

Mom On Purpose Foundations: The Pressure To Do It All



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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 the podcast. I am so happy to be here with you. Today we are going to be talking about one of my favorite topics that I coach on so much, which is the pressure to do it all. Can you relate to this? I personally can. It just sounds like I have a lot going on. I feel so much pressure to do more than I'm already doing. I never feel like I'm doing enough. I don't know if I should be doing more for my kids.

And then we kind of look externally to determine that what are our neighbors doing? What are our peers doing? What do we see on social media? And then we fall into the comparison trap and then we make that pressure worse. And where is it coming from? Our mindset, of course. So that's what I want to talk with you about today. Let's just dive in. How do we solve this? How do we feel better and really reduce the pressure that we feel to do it all? I think the solution has several parts. So let's just start off with part one, which is identity. When you make your feelings part of your identity, it becomes so much harder to change. And what I mean by that is just calling yourself an overwhelmed mom. So if you say I'm an overwhelmed mom, or if you identify with that, it's going to be a lot harder to change and reduce that overwhelm and have fewer things to do and feel content and rest and all the things that we want.

It's going to be harder if you have this identity running in the background. I'm an overwhelmed mom, so the very first thing you want to do is notice what is the identity that you're creating for yourself. And you've probably done it on default. And the work here is to decide intentionally what identity you want to have for your sake. So you my friend, are not an overwhelmed mom. You are a mom who feels overwhelmed from time to time. So start

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practicing that separation. When you separate out your negative feelings from who you are, there's like this relief almost. There's relief because you allow yourself space to feel your feelings without making them a part of your identity. You can say to yourself something like, I feel overwhelm, but that's not who I am. I am an amazing mother and I'm the leader of this family and my capacity is constantly expanding.

You can come up with mantras and thoughts that create this mindset, that allow space for you to feel however you're feeling because your feelings are valid. But my friend, they are not who you are. You feel overwhelmed. That is valid. Your feelings are valid. Validate yourself, place your hand on your heart and say, my feelings are valid. I feel overwhelmed. And then add on. But that's not who I am, I am. And then fill in the blank with however you want to decide and define who you are. You get to decide who you are. Don't let negative emotions that come up throughout the day from that primitive brain of yours become your identity. Separate out those negative emotions, the overwhelm, the irritation, the frustration. Separate out all of those negative emotions from who you are and decide on purpose who you are. That alone is going to have an amazing influence in the way that you think about how much you have to do.

So that's part one identity. Part two is ownership. There is nothing that you have to do. Did you know that You're like, Natalie, that's not true. I have to pick my kids up from school. That is not true. Did you know you don't have to do anything? You do not have to do one thing ever. This doesn't mean you don't want to. I'm sure you want to be the mom who picks up her child from school, but if you have the dialogue running in your mind that I have to go pick up my kids from school and you don't feel like it's your choice, it's so disempowering and then you become a victim of your life, you become a victim of motherhood. So I just want you to notice, you always have agency, you always have the self-control to decide what you want to do and what you don't want to do.

You could quite literally sit in bed a day, you're not in a war zone, you're not being held hostage. You have a lot going on in your life because you want

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to have a lot going on. And I'm the exact same way and I can totally relate to not wanting to take ownership. So I just want you to know that I'm giving myself this advice here too, and I, I do give myself this advice and it really does reduce the pressure to do it all. So in my mind, I just quit all of it and I tell myself the truth. Oh, I'm doing it because I want to do it. The example I often give inside the Mom On Purpose membership is with a baby. So in the middle of the night when the baby wakes up, we often tell ourselves, I just want to sleep.

I don't want to get up with the baby. And those thoughts create such a disempowered mindset. We feel like we're the victim of this baby's night wakings. And it's just not true. The truth is you want to get up with the baby more than you want to sleep. How do I know? Because that's what you're doing. It's just harder than you thought. So I frequently tell myself this, whenever I have to get up in the night with my kids, I say, I want to be the mom who gets up in the middle of the night with my kids, even if it means I get less sleep, that's harder than I thought it was going to be. But that's also who I want to be. That's the truth.

And when you own that, when you take ownership over your actions, you feel so much more empowered. So just know that anything you do is because it's what you want to do. And when you train your mind to see that and own it, it is life giving because then you no longer feel like you are at the effect of your life. You don't feel like you are a victim of your life or of motherhood. You really feel so much more empowered and you can still give yourself space to know that it is hard, but you're choosing this hard because you know in your mind you don't have to do any of it.

Part three is your mindset. This is similar to taking ownership. I think ownership is its own mindset. But I wanted to separate these out because I think depending on your specific thoughts, your specific mindset, mindset, you know, kind of deserves its own category here. So I think that based on the clients that I've coached, there are a number of different mindsets that you might have that create this pressure feeling that you need to do everything.

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The first mindset is time scarcity thoughts. And those sound like, I don't have enough time, I don't have time for this. There's never enough time for me, I never get me time. Any thought around time that feels negative and disempowering to you is a time scarcity thought. And your brain has such a good reason for thinking those thoughts. I never want you to be mad at yourself, but I also want you to feel empowered to know that you can change that mindset. You can decide, I have enough time to scroll social media. I have enough time to drink a glass of wine. I have enough time to online shop or watch Netflix, or whatever it is. And so I want you to do those mindset turnarounds, those mindset shifts so you feel empowered by time so you feel like you are using your time exactly how you want to be using it in this season of life.

So for me, when the dogs are barking on potty training, the baby's crying and you know, I'm overstimulated. Instead of saying, I don't have time for this or this isn't what I want to do with my time, or I just need some time alone, I tell myself this is exactly what I want to be doing with my time and it's hard in that moment and that's okay. So a huge part of this is coming up with a better mindset to support you and validating how you feel through the process. Because you're a human, of course you're going to feel a little bit overstimulated, but when you zoom out and you think about your purpose and how you want the exact life that you have, it is actually something that will increase your capacity. Like I feel so much stronger and empowered in my everyday life and I rarely feel the pressure to do it all because I am applying this mindset work.

So time scarcity thoughts are kind of the first bucket. There's another bucket of thoughts that I think go under the mindset category, which is the mom guilt thoughts when you feel like you are not enough, when you are failing like a mom, when you should be spending more time with your kids or the time that you do spend, you don't think you're spending it well or you're distracted or on your phone or maybe you're sad or you're struggling with you know, some diagnosis or even just an injury and you have these mom guilt thoughts, that mindset can create a lot of pressure and you can totally change your mindset. I never want you to think thoughts that you

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don't believe, but I'm telling you my friend, you can think really empowering thoughts that feel connecting to you and connecting to your kids. And the way that you do that is you identify the thoughts that you have.

So if you feel like you're constantly failing as a mom, something that comes up all of the time in coaching, do you want to think that? What are you basing your success as a mom on? Is it on other people? Is it on how you entertain your kids? Is it on how many activities they're in? Is it on their happiness? When you clean up, how you evaluate yourself and when you start evaluating yourself based on things you can control and you make room for your humanness and you say, oh yeah, I'm a human mom. I have repair of course, sometimes I'm not going to give them my full attention, of course I have other roles. I want to have other roles like friend, like wife, like colleague, or whatever your other roles are. And when you start to see that mom is just one of your roles and you personally get to decide how much time, money, energy space you put into that role, you will feel so much more confident because you will stop looking to other moms to decide what you should be doing and you'll feel so much more connected to yourself.

And then when mom guilt comes up, you'll give yourself validation because you are a really great mom and you're a human mom. So cleaning up those mom guilt thoughts will really help you make better decisions for your family and relieve some of the pressure to do it all. I'll give you a specific example from my life. I am asked often when I'm going to sign up my son for school and he turned two this year and I don't want to sign him up for school yet. And so I did a lot of work around mom guilt thinking like, should he be in school already? Is he supposed to be in school? Why does everyone else have their really young kids in school? Am I doing something wrong? And it was all sort of this primitive brain thought pattern spiraling about um, you know, me just wanting to be included and validated.

And once I realized that and that there is no right decision with respect to putting a 2-year-old into school or not, then I felt so much more empowered to make the decision that was best for our family and my son and what's

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going on in our lives right now. And then that meant I had so much more space to validate what other moms were doing and remind myself my life isn't supposed to look like her life. My kids aren't supposed to be like her kids. And then I felt so much less pressure to sign my son up for school right away and make the decision from a really empowered place. The same thing goes with all the different activities. By the way you can get inside the Mom On Purpose membership for less than it costs to send a 2-year-old to swim lessons. I was blown away by this.

I was like wow. I really do keep it at a price that I think is so accessible to so many and it was just a reminder of that as I signed my son up for swim lessons and that was something that I wanted to do, not from a place of I should be doing it. So just be careful if you are should on yourself, it's a cognitive distortion when we should on ourselves based on um, kind of that negative mom guilt space. So you want to clean that up so that you can make the decisions that are best for you and your family. Another category of mindset thoughts that contribute to the pressure to do it all are mommy martyrdom thoughts. Mommy martyrdom is this sense that you need to do everything for everyone always. It's needing to do everything you mentally, emotionally, and physically can for everyone in your family, even at your own expense.

So this means that you are willing to sacrifice to your own detriment. And I don't mean you know, in those like emergent situations, of course from time to time, even consciously, we all want to make sacrifices for people we love, but I'm not talking about that. And I think you know that I'm talking about the everyday life, the in and out of the logistics of motherhood where you are giving constantly and consistently at your own expense. Think about the last time that you felt joy or happiness or pleasure or fun. When was it? And think about the last time that your kids or your spouse felt joy and pleasure and fun. Was it earlier today? Was it yesterday? And yet so often we in the midst of life and motherhood and the the daily grind, we forget that that's important. It's really important. And if you just think about your identity and your mindset and if you, if you have this mindset that it's my job to do everything for everyone, always even at my own expense,

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then you will constantly feel like you're never doing enough and have this pressure to do it all.

And all it really takes to kind of get rid of this is awareness. As soon as I became aware that I had a little bit of this mindset, it was so life giving, I thought to myself, oh my gosh, I'm making myself invisible. And not only do I not want to do that for myself, but what example is that setting for my family? What am I teaching my kids and my spouse about moms and about just, you know, my role? And so one of the thoughts that I love is it's not my job to do everything for everyone always. I want to show up as the mom I want to be, but it's not my job to entertain my kids. It's not my job to make them happy. Now that does not mean that I'm trying to make them feel frustrated or negative emotion. I just don't take their happiness on as my responsibility.

Instead, I want to show up as the mom who I want to be, which is loving, connected, respectful, sturdy, strong. You know, there's lots of other positive emotions, but this puts me into a state of feeling so empowered because it focuses on what I can control if I am in that martyrdom space. It's constantly giving from an empty cup. It's, you know, self-sacrifice as my life's purpose, constantly feeling depleted without ever taking care of myself. And that's sort of the extreme of it and I think that it's sort of like a spectrum. So just check in with yourself and notice if you have this identity, if you have this mindset that it is your job to do everything for everyone, always just repeating the mantra. It's not my job to do everything for everyone always. I get to decide what I do and don't do and this is the kind of mom I want to be.

That mindset shift is a game changer and all of a sudden you can give yourself a little bit of space, even just 10 minutes of joy every single day for yourself can be the start of kind of breaking this mindset pattern depending on kind of the category of mindset thoughts that you are having that are creating this sense of pressure to do it all that will influence the next believable thoughts that will be most helpful for you. But I don't want to leave you hanging. I want to um, offer you some thoughts that you might

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find helpful. And how I like to think about these thoughts is setting a mindset intention for the day. So it's very easy to wake up and jump right into that low grade energy of the to-dos for the day. But what is just as easy and doesn't take a lot of time is to set an intention of what you want to think about the day.

For example, you might think I don't need to earn my rest today. I am worthy of feeling joy. Rest benefits my mind and my body. I matter and my wants matter. Today is going to be fun. I'm the decider of what I do each and every moment I get to decide what I do with my time. It's not my job to do everything for everyone always. I will create space for five minutes of time where I enjoy being with myself. These are just a few thoughts that I sort of came up with off the top of my head. They may or may not resonate with you, but the point is for you to just have some examples of what might really work and the best thoughts will come from you. So come up with a next believable thought that you can think and practice that as an intention every single day. Smile, say that intention in the morning and commit to repeating it in your mind. Mindset really is a decision to put that primitive brain in the backseat and intentionally decide how you are going to think.

Okay, part four, moving on to stillness. If busy is your drug of choice, then rest will feel stressful. This is so important. I've mentioned this before but I want to say it again. I'll never forget when one of my clients said Natalie, I realized that it was my mindset creating the overwhelm when I thought back to how long I had felt overwhelm and it was decades. So even throughout college and her career transition and becoming a mom and every season of life that she's been in, she has identified as someone who creates a lot of overwhelm for herself and this pressure to do everything for everyone always. And what really was a game changer for her was awareness of this.

To stop the busy, to stop the overwhelm, to be still. And the way that you do this is you build up to 10 minutes of silence every single day. This is going to feel really uncomfortable my friend. I can't tell you how many clients say, um, I'm doing this and it doesn't feel good. It doesn't feel pleasurable. And I

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say yes, that's the point. Because remember, if your body is used to feeling busy, it actually prefers that feeling. Even if intellectually and consciously you're saying, no, I don't want to be busy, your body feels very uncomfortable resting and being still. So you have to train it. Just like if you were going to the gym or learning that yoga handstand, the training of new muscles to do something new often feels uncomfortable. The same is true when you're training yourself to feel comfortable with rest. It starts with discomfort.

So I always recommend doing 30 days of 10 minutes of silence at the same time every single day so that you can calm down that nervous system. And I always think like the two weeks about are going to be the most uncomfortable and then you get into a rhythm of it. And for me, I actually got to a point where I really looked forward to this space and enjoyed it, but it didn't start off like that. So I do think that if you are constantly feeling overwhelmed or like there's just a lot of pressure to do everything for everyone, always, you'll notice if your thoughts are something like I just have a lot going on, there's just a lot in my life right now. A lot of my clients will say a lot in their sentences. So notice if you are saying that as well, it doesn't mean it's not true, it just means that you want to have awareness of it because that way of thinking about it might not be helpful and the solution is doing all of the things I'm talking about here.

So step one is identity, step two is ownership. Step three is mindset. And now step four is stillness. Giving yourself permission to be still. Whenever I tell myself I don't have time for this, I remind myself that I've definitely scrolled on social media for more time than I want to be still. So if you're doing two minutes of silence to start, for me it sounds like, well I've definitely scrolled for more than two minutes. So I certainly have two minutes to sit in silence because for me intellectually I want to sit in silence and stillness more than I want to scroll on social media. But as you know, it feels really pleasurable to get that dopamine hit. When we open our apps, that Instagram app gives me that dopamine hit. And unlike sitting in silence, I get that instant pleasure hit. So when I know that it makes it much easier for me to do the work.

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And it is work, but it's so worth it because what you're doing is you're training your body to get comfortable doing nothing. You do not need to earn your rest. I love reminding myself of that I don't need to earn my rest. When I remember that I just sit on the couch for like a minute or two here or there and it feels amazing like indulging in those moments without blaming my circumstances, knowing that I'm the creator of my life and this is the life that I would choose 10 times over again. And sometimes it's harder than I think it's supposed to be and that's okay. I give myself permission to rest. So stillness is something that I think most members of this community could benefit from. Particularly if you are someone who feels the pressure to do it all, it's unlikely that you are comfortable and doing a lot of stillness. And this is really different than like a yoga practice for example. I think they just have different benefits. This is really about being still and not moving and being comfortable in your body.

Part number five, the last part is planning plan. How you're going to spend your days meal plan, plan when you work, plan what you do when you work, plan activities, plan what you're going to do with your kids plan, self-care plan, downtime plan, your pleasure. Anything that takes up mind space is worthy of planning. So for example, I love the way that my weeks go when I meal plan, I don't have to think about what to make at 4:00 PM I just look at the calendar and I say, oh, this is what we're having tonight. It makes it so much easier throughout the week because my brain doesn't have to come up with ideas in the moment. The same is true with activities. If I have like a little bank of activities I want to do with my kids so much easier because my brain doesn't have to come up with those ideas.

A note about kind of self-care, I believe that if you don't plan self-care ahead of time, you're going to need an escape from your family. If you do plan self-care in advance, you will need less of an escape. You will get that space that you need. So ask yourself, what do you need? It is so personal and I was just coaching someone inside our ask a coach platform inside the Mom On Purpose membership. And she said, this sounds so dumb, but I don't even know what I need and I want you to know it doesn't sound dumb. In fact, nine clients out of 10 who I've coached say that exact same

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thing, I don't know what it is that I want or that I need. That doesn't mean there's something wrong with you or that you actually don't know. It just means that for so long your attention has been on other things, on your family, on your home, on your work, on whatever else your attention may have been on.

So now when you turn it back inward and say, okay, what do I need? Of course you don't know. You haven't been focused on it. And so we're not trying to know in the sense like there is just one thing that you need that's going to check the box. Instead think of it like you're dating yourself. You want to get to know yourself and what you like and what fills you up. And so let's try something. Maybe going and getting a manicure or maybe doing an at-home workout class or maybe it's walking your dogs. For me, I love getting fresh air and walking my dogs. I feel so refueled and maybe monthly I go out to brunch with a girlfriend. I'm actually going out to brunch with one of my girlfriends tomorrow. I'm so excited. That's a little bit of self care for me. And so what is self care for you is dependent on how you feel when you're doing that thing.

So think about for yourself what it is that would help you take better care of yourself. And when you take better care of yourself, you will feel so much more connected to yourself and more connected to your family. Remember, if you don't plan that self-care in advance, you're going to need an escape. Alright, let's kind of review everything here because I think it's so important. I think that when we think about the pressure to do it all, it feels so big and vague. Like we don't really say what's going on, we just say I have a lot going on. We don't really know where the pressure's coming from. It just feels kind of tense and tight and overwhelming. And then there's the scarcity that comes in feeling like we're not enough, we're not doing enough, we should be doing more. And then we have thoughts like, what did I do wrong?

Why is this happening to me? And we get into that victim mentality and before we know it, we're thinking a whole spiral of negative thoughts and we don't even know where to start to kind of change them and get out of

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that pattern. So what we've talked about in this episode and what I want to encourage you to do is think of it as like a five step solution that you can use any time to work through and overcome the overwhelm, the pressure to do it all. Part number one is identity. Changing your identity to be exactly who you want to be. I am fill in the blank, I'm the leader of my family. I am a happy mom. Separating out your negative feelings. And when you feel overwhelmed or irritated, you say, I feel this way. My feelings are valid, but it's not who I am.

Part one is identity. Part two is ownership. Taking ownership that everything you're doing in your life is because it's genuinely what you want to be doing. And that might mean it's harder and more full than you imagined and you might want to reduce some of those things or you might not. But owning that you're only doing things that you want to be doing puts you in the most empowered and helpful position in your life. Part number three is taking a look at your mindset. What are your thoughts? Do you have martyrdom thoughts? Do you have time? Scarcity thoughts? Do you have mom guilt thoughts? Do you have comparison trap thoughts? And then coming up with better feeling thoughts like, I don't need to earn my rest. I am a great mom. My life isn't supposed to look like her life. It's not my job to do everything for everyone always.

Practicing better. Feeling thoughts gives you a connected, empowered mindset to help you show up as the mom that you genuinely want to be and kind of minimizes significantly reduces the pressure to do it all. Part four is stillness. Training your body to get comfortable being still. Because if your body is in the habit of being busy, then you will almost certainly feel the pressure to do it all, all the time. You won't stop because you haven't let your body feel the discomfort of being still. So practicing. This is going to help you change your physiology so that your body gets really comfortable resting and doing nothing. And again, it's going to start and feel very uncomfortable. Start with two minutes and build your way up to 10. And part five is planning. Planning how you spend your days so that you are not feeling like you're putting out fires constantly.

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You are using your prefrontal cortex and you are putting your kind of primitive brain in the backseat and plan white space plan. Self-care planning doesn't mean you plan to be busy all of the time. That is a misuse of the planning tools. Instead, it's just using your time intentionally and making sure that you include taking care of yourself as part of that plan. This is one of my favorite topics. I think particularly because I am someone who does like to create a full life. And so that does mean that I too get into overwhelm. But using this process has enabled me to reduce that overwhelm, minimize the pressure to do it all and show up as the mom that I want to be. And that is my hope for you, my friend. Give this process a try. Work on your identity, owning it mindset, stillness and planning, and watch how much you minimize and reduce overwhelm and the pressure to do it all. That's what I have for you, my friend this week. 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.