, you can choose any feeling you want, but what was interesting was what she

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actually meant was regulated. And this is why words matter. So calm is a feeling that we often use to describe feeling regulated, but it's completely different. If you decide that you want to pursue leading a company, calm probably isn't the most useful emotion I think of, you know, calm might be really useful, feeling fuel. If I work at a spa. Now I want to feel regulated, but I also might want to feel ambitious, motivated, determined, productive if I'm a CEO. So regulated and calm are not the same.

What she was referring to was feeling regulated. She didn't want to feel dysregulated and upset and kind of fiery and outraged when, you know, people talked about things that she didn't agree with. So I said regulated is a much more useful way to think about it because with feeling regulated, with having a regulated nervous system, then you can decide what is the feeling fuel that you want in those meetings. Is it connected? Is it, um, excited? Is it ambitious, determined, productive? Typically some of those harder, more goal-oriented emotions. I like to use those emotions for my work. And the emotions that I like to use at home are much different. Calm, nurturing, grounded, playful. I'm not saying that those have to be separate, but it is useful to think about. I read a book a long time ago that used an analogy with kind of putting on hats.

And so if you think about your CEO hat or if you are a physician, I have a lot of physician clients in the membership, put on your physician hat, what is the most useful fuel as a physician? It's probably going to be a little bit different than the feelings that you want to feel when you put on your mom hat. What feelings do you want to feel most of the time as mom at home? And then you have so many other roles besides your work role and your your mom role. What about your wife role? What feelings do you want to generate as a wife? I coach a lot about intimacy in marriage and so much of it is resolved just with this, with deciding you want to create the feeling of desire because that's who you want to be and playfulness and connection and flirty and love and all of those other emotions that, um, you may not be focused on if you're not thinking about creating feelings intentionally.

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And there are other roles that you might want to do this for as well. Maybe it's your friend role, maybe it's, you know, you're into yoga and you're a yogi, whatever roles that you are in, I talk about this in the self-identity course and just really paying attention to the feeling that you are bringing to each of those roles. And you'll have more than one feeling, but I if you just break it down so simply into the top kind of one to three feelings for each of those roles, it's transformational because all of a sudden you can see, oh, I'm actually bringing home my determination, my grit, my excitement from my work role into my mom role, and it's just not the most useful feeling fuel. And so maybe I want to bring in more playfulness, groundedness, lightheartedness, whatever it is, you get to decide.

Okay, I did actually have one more thing that I want to talk with you with respect to feelings that I haven't mentioned yet, and that is mirroring. Notice if you mirror other people's emotions when you don't want to. This comes up a lot in my marriage coaching and as well with teenagers and toddlers. So when your spouse feels stress, do you feel stress about their stress? When your toddler is kind of having a meltdown, do you internally have a meltdown about their meltdown? Or when your teenager is being really disrespectful, do you feel angst and anger and disrespect internally? Now it's really important that you focus on what's going on internally for you because that's what matters. I know for a lot of you, a lot of my clients are able to kind of show up in a way with their actions that they like, but you know, they still feel like on the inside it's exhausting.

It's not what they want. It's um, there's a lot going on in their thoughts and feelings, and that's what I want you to pay attention to with mirroring. So while the default brain will pick up on other people's feelings, that's just the default. You can actually stop this so you can notice, okay, every time that my child gets frustrated, I get frustrated about their frustration. And that's not very helpful. So when my child gets frustrated, how do I want to feel for myself? I want to feel connected, I want to feel loving, and I want to feel strong. I know that that's really helpful for my strong-willed child. When I present in a way that doesn't seem like their feelings bother me, I want

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them to know that I'm with them and their feelings and it's okay that they feel frustrated, but I don't need to feel frustrated.

This also comes a lot up, a lot with a worry. If your teenager is worried about one of their friends, it's not helpful to feel, worry about their worry. Now that doesn't mean that you go to the opposite end of the spectrum and are apathetic about it, right? That's that all or nothing thinking. Instead, you're going to decide how you want to feel. So you're going to stop the mirroring and decide on purpose. How do I want to think and feel when fill in the blank? When my spouse, when my teenager, when my toddler feels, fill in the blank, when they feel stressed, when they feel anxious, when they feel um, disappointed, when they feel frustrated, you can decide on purpose, ahead of time how you want to feel. And it is to your benefit. It is also to their benefit. You feeling stressed about their stress doesn't help you and nor does it help them.

You feeling frustrated about their frustration doesn't help you and it doesn't help them. You feeling worried about what's going on with your kids' friendships because they're worried about it. It doesn't help you and it doesn't help them. And really seeing that out of the moment, that's what we do When we look at our thoughts and feelings. That is going to be the why. That is going to provide enough evidence for you to want to change and decide on purpose. Okay? The next time that my child is feeling really frustrated and melting down, I'm going to be present, I'm going to be connected, I'm going to be sturdy. I am going to be strong, but I'm not going to also melt down. I'm not going to feel frustrated. So just notice if you are mirroring, watch yourself mirror and practice better feeling thoughts that change the way that you feel so that you don't mirror.

Okay, I covered so many different feeling tools in this episode, and that was really my intent because it comes up so much with all of the coaching, all of the work that we do here. So if you have any questions about it 24/7, ask a Coach Forum inside the membership. You can also send me a DM on Instagram at mom.onpurpose. Um, and you can also email me at theteam@nataliebacon.com and my team can forward me any questions

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that you have. I am so committed to this work because of the profound impact that it has had on my life, and I want to see that happen with you. And I want you to remember, these are skills, skills that you can learn, that you are learning and be so proud of yourself just for being here and listening and getting all of this information so that you can change. I promise you, my friend, you're doing good work. You can change, you can learn these skills. Let's go. I will talk with you next week. Take care.

Thank you for being here and listening. Now, head on over to momonpurpose.com/coaching to learn more about the Mom On Purpose membership, where we take all of this work to the next level.