

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Natalie Bacon

[Mom On Purpose](#) with Natalie Bacon

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

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. How is it going with your calendar? Are you planning? Are you following through with what you plan? Are you procrastinating? What is going on within the realm of time management and productivity for you right now? Whatever it may be, I want to offer you some helpful tools to implement right away that will improve your planning and your productivity and your time management. So this is an area that I am exceptionally skilled at in part, sure it's my natural disposition, but I don't think that's really helpful to think about because I wasn't born using a calendar.

It's just important to remember that these are skills that we all can learn and yes, based on your personality, might this come easier to you than for some other things or the opposite, might it be harder for you? Sure. But I think what's more helpful to understand and to just know is that if you want to make progress, make changes, get a better handle on time management, planning, productivity, it is available to you. You can plan in a way that makes your life better. That is the only reason I continue to plan. I continue to be productive. I continue to use time management skills and tools to help me create the life that I want. So I want to start off really with this Tony Robbins quote that is, "You can't have a plan for your day until you have a plan for your life."

You may have heard this quote before, and for good reason, right? It is reflective of a point that I really want to make ahead of time, which is, if you don't have your priorities intact, if you are working way more than you want to be, there is no time management skill that will help you change that. That is mindset, that is decision making, that is changing how much you're working and for a variety of reasons you might decide to do that or not do that. That's really not the purpose of this podcast episode. But I do want to

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

offer to you that planning and time management and productivity will help you optimize your time within the current priorities that you've set. So it's just helpful to make sure that you have a handle on what your priorities are and you've made intentional decisions about those priorities before trying to implement time management strategies.

So for example, if you want to spend more quality time with your spouse, but you notice that your calendar is kind of full of, you know, time out and about with your girlfriends, that is more of a decision about priorities than it is a time management problem. We all have time for the things that are a priority to us. So notice how often and to what extent you blame time. It's kind of one of the rules that I live by for myself that I refuse to blame time. It's just not helpful for me to ever blame time and blaming time just sounds like I can't do that because I don't have enough time. I wish I could go to a workout class, but I don't have time for that. I don't have time for x, y, or Z. That is blaming time. We all have time for what's important to us.

So you might have your calendar booked for this week and all of a sudden you get a call from your child's doctor that they need to come in for a three hour test this week and they give you one timeframe, right? You are going to make that work. It might mean moving things around. It might be canceling some work meetings, it might be getting other childcare. Whatever it is, you will make it happen because all of a sudden that becomes the priority. It's not like you had to go order more time for that, you just made time for it. So we all have the same amount of time. You may have heard this described before and I find it to be really helpful. I do want to point out though, of course we all have different resources. So I have the same time as Oprah, but Oprah has a lot more financial resources than I do.

I don't focus on that. Instead, I focus on how do I want to best utilize my time given the resources that I have and the priorities that I want to set for my life. So I just sort of stay out of the comparison trap and really try to get to a place of sufficiency and abundance with respect to time. So I don't blame time, I just don't find it to be helpful. So next, I think kind of along

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

those same mindset lines that I think would be really helpful with respect to how to plan better is to just check in with yourself. What are your thoughts about these things? What are your thoughts about your to-do list? What are your thoughts about your calendar? What are your thoughts about planning? What are your thoughts about productivity? What are your thoughts about your identity with respect to time management and planning?

So for example, do you identify as someone who is just not that great at planning? If you identify as that, then there is no time management tool that I could ever teach you to change that you have to do the identity work first so that you believe it's possible for you. So what that might look like for you is to just start saying, I am getting better at time management every single day. You are working on creating thoughts that help you step into becoming who you want to be. It all starts with that identity work. So what is your identity with respect to productivity, with respect to procrastinating? Do you identify as someone who procrastinates, I'm just a procrastinator. I like to do things at the last minute, or things just come up in life and I always do it at the last minute. Notice the way that you talk about yourself with respect to these areas because it is a choice.

Even if you've had examples where you've procrastinated in the past, you never have to identify as a procrastinator. You can just say in the past, I did it one way and now in the future I'm deciding that I want to do it differently. I'm deciding that I am someone who is going to learn planning tools and use them to help me get things done on time. That's who I'm becoming. And the more convicted you are and committed you are to that identity, the more your actions will align with that. And that's what I teach in journaling as well. In the Journaling course inside the membership, it's you focusing on who you want to become and proclaiming that as an identity so that your actions align. I think it's the fastest way to break any bad habit and to really step into who you want to be.

So if you constantly are late, start identifying as someone who is on time and write about that journal about becoming someone who is punctual,

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

someone who is on time, someone who values being on time and then live into becoming her. So this is just the mindset part where you are noticing, okay, what are my thoughts about my to-do list my calendar planning, productivity and my identity with respect to these areas. You can also ask yourself, what are your feelings about your to-Do list about your calendar, about planning, about productivity. It's very rare that someone comes to me and says, I just have no idea how to plan. What's more common is they come to me and they say, can you teach me how to plan because I put things on my calendar and then I just don't do them. Or life happens. So they might ask for the steps of how to plan, but they actually know how to plan.

What they don't know how to do is follow through with what they say they're going to plan or how to have a really flexible mindset that problem solves when a plan doesn't work, and knowing when to change the plan versus when to recommit to the plan. So I'm going to give you some tools that you can implement right away that will dramatically change the way that you view time management and productivity and planning. But I think that it's important to know that none of it will work at all if you don't have an empowered mindset around these areas. So really take a look at your thoughts and feelings with respect to all of these areas and try to find some truth and some empowering thoughts that feel good to you. For example, if you think, you know, using a calendar is going to make my life too busy and too overwhelming and I just don't want to do it.

If that's your mindset about it and you think that calendaring is going to create more rigidity in your life and then you feel disconnected and disempowered when you think about your calendar, you're not going to improve on time management no matter what sort of hacks and tips and trips that you're looking for. So instead, what I suggest is cleaning up your mindset first so that you feel really good about it. Maybe it's just a simple thought like, I don't know how I'm going to get planning to work for me because I haven't in the past, but I want to be the person who tries. And so that's what I'm going to do. I am going to put my best foot forward and try to make planning work this time around. It can be really simple thoughts that

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

feel good and true to you and that motivate you to utilize these tools to enhance your life, to make your life that much better.

Now let's dive into the actual tools. I want to talk with you about. I have several here that I live by that I teach, that I prescribe that will improve your life in the areas of time management, productivity and planning. And number one is don't use a to-do list. Do not use a to-do list. The reason that I have this rule is because using a to-do list very often almost always puts your brain into scarcity. So the minute you look at a to-do list, it feels overwhelming. It feels like everything has to be done right now and there are all of these default thoughts to overcome. Like, how am I going to have time for this? I can't get it all done. There's always more to do. We have this running sort of, you know, thought loop in our mind about how we have too much to do and not enough time and a to-do list I think just magnifies that and makes it worse.

And that is true even for me. And I've been doing this work for years and I identify as someone who really loves time management. So I do not utilize A to-do list. I do not think that it is helpful and I think it makes my life harder. So what do I do instead? Number two, I use a digital calendar. I swear by this particularly for the mamas , if you have a lot going on in your life, and I think we all do, we we identify as having these full lives and we want to, using a paper calendar just becomes kind of like an obstacle. At least it does for me because you have to bring it with you everywhere first of all, and you're going to be constantly kind of crossing things out and rewriting things and it's never just going to be as easy as using an electronic calendar.

What I love about GCal, which is what I use, it's Google Calendar, is I always have it up in a tab on my computer in front of me and then I also have it on my phone. So when I'm not in front of my computer, I just click on the little app Google calendar and it syncs. And so everything is right there. I can look and see what's ahead before I ever say yes to anything or no to anything. I'm looking at what's ahead. If I think, you know, very often if I'm invited to something or asked to talk or anything like that, I'm typically

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

running like two to four weeks out. And I like it to be that way because then I feel very much like I'm not putting out fires and just so much more in control of my calendar and of my life.

So this is my sell to you to use a digital calendar, but I really don't think it's as much about the tool. So if you have another calendar that you love and swear by and that works for you, use it. Okay? I just know based on my experience personally and then coaching thousands of clients, that the easier you make it on yourself to have access and utilize your calendar, the easier it will be to follow through with it. So I'm all about making it easier and I really believe that using G Cal or some version of an electronic calendar will help make it easier for you to follow through and to plan better. So number three is to put anything that you have to remember in your brain onto your calendar. So I want to use my brain power for really important things that I want to think about, not my to-do list.

It's so boring to remember what I need to do and it's just not a good use of my brain. I want to be thinking about my future, my family, my relationships, my goals. I really want to put my brain to work on very meaningful things that is not what needs to be picked up from the grocery store or, um, when my doctor's appointment is or what my kids need this week or what day and time I'm going to record the podcast. Like anything that is in my brain that I need to remember to do at a certain time goes on my calendar. So I just dump everything on my calendar. Once you do this, once it's done forever. It's not like you brain dump every single Sunday and then you build it all up to the next Sunday. You just dump on your calendar, put it all in time slots or days right when you start this process and then every time something else comes up, you add it to the calendar.

So for example, we were talking about going to an indoor waterpark coming up and I looked at the calendar first and then I decided what kind of day and time slot that would work best for everyone in our family. And then I put it on there. And so it's not a list, it's not a to-do, it's on the calendar in a specific time slot so that I don't have to remember it. I even will put in any helpful notes, any links, like there was this link to a few indoor water parks

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

around where we live. I put that link in the calendar if there is a holiday coming up. When my mom's going to come in town, I put that on the calendar specifically if she's coming, you know, Wednesday to Monday I might put mom in town and then I put it from, you know, spanning those four days.

I also color code what's work related and what's personal related. And then, I have some reminders set up. So I have um, a specific Google calendar for birthdays and I can click the check mark and it will disappear if I don't want to see it or click it and it will up here and it's birthdays and anniversaries. So I look at my calendar in either week or month view and I can always see whose birthdays are coming up. If a niece or nephew is born or something like that, I immediately add that date as a recurring every year to my calendar that that's when their birthday is. So what I'm doing here, the reason I'm doing this is because I want my calendar to be like my executive assistant in a way that helps me remember things that I don't want to spend my brain energy remembering.

Now, there are lots of things I don't put on my calendar. I don't put on my calendar when I do laundry. I don't put on my calendar when I shower. I don't put it on my calendar when I journal anything that I'm already in the habit of that I don't need a reminder to do, I don't find useful to put on my calendar. I want to put things on my calendar that I don't want to spend time remembering to do. So habits I'm already in the habit of, um, you know, if I look at this upcoming week, I see that the cleaning ladies are coming on this upcoming Thursday. I also see a note here that, um, I need to schedule an eye doctor appointment. So that's something that I need to do that I don't want to have to remember to do. So I just put it on my calendar that I'm going to schedule that eye doctor appointment on this day and this time that is so helpful for me because then I don't have to have this running to-do list of items in my mind.

I also see that one of my sons has a checkup coming up this week. I see my coaching calls for the membership. I see all of the other areas of the week where I'm going to work and I see lots of white space. So, that gets

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

us kind of into the next tip that I want to give you the next tool, which is schedule in white space and schedule in self-care. I think it's a kinda misnomer that planning and calendaring and productivity means busy. I do not ever want to be busy. Sometimes I'm busy particularly with littles, but I identify or think about that as a feeling that is not desirable for me. I instead want to think about calendaring and planning and time management and productivity as tools that I can use to live my best life. And my best life includes lots of white space, it includes lots of time with my kids, it includes lots of self-care, it includes whatever it is that you want in your life that is what you should put on your calendar.

So I just want you to really take it to heart that planning and time management does not mean you should be doing something from sunup to sundown. You're not supposed to earn your rest, okay? Just remember that earning your rest is I don't think healthy or helpful, right? Because we then attach our worth to how much we do. And you don't have to do anything to be worthy. Doing more does not mean you're a better person. Now knowing that and feeling worthy and whole, then I say set big goals, do lots of things, produce more just because that's who you want to be, but not because you make it mean that you're somehow better. I coach a lot of women who are successful and identify as perfectionist and this definitely comes up a lot where there's this idea that doing more makes them better people and that resting or relaxing or "being lazy" is bad.

And I think you just gotta question all of that and notice what your thoughts are because you will end up really exhausted and probably resentful of other people who you see have it "easier" because they're taking time to relax and rest. And so what I say is to plan self-care plan in white space to just do nothing. It's a beautiful thing my friend. The next tool or tip I have for you is to make sure that when you can schedule something as a result, schedule the result instead of the activity. Now this isn't always the case. So my son's doctor's appointment, it just says son's doctor's appointment. That is more of an appointment or an event that's coming up. You would just schedule what that is. But for anything that is, is a result oriented, I think putting it in your calendar as a result is so much more powerful.

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

So for example, when I was first starting my business working on, you know, getting some products out into the world and one of my first products was an ebook and I had on my calendar work on ebook, that is not a very useful way to plan because what it allowed space for was a lot of dilly dallying, for lack of a better word. It was a lot of procrastinating and checking social media and email and you know, responding to all of these other things. And then finally getting to my ebook. Instead, what I did was I flipped it and I started to put on my calendar exactly what I expected myself to produce in that specific time. So write three chapters of book and then I was able to produce at such a higher rate when I scheduled those results instead of activities. And so any area of your life you can pretty much do this for, even if it's taking care of the home, instead of like yard work, you could put exactly what you want to accomplish.

Instead of, you know, declutter, you could put clean out downstairs cabinets or whatever the specific area is. The more specific of a result that you can put on your calendar, the more helpful this tool will be for helping you create the result. Because then you sit down and you know, oh, this is exactly what I expect of myself. The next tool is to anticipate obstacles. This comes up all of the time with my mom clients. The obstacle is thinking that, you know what, if something comes up with the kids during a time that I have planned to do something else, like clean out the cabinets or work out or journal or anything like that. And what I say is to anticipate obstacles. So will there be some obstacles that from time to time you can't anticipate? Absolutely. I'm thinking back to a couple years ago when I got food poisoning.

I can't anticipate that, right? It's going to happen. But those are emergencies that happen once a year. Um, if you are finding that every single week there are obstacles coming up, you're probably just not anticipating obstacles in a way that you could be to utilize your calendar more effectively. So for example, if your kids continuously interrupt you during your working hours and you work from home, anticipate that and come up with strategies to overcome that. So this gets into a little bit more of the coaching that I do with my clients. And if you're inside the

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

membership, you can get coached on this. But for purposes of this podcast, I think it's just helpful to ask yourself what obstacles might you experience might come up and then come up with 10 strategies to solve for those obstacles. So it might be that you have some areas of the week on your calendar that are left open specifically for working on things that didn't get done because you were interrupted by your kids.

It might be that you have some backup plans in place for when childcare is canceled. It might be that you have some options in place for when kids get sick. What I want you to see is that kids getting sick, kids at all, right? They are not a surprise, right? Food poisoning yes is a surprise. You know, a car accident yes is a surprise, but your kids interrupting you while you're working. Not a surprise. So ask yourself what obstacles you have right now that are preventing you from following through with your calendar and come up with strategies to solve them. I promise you my friend, your life is happening for you. You are not stuck. You can utilize these tools to create your dream life and this is your life, which is why putting your brain to work on strategies to overcome these obstacles is the best way to work through them.

The next tool or tip that I have for you is to test and find out what works for you. I can't tell you how many times that I've coached women who have said, you know, I, I set the time block for two hours to work on this thing and it took me six and then the next week the same thing happened. And I always say, okay, why did you continue to do the same thing the next week? This is your plan. You are in charge my friend. So if something isn't working, ask yourself, what about that didn't work? What can I try next? So maybe you decide you're going to do it faster and you're going to give yourself a little more time. So instead of extending all the way to five or six hours, you're going to extend it to three and a half or four hours or whatever it is.

Test and find out what works for you. This reminds me of my evolution with planning. You know, pre-kids versus you know, the phases of having a newborn to a toddler, to having another child, two under two and where we

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

are now and it continues to evolve, but I never feel like my plan isn't working. I always take responsibility that it's my job to work my plan. So as I've gone from no kids to having two kids, what's been really helpful for me is to just reevaluate my plan and make changes. So I used to be able to time block everything in specific hours, and that works really, really well. So if you have set childcare, that could be an option for you, that would work really well. If your job is more flexible, if you are part of the childcare or just if there's a reason that you find in your life that this makes more sense, what I suggest doing is putting certain things that you can get done that day that you want to get done that day, but not setting a specific time block.

So on my calendar I have specific time blocks set for my coaching calls, for example. But for a lot of the other things that I plan to get done for that day, I just put them at the top of that day. And I know sometime throughout the day that's the thing that I'm going to do. And so from time to time, will I need to move something? Yes, but it happens very rarely. I plan to do what's on my calendar always. I don't overplan. I don't expect more of me than I think I'll do. So I like to be really intentional and thoughtful about who I want to be. And I don't want to be someone who over plans. I also don't want to be someone who under plans. So the person who over plans is going to be exhausted going from next thing to the next thing, the next thing and the next thing, right?

They're so busy all the time. The person who under plans is not going to be creating a lot of results, not going to be making a lot of progress in their life, going to be creating more of the same. And so just check in with yourself, notice are you over planning or are you under planning? And then kind of move along that spectrum in a way that is helpful for you. The last planning tool that I want to offer to you is to plan to not want to do your plan in the moment. In the moment, you are going to want to do anything except for what you have planned. You are going to want to do the laundry and your brain's going to have a really good reason for why you should do that. Your brain is going to have all of the reasons why it should do exactly what it wants to do.

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

Whether that's laundry, whether that's cleaning, whether that is netflixing, whether that's shopping, whether that's sitting down and playing with your kids, whether it's cooking, your brain will have lots of good reasons in the moment for why you shouldn't do your plan. I want you to trust your prefrontal cortex and follow through with what you say you're going to do. So if you planned to work from two to four, I don't care what comes up at one 50, barring some sort of catastrophe where someone is injured or there's an emergency and you know, a real emergency from something else. Aside from that happening, I want you to do what you said you were going to do because then you get really good at following through with what you say you're going to do. And that is how you give up short-term gratification for long-term results. And you will create the life that you want.

This way you will create the life that is the one that you deserve most. It's the one that when you quiet your brain and you go inward and you ask yourself what kinda life you want, that's what comes up. What's required of you is to feel discomfort creating that for yourself. So a lot of times people will say, I don't understand why I don't want to do what's on my plan. When I decided that that's what I wanted to do, and it's because of the motivational triad. This is what I teach in the mindset course, the inner work framework, the motivational triad says you want to seek pleasure, avoid pain, and be efficient. So what is efficient? What is pleasurable is rarely what's on your calendar. What's on your calendar is often painful because it's not the path of least resistance. If it was, you would already have that result.

So let's just take an example. If you plan to journal and you are in the middle of something else going on, it is so much easier for your brain to want to continue doing what it's always done in that moment. To stop, to transition, to do something else creates resistance. It's not the path of least resistance. So your brain will try to talk you out of doing this other thing. That is why you want to trust yourself. Trust your prefrontal cortex. It has your best interest at heart. And what you can do is you can tell your brain, okay, brain, we're following through with our calendar and if I want to change my plan in the future, I will do that. But I will do that in advance. It's

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Plan Better

sort of like you when you start watching what you eat. If you decide what you're going to order at the restaurant ahead of time and you follow through with that, you will make such better decisions comparatively.

If you go to the restaurant, you sit down and the person at the table next to you has this delicious looking order of french fries that just got delivered to their table, you are so much more likely to order those french fries, even if you already have a food plan in place because you didn't make the decision ahead of time to plan what you're going to eat. And so the same is true with your time. It's planning in advance how you want to use your time and following through with that honors your future self. You can create the life that you genuinely want, but it does require you to be willing to feel the discomfort of transitions, to be willing to feel the discomfort of not wanting to do the thing on your calendar and do it anyway. I just plan to not want to feel like it.

And I watch out for those deserving thoughts like, do I deserve to watch tv? Or do I deserve to take care of my body and have a healthier body in the future by working out instead of watching tv? So be careful 'cause the primitive brain is sneaky with those thoughts thinking you deserve that dopamine hit immediately when the long-term pleasure is so much more beneficial to creating the life that you want. So my friend, use planning as a tool to help you live your best life. It helps me on a daily basis. I can't imagine my life without it. If you want more help on this, come inside the membership. I will coach you. There's lots and lots of time management and planning tools that you can get right inside. 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.