

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Natalie Bacon

[Mom On Purpose](#) with Natalie Bacon

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

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, 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 gorgeous friend. How we doing today? I hope you are doing well. Hope you are looking forward to spring and all that is to come. Today I want to talk with you about overthinking and I'm going to weave in my story as well as some examples and how I've been able to manage, overthinking and help thousands of women with it, with the tools that I've been trained to teach for the last over five plus years. Before we dive into all of that, goodness, I want to remind you about the podcast hotline.

Now, if you've left a message and I haven't yet answered it, don't worry, there are more to come. I know that there's a bank of, recordings in there and I try to do my best to pick out ones that will apply to the broadest audience and, answer as many as I can and also balance that with all of the other content I have planned. So I want to make sure that you are getting your questions answered. A lot of parenting questions have been coming in lately. If you have any parenting questions, a lot of health questions have been coming in as well because I've been on my own health journey. I've been talking more about that over on Instagram, @Mom.onpurpose. It could be anything that I teach and coach on and talk about. So feel free to leave me a message.

I am the one who gets those messages. I'm the only one checking it, so it will come directly to me. The number to call is 833-AskNat that's 833-327-5628 and I'll be sure to listen and hopefully get your message on a podcast upcoming. Alright, with that, let's dive into How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom. Do you overthink and do you know what overthinking is? And do you know how to stop overthinking or at least how to manage it? That's what we are talking about. I want to start off with what overthinking even is. Overthinking is your brain focusing on the negative and repeatedly thinking negative thoughts. I always like to say no one

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

comes to me and says, I'm having so much trouble overthinking my positive thoughts. No that's not what happens. If that was the case, then that would not be a problem.

That would be amazing. When we call it "overthinking", we're really talking about our brain replaying all of those negative thoughts and how awful that feels to have it kind of repeatedly going on in the brain. Before we "fix it or change it", I want you to understand why that's happening. Nothing is wrong with you, it's just the survival brain. The brain is designed to prioritize survival over happiness. What does this look like? Let's say you finally sit down to relax after a long day, but instead of enjoying the quiet, your brain starts listing all of the things that you should be doing. You should be doing laundry, you should be doing meal prep. You should be responding to that email. You should be doing, fill in the blank. This is your brain trying to sabotage you. It's just wired to scan for what still needs to be done.

It's wired to scan for the negative, the not good enough. The lack, instead of scanning for rest, for abundance, for positivity. It is the amygdala, which is the part of your brain that is responsible for detecting threats, whether those threats are real or perceived. So keep this in mind. It truly is your brain. Let's say you get a short one line text from your child's teacher and the text says, Hey, can we chat later today? Immediately it would be your amygdala that would kick in flooding you with stress. And instead of assuming it's something neutral or even positive, your brain jumps to What did I do wrong? Is my child struggling? Am I failing as a mom even though there's no actual evidence of danger? So this is truly your brain's job to do this.

Your brain also has a negativity bias and it's naturally going to focus on worst case scenario. The problem is that it continues to do this, and without any brain management, you will create habits like habit loops where you strengthen these neural pathways. And so your brain is just perpetually overthinking the negative and then you're more likely to be in that fight flight, freeze fawn stress response without breaks. So I say all this because I just want you to normalize it like nothing's wrong with you. You know the

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

neighbor that you have who seems so positive, or the person on social media who seems like she has it all together, we have no clue what's actually going on. I promise you she still has a primitive brain too. We want to focus back on your brain, on your brain's tendency to overfocus overthink the negative. I want you to pay attention to how this shows up in your life. Is it showing up in worrying? Is it showing up in catastrophic thinking? Is it showing up in all or nothing? Nothing thinking. I was just coaching on this actually in the Membership. It's like, if I don't do this perfectly, then I failed. It's that black or white all or nothing thinking when life is so much more gray.

Are you shoulding on yourself, on your kids? I should be more patient, I should be more organized, I should be more productive. I should be more calm. I should spend more one-to-one time with my kids. Now, I'm not saying that those aren't skills that you want to work on. Those are skills that I teach and appreciate myself. But at the same time, when you do it from a place of negativity, you're beating yourself up. You're disapproving from yourself and saying, I need to change in order to be better. And what I want to suggest is that you do the opposite. You approve of yourself. You love yourself. You get to a place of positivity and then say, okay, let's just build some skills. Let's just add some tools to my tool belt, because that's kind of mom. I want to be, I want to work on my patience and staying calm 'cause that's the kind of mom I want to be, not because I have to do that in order to be better.

Because the brain is wired for negativity. It's wired to look for the bad. It's wired for survival. It's not going to take you long to notice. This is a pattern in your life. I suggest just looking back at the last two days and noticing where you are, focusing on the negative. Now, if you are like my amazing perfectionist clients, you have a tendency to then take this and use these tools against yourself. Meaning you will say, oh my gosh, not only have I been doing this for the last two days, but when I look back, I have been doing this for the last, you know, 20 years and definitely for the years that I've been a mom and this has had a negative impact on my kids. And oh my gosh, now I'm even worse because I'm noticing all of the ways that I

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

have been projecting my negativity and my overwhelm and whatever else onto my kids.

Don't do that. There is nothing wrong with you. Just go back to the truth that is, I'm supposed to be a human mom and my kids are supposed to have challenges and my kids are supposed to have me as their mom, a human mom, and let's improve. Let's change from the inside out just because we want to, not because we need to, not because something's wrong with us, not because our kids don't have a good enough mom. None of that is true. Your kids have an amazing mom, they have you and you are enough. And now let's work on this just because we want to. I know for me, before I started working on managing my brain, negative thinking and overthinking really manifested as anxiety, worry, and stress. So I would have a lot of tension in my body, like my jaw, I would have restlessness.

The thought of slowing down or taking a break was just preposterous. I remember, and I've said this a lot now, but I'll say it again because it's so true. I felt panic at the thought of slowing down at the thought of working less. And because of that I had a lack of presence, I think. I think it's really hard to be present with the person in front of you, whether it's your spouse, your kids, your coworker, anyone, and give them your attention. If you have that constant loop of overthinking going on in your brain, and it's not that you're a bad wife or a bad mom, it's just what is happening in your brain. So for example, if you're playing a game with your kids, but instead of laughing and enjoying and connecting, you are thinking about what's next on your to-do list. This is a subtle way that your brain is scanning for the negative is scanning for what's next is overthinking.

And it can be that subtle. It doesn't have to be, you know, these, you know, grandiose kind of negative, overbearing, harsh thoughts. I mean they can be, but it could also just be, oh, I didn't handle that right, or I feel left behind, or I'm not a good enough mom, or my kids deserve better. They're just, I, I call it like low grade. I think the low grade negativity is sometimes worse because we think it's a fact. When we are in that low grade negativity of overthinking and constantly replaying the negative thoughts in our mind,

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

we think it's facts and it's just not true. It's just, I call it the channel. So I know we don't listen to the radio anymore in the car, my friends, but just bear with me for illustrative purposes. You're in the car and you have the six presets for the radio, at least we used to.

And you can click each one of those. That's how your brain is. And you might have the preset number one in the number one primary spot that you turn on as soon as you get in the car, as soon as you wake up, is overthinking about what you're not doing right, about the negative, about what's wrong. And what I'm suggesting is not necessarily that we're going to be able to totally get rid of that preset, but instead let's intentionally program presets 2, 3, 4, 5, and six to be much more helpful so that when your brain automatically wakes up and goes to preset number one, we're like, ah, we're not going to listen to that channel today. We're going to preset number two or three or four. That's the power of managing your brain. So with that, I want to transition into what I mean when I say manage your mind, manage your brain.

It is truly a gift you will give to yourself. It is life changing. You can take any circumstance, any challenge and work through it just by brain and mind management. It is what I am trained on extensively. It's what I practice in my own life on a daily basis. I think to myself, I could not navigate motherhood and my life without these tools, without brain management. I just really couldn't. And I don't know how other people do it. So I want to make sure you know what I mean. If you're in the Mom On Purpose Membership, you definitely know what I mean, retake the Inner Work Framework Course, I think every three to six months because it will give you a fresh perspective on how to actually apply this work to your life. And that's really what we're talking about here. So with that, I want to give you some steps that you can take to manage your brain.

That's what I'm talking about here. First, I want to talk about the role of metacognition. Metacognition just means becoming aware of your thoughts instead of being consumed by them. It's the skill of watching your thoughts instead of just reacting to them. When you can step back and notice your

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

brain's patterns, you create space between you and your overthinking. Instead of believing every anxious or worried or angry thought that you have is the truth. You start to see it as just a thought. I say this all of the time in my own life and in the membership, I'm like, you know, that's just a thought, right? And I remember when I didn't really get that and now I fully get it. So if you don't get it yet, that's okay. Keep doing this work. It will just click one day. That's kind of how I've experienced it.

But it does take practice. It takes getting your reps in. So it is not uncommon for someone to come to me and ask me about journaling. And I am a big fan of journaling, but I'm a big fan of intentionally journaling. I teach four methods of journaling in the Mom On Purpose Membership, and essentially you want to make sure that when you're journaling, you're not just doing a brain dump and then asking, who do I want to be in this situation? The problem with that is you were probably consumed by your thoughts. So for example, if you write down all of the ways that your sister and brother-in-law are driving you crazy and how negative they are and how dramatic they are and how you can't believe they did X, Y, and Z, whatever, you just brain dump, you get it all outta your mind. And then at the end, you're just asking yourself, okay, who should I be in this situation?

That is not the best next step because you have no awareness that what you just wrote down are all thoughts. They might be true thoughts, but they're still thoughts. It's when you are consumed by your thoughts, you believe them to be true even when they're really painful and unhelpful. And that's what happens when you just do a brain dump and then ask yourself, who should I be in this situation? Right? You haven't looked at your brain dump, so only write down negative things if you're going to watch your thoughts, if you're going to look at that paper afterwards and say, huh, that's really interesting. This is what my brain's doing. Oh wow, I'm thinking my sister shouldn't have done that. That's really interesting. How do I know what my sister should do? I must think that I'm in charge of her and that good sisters do something else that's really interesting.

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

I wonder what that's about. Why do I have to control my sister? Why do I need her to act a certain way for me to feel good? So you're sort of talking back to your brain, you're having a conversation with your brain, you're being really inquisitive, really curious, and you're just pulling apart the thoughts that you automatically would think are facts. So you sort of have this sense of curiosity like, oh, that's really interesting. I'm making myself the center of this and thinking that they should behave in a certain way and I'm being really judgmental. That's so interesting. I'm being negative about their negativity again. Interesting. Now, it's not like we say, oh, interesting, we just stop there. But you've gotta do this first step where you're watching your thoughts. I honestly think it's the step that is missed the most. We all want to go to the question of who do I want to be?

Because it's, it is a good question, right? It's, it's very empowering and it, it puts the onus back on you to feel confident and act within what you can control. And I love that question. I ask it a lot, but you can only do that after you've become aware of the story that you're telling yourself. If you're in a victim mindset, you know at the effect of your sister and brother-in-law or whomever else, and you think that they're causing your frustration, then that's a really bad question to ask, who do I want to be? Because you're making it sound like they're the reason why you feel upset. Instead of taking responsibility for your emotions, you're emotionally delegating to them. So metacognition become aware of your thoughts instead of being consumed by them. One of the best activities for this, in my opinion, is to write it down.

Number two, cognitive reframing. Shift your perspective on your automatic negative thoughts. And I love the visual of the radio stations that you have pre-programmed in your car. You get in the car and you're on the pre-programming of number one. That is the automatic negative thoughts station. All I'm asking you to do is come up with some new next believable thoughts that are true to you for programming station Number two, your brain will love those old stories, but that doesn't mean that they're the most helpful. They're probably true. Your brain likes to look for " what it thinks is true". It will never really know. But the more you look outside of you for

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

what's true, like what did brother, sister-in-law, sister, brother-in-law, I'm getting confused now. What did they say? That is what your brain's going to look for. What was their tone? It's going to look outside of you, but you don't have to do that. You can go inward and say, what's the most helpful story that I want to tell? Maybe they're just having an off day. It's none of my business. It's totally fine. I can decide this isn't a problem at all. That is also just as true. It's just a different station in your brain that you haven't programmed. So start reframing and practicing those new thoughts. So you get station number two just to be as automatic as station number one.

Next is self-compassion. This is about talking to yourself like you would one of your best friends who you respect so highly. I think that for most women, particularly if you run a little type A or high achieving, and even if not, it's like we have this inner self-talk that's so critical, that's so harsh, it's just brutal. You say things that you would never say to a daughter or a friend, and self-compassion is about replacing those critical thoughts with kindness and understanding and grace instead of, I can't believe I messed that up. You ask yourself, if my best friend was in this situation, what would I say to her? And it would probably be something like, you know what? You had a lot on your plate. It makes sense that happened. You're still a great mom or wife or professional, and it's okay that you mess that up.

It's okay that you made a mistake. You would be honest and direct, but very kind instead of harsh and critical. Again, maybe this is station number three, the self-compassion station. Okay? And so you want to practice having an inner self-talk that is kind and loving to yourself. The fourth way that I want to talk about managing your brain here is with pattern interrupts. It's a simple way to disrupt an overthinking spiral. Overthinking thrives on momentum. When you are deep in that spiral, a quick pattern interrupt can snap your brain out of it and break the cycle. And the goal here is to shift your focus, move your body, think a more empowering thought, change your environment. So for example, let's say you are spiraling about a decision and instead of letting it consume you, and it's all you can think about, you just out loud say to yourself, stop.

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

We're not doing this. And you stand up, you shake out your body, you go into a different space, a different room, and you talk back to your brain. You have a conversation with it. You say something like, you know what? Brain, enough of this for today, I don't want to think and focus on the negative of this decision. What I'm going to do is I'm going to get the information I need by tomorrow at 5:00 PM and I'm going to make a decision by then. Done. You're, you're just talking back to it. You're not letting the primitive negative overthinking part of your brain be in the front seat and take charge. You're having a conversation with your brain, and you can do this all in your mind. Most of the time, I am doing it in my mind. I'm talking back to my brain.

The last tool for managing your brain that I want to talk about here is making an identity shift. It's training your brain to believe new thoughts specifically about you. So your brain will believe the identity you give it. If you think I'm someone who always overanalyzes everything, then that is what your brain is going to believe. You can think a thought like in the past I've noticed a tendency in my actions to overanalyze things, but I'm working on that now. I'm learning to trust myself and be okay with making mistakes and moving forward with confidence. And then you repeat that to yourself and you live into it and your brain will start to believe it. So how do you put this into practice? I want to talk about that because I think people will hear this and think, okay, I love this, but also how, how, how, how?

Right? I'm going to give you some specifics. Number one is literally just in your mind talking back to the thoughts that you hear, like pay attention to the thoughts you're thinking and talk back to it. Have a conversation with your brain. That is most of it. That's most of what I'm doing during the day. I'm like, no, brain. We're not doing that negativity. We're going to have a good attitude today. So simple. Number two, journaling. Journaling is I think, the most powerful tool that you can use to stop overthinking, stop negative thinking. You are learning a new language, my friend. And the best way to practice a new language is to write down the new language and to practice in writing. So journaling can be a very powerful tool for reprogramming your mind towards intentionality and positivity. The third way is to talk back to yourself in the mirror.

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

We all see a mirror most likely throughout the day, whether it's when you go to the bathroom, whether it's first thing in the morning when you're getting ready or at night, you can create like a habit stack. So maybe after you brush your teeth every day, you practice saying two kind mantras to yourself to have a moment of connection. This can be a great way to habitualize this type of brain management. The next way is to create reminders for yourself on your phone or physically on sticky notes. This can be a great way for you to, again, get in the habit of getting to the second or third station that you want to program. It's like a visual reminder for you, for your brain, because whatever you focus on expands. So if you focus on those negative thoughts, that's what's going to become your habit loop.

But if you have just a visual sticky note that you're putting on your desk or somewhere else where you know you're going to see it often, maybe in the kitchen, that's going to be a visual reminder for you. Same thing with having reminders. You could have an hourly reminder pop up on your phone of a thought that you want to practice like I'm a really great mom and really great moms make mistakes. Or there can be hard moments and great days. Whatever thought you want to think, you can put that on a sticky note or have a reminder pop up on your phone. The last practical way to implement positive thinking, stopping overthinking is to come up with a positive identity statement that you want to start each day with. I think this can be a really great way to practice living into the identity of who you want to be.

So instead of, I'm such a people pleaser, it's, I've noticed a habit of people pleasing in the past, but I'm becoming more confident in my decision making and saying no every day. And today's another opportunity for that. If you said that every day for 30 days or 60 days, there is no way you would continue people pleasing because a lot of the "bad habits" of negative thinking and overthinking that we're in are just habits that we are unaware of. And that's why metacognition and cognitive reframing are so important. You gotta become aware of your thinking so that you don't think that how you're thinking is a fact, and so that you can change from a place of acceptance and loving your life, not from a place of lack or thinking that you

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

need to fix yourself. So my friend, there's nothing wrong with you for overthinking, for having your brain wired on channel number one.

That is the default for survival. But you can manage your brain. Managing your brain means talking back to your brain saying, no brain, we're not doing that today. I'm going to think this instead. And the more you do that, the better brain management you will have and the better you will feel. You will show up with so much more positivity and intentionality for your days, for your life. It's the only reason why I'm able to kind of 10 x my life in ways that I think would be debilitating or seriously overwhelming to other people. I think about getting married and having three kids within a very short amount of time. I had three kids in three years. Yes, it's hard, but hard doesn't mean bad. That's a thought. I think all of the time I am not in the victim mentality about my life. I'm living my best life and it's hard.

And that's okay. These are thoughts that I learned to program in, and because of that, my capacity continues to expand. I'm very focused. I have clear priorities. And because of that, because of these tools and doing this work, I'm able to create a life I love, not just the life that other people wanted for me or the life that seems like the most obvious given my current circumstances or my past. It's a life that I am creating from my future because I'm able to manage my mind and manage my brain. That's it. That's all it is. All of the classes that I teach inside, the Membership that you all get that are in there, there are just different angles at brain management. When I teach permanent weight loss, guess what? It's all about your mindset. Now I'm going to tell you what to do specifically, and I do same thing with parenting.

I'm going to give you scripts, I'm going to tell you how to validate feelings, but guess what it's all about mindset, mindset, mindset, mindset, my friends. So if you can manage your mind, then you make these shifts permanently. There is no going back. There is no starting over. It's true change from the inside out. And it is a gift that you give yourself and everyone in your life. I am so grateful for managing my mind because I know that I wouldn't have this life without it, and I certainly would be feeling

How To Stop Overthinking As A Mom

a lot worse, a lot more negative. If you're there right now, keep doing this work. Come get coached because it's so important for you to manage your mind. I think it's the most important and most valuable line item that you could have in your budget, because otherwise you're going to be unhappy. You're going to be miserable, you're going to be escaping your life. You're probably going to have really bad habits. They're going to show up in your parenting, in your marriage, in your physical health. And it doesn't have to be that way, my friend. It's as simple as switching the channel, the channel in your brain from the first preset to all of the other presets that you can create by intentionally doing this work. It is work, but when you do it, like my client said, it's magic. And with that, 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.