

Everything Is Great, So Why Don't I Feel Better?



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With Your Host

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, 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 friends. How are you? End of July when this episode is coming out, and I always find it fascinating at the end of July when it is warm and it's summer, yet there is this sense that school and the school year is on the horizon because of course we have to prepare for a few weeks later when school does start. So even though it's summer, it kind of feels like school is starting soon and that means fall is coming and I just love, love, love that time of year.

So that's what I'm thinking about. How are you doing? I hope you're doing well. Not too much is new around here. I am loving this season of life. I am loving the boys getting a little bit older and playing together, and we're just having a good time in Chicago, in the suburbs of Chicago and really soaking up motherhood and work and all of the amazing work we're doing at Mom On Purpose and growing my business and working with all of you. It's just been a really fun, inspiring, energizing time for me and I'm excited for it to continue. So today I want to talk with you about how to feel better. And I thought of this episode because so many of you have reached out to me wanting to work with me about this topic and you're wanting to work with me privately on this topic, meaning I have a lot of private clients right now who I'm coaching on how to feel better, and I was thinking about the content that I have already on this topic and there's a fantastic course inside the membership called How to Feel Better.

And there's not a podcast on this topic at all. I was so surprised by that. Of course, we have other feelings, podcasts, but I wanted one specifically about everything being kind of great. Fine, of course we all have our challenges. It doesn't mean that everything's perfect, of course not, but you know what I mean. Like you've set out to create what you want to create and yet you don't feel better, you don't feel as good on the inside as you

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thought. That is what many of my clients are coming to me with, and I thought it would be useful and helpful to have a podcast on the topic. So let's dive in. Why does this happen? The mismatch between your life and your emotions. It's kind of confusing, right? Life looks great, seems great, but your emotions don't feel as great as your life looks basically.

It's not that you feel terrible, it's just that you don't feel as good as you thought you would with your life looking this great. I want to tell you that this is normal. Yes, it seems a little confusing. I'm like there's a mismatch, but it is 100% normal. You have trained your brain to live in whatever state it is living in. So for example, if you're very comfortable feeling stress, that's your body's set point. I like to think of a set point like a thermostat where if you put it up a few degrees or down a few degrees, it's going to reset based on where you have it set. So if the room gets too hot, it's going to go back down. If it gets too cool, it's going to go back up. Your body is the same way. It gets in the habit of whatever emotions you are comfortable feeling.

Abraham Hicks says "the path of least resistance is the path you're already on". What does that mean? It means if you are used to feeling dissatisfied, if you are used to feeling stressed, if you're used to feeling worry, if you're used to feeling overwhelmed, whatever the emotion is of choice, your top emotion in this season of life, whatever it is, your brain and body would rather recreate that over and over and over again because it's efficient and it feels really safe, your brain feels really safe feeling this way, it knows that, okay, for the last decade we felt overwhelm, so I'm pretty sure that you're going to survive if we just continue to do the same thing and it's the most efficient. So your brain continues to look for things to be overwhelmed about. This is so important to understand because once you understand that it's more about safety and efficiency and just that primitive brain being wired for survival, not being wired for happiness, then you can do very real things like use very real tools to rewire that part of your brain to expand your zone of safety, to expand your capacity to feel better.

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It's not going to happen overnight, but just like if you want to get fit, it's not like you learn how to do a pushup and then all of a sudden you know you're ripped. You have to do the pushup or the sit ups all year long. But then by the end of the year your body looks completely different. It's the same with how you feel. If you learn the thoughts that are causing you to feel how you're feeling and then you practice new better feeling thoughts, you will feel different over time. So right now, part of your work is to notice and become much more aware of your thoughts and feelings. If you've spent years being productive, high achieving, proving yourself, your nervous system is probably wired for urgency. I can totally relate to this. It took a few years of doing this work for me to get out of that, but it was so worth it because now I feel so comfortable and by comfortable I mean my body and my brain feel safe, feeling calm and just sitting and being alone with myself doing nothing.

It sounds like such like a silly thing or something that isn't very important, but it's so important. So many of us will say, we want to feel more calm or we want to feel happier, and yet we haven't shown our body, our nervous system, that it's safe to do so. Right now even if you intellectually think, okay, something's gotta give, I'm just in this, do doer energy all the time. Even if that's true for you in your mind, if your body doesn't feel like it's safe to slow down, then you just won't do it. You'll always find more things to do. So you have trained your brain and your body to live in the state that it's most comfortable in. What is that state? If you had to name your top, I don't know, one emotion or two emotions in the last 30 days, what is that top emotion or what are those top two emotions?

And then you can extend it as well. In the last six months, what are your top two emotions in the last year? What are your top two emotions? I remember coaching a client once and she said, you know, I thought that I was just overwhelmed during this season when my kids were teenagers, but when you taught this, I was thinking back and I realized I have been overwhelmed for decades, like since college basically. And I loved that because what she realized was that she was taking her brain with her wherever she went. And that's what I always say, right? It's like you take

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your brain with you. So I'm a fan of changing your circumstances if you can, and yet you still take your brain with you. So if you are in the habit of feeling overwhelmed or you are in the habit of feeling apathetic or self-pity, that was one that you may have heard me talk about that I had to clean up a lot, a little bit of negativity as well as I reflect back on the thoughts and feelings I used to have, I definitely felt more comfortable in judgment and negativity and really I had to find a new way to think and feel and tell my brain and body that it's safe to do that.

And it seems like that would be so easy to do, and yet it's not. It's why we have popularized the get outside your comfort zone. Whatever your body is comfortable feeling, that is your comfort zone. It doesn't matter if it's stress and it's causing you physical problems. If your body is comfortable in that state of stress, it's not going to feel comfortable to get out of it said differently, it's going to feel uncomfortable. It's like when I help my clients feel more calm and get more grounded, I often recommend that they sit in a few minutes of stillness and silence and it is not a fun experience, my friends, and that is because of what I'm teaching you right now, which is your brain and body are the most comfortable in whatever state, whatever feeling state you've trained them to be in. So if you're used to doing all of the time and then all of a sudden you sit still for a few minutes and are quiet, it's going to feel very agitating.

You know, I can do it very easily now and I love it, but if I went on some silent retreat or something and had to do it for a day, I would definitely experience that level. So if you think of like this zone of safety or your capacity, and we're just trying to expand it a little bit from where you're at next, I want to talk about the thoughts that are currently creating your feelings. What are you thinking that's creating your current feelings? And there also might be other thoughts that aren't serving you that you may be also noticing that relate to happiness such as you now maybe noticing that you thought all along the way you would be happy when, so if you feel a lot of tension and you are doing this work and you're reflecting, noticing, oh my goodness, I have been feeling tension for a decade.

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It might be that one, you didn't have that awareness, but also even if you did, you were telling yourself the story that, well, it's because I'm in school. It's because I'm planning a wedding. It's because it's my first few years of my career. It's because I'm a new mom. It's because fill in the blank. And everyone's validating that because whatever it is you're going through is something that is impacting the way you're thinking about it. So of course you're going to get that validation from it. And yeah, it's not going to be helpful because all that did was perpetuate the problem into the future. And now what you might be finding is that okay, there is no reason that your brain can kind of latch onto in your circumstances, IE you've made it and you still don't feel better. And that's because along the way, you weren't actually solving the root cause.

You were just telling yourself, oh, I'll feel better when, and as a high achiever as someone who loves being productive, I can so relate to this. And I will say that this, this was life changing for me. It truly was because when I realized like you are always with yourself, I am always with myself. And so the happiest I will ever be is how happy I decide to be in any moment. And the only way I can ever experience a moment is in that moment. So right now, the present moment is all we have. It's fun to think about the future, but I'm still thinking about the future in the present moment. And some of you think a lot maybe too much about the past. You're still doing that in the present moment. So you're not feeling a feeling from the past. You are recreating that feeling right now with a present thought, and that thought happens to be, you know, tailored to an event that happened in the past. So why is this relevant here? Because it can be really inspiring, at least it really was for me to know the importance and the possibility of feeling better right now, because that's all we have is right now, and you are always with yourself right now. And so why not just feel good?

And once you really understand that, I think then you're more willing to play around with the different tools, but you really have to understand that first because otherwise you're just going to keep blaming your circumstances and then project it into, on the other side of it's like, you know, what we

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were told when growing up kind of right? It's like once you graduate, once you get the job, once you land the house or the career or the husband or the kids or whatever, you know, that's where happiness is. And I am all for goals and productivity and accomplishing things and being high achieving, but from a completely different place. Now, the place that I do all that from now is just because I like it, just because it sounds fun. I do not think I will be happier over there. I do think I'll still have problems, and I do think some things will be easier and maybe better, but it's not like, you know, there's this thing I'm trying to achieve and then over there is where I'll be happy. So whatever it is that you want, I want you to keep wanting it and I want you to desire it and I want you to create it. Whether you know it's writing a book and being a New York Times bestseller, whether it is getting a different job, whether it is, starting a business, whether it's losing weight, it could be anything that you are working on, your desires matter, and yet they don't make you happier.

I think there's like purpose and fulfillment wrapped up in there, but as we all know, working on anything also has a lot of negative emotion in there as well. So the work that we're doing here is to separate out feeling better from the goal. Like, let's go achieve the goal because that sounds fun and I want to show myself what I'm capable of and I really have this desire on my heart. Let's do that. But let's also feel better. It's a completely different goal. We might say it's a completely different task. It's a completely different undertaking because it involves changing the way that you are thinking right now and giving yourself permission to feel as happy as you would had you just achieve the thing that you want to achieve. And that's hard to do because again, your brain loves thinking that it's over there because then it doesn't have to do the work.

If you're used to feeling tension, you can just continue to feel tension and your brain would prefer to do that because it's more efficient and because it feels safer, because that's the path of least resistance. It's the path that you're already on. And it might not be tension for you, it might be frustration, it might be apathy, it might be, you know, anger, disappointment, whatever it is, boredom. We all have these emotions that come with us

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because of what we're thinking and we recreate them on default automatically. Now why is this? Because your brain is wired for survival, not happiness. What does this mean specifically? It means that it's your brain's job to scan for what's wrong. And that would be very helpful if a bear was going to attack you. And it is actually even helpful in today's day and age if you are really threatened and hopefully for most of us, for all of us, definitely listen to this.

That is very, very rare, very, very, very rare, and we're so lucky and privileged to be able to say that. And yet, now what do we do? Right? We're living in modern society and we have this default brain that its main job is to keep us alive. And to do that, it needs to avoid pain, it needs to scan for what's wrong in our environment. And if our environment is mostly safe, guess what it's going to do? Point out every little thing that it thinks is wrong in your home. Point out how it thinks your spouse could be better. Point out how it thinks your kids aren't the kids you're supposed to have or that you're having challenges they're not supposed to have. Basically any of the negative thoughts that you are thinking are probably just coming from default thoughts that your brain is thinking automatically. You don't have to teach your brain to do this, it does this automatically to ensure your survival.

So the work is to override this part of the brain and rewire your brain for happiness, for joy, for excitement, for play, for fun. What emotion, what top two emotions do you want to feel in the next 30 days? What top two emotions do you want to feel in the next six months? If you normally feel frustrated every single day, and that is a top emotion for you, I'm not saying that you're never going to feel frustrated again, but instead of you feeling frustrated nine times outta 10, you can get to a place where you feel frustrated one to two times out of 10. Instead of frustration being your main emotion, you feel content, you feel peaceful, you feel inspired, you feel energized, you feel happy. And then occasionally because you still have the default primitive brain, but it's very well managed, occasionally you will feel frustrated.

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So practically what that looks like is instead of having these negative, harsh, self-critical thoughts, like, I'm not doing enough, I should be better, I should feel happier if I complain I'm ungrateful, something's missing. Why is my house not perfect or not good enough? Or, you know, why do I not have more help? Or the help I do have? Why is it not better? Why isn't this easier? Any of those questions that aren't really questions but they're kind of negative statements worded with a question, any of those thoughts that you feel on default, you can clean right up. I promise you I never have those thoughts. And it's not because I'm just naturally an upbeat positive person, it's because I've dooled them so much that I don't entertain them. And here is a little pro tip for doing thought work. Any of those thoughts that come later in the day, I am especially skeptical of because my brain is tired, our brains are tired.

And what I mean by that is the prefrontal part of the brain, the the sharpest, the best part of your brain for critical thinking and decision making is the most tired at night. So the primitive brain is loudest. And I will tell you what best life hack, one of the best life hacks that I have given myself is to not ever entertain my nighttime thoughts and those lower grade negative, harsh, self-critical thoughts that might come at night or later in the evening. I really do not think them, and it's because I've trained my brain to let go of them to give myself self validation. It's one of the best hacks ever. Also, at the end of the day, when you're brushing your teeth, look yourself in the mirror, tell yourself you're doing a great job. Tell yourself what you would love to hear from someone else.

It will feel awkward at first, but think of it like putting on some really different type of outfit that you would never wear. Like if I put on like a, a hot pink or a neon green dress or something like that, nothing wrong with those colors, but I don't wear them. So if I put them on it would feel really awkward and weird. But that's okay, right? It doesn't mean I'm doing something wrong. It doesn't mean there's anything wrong with the dress. It just means, oh, this is new and different. So when you start to talk positively to yourself and you give yourself that validation before it feels better, it's going to feel weird. And that's the part that I think trips people up because they're thinking,

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okay, I'm doing this to feel better. It doesn't feel better, so I'm just going to stop. It's a waste of time.

It's kind of like if you're remodeling a kitchen, you don't just go from your current kitchen, which is fine to the most amazing kitchen. You have to gut your perfectly fine kitchen so that you don't have a sink, so that you don't have a refrigerator so that there's construction everywhere and it looks like, a disaster. It's like way worse than your fine kitchen that you started with. That's kind of like what it's like doing this work in so far as you feel fine. But when you try different tools to feel better, it's getting you outside your zone of safety. And that's like the part of the kitchen remodel that looks worse, that isn't your new kitchen and it's worse than your old kitchen. It's going to feel uncomfortable. It's getting outside that comfort zone. And after you do that, you do get the amazing kitchen.

You do feel better, but most people aren't willing to do that part. And so I want to encourage you to expect that, expect to have a little bit of discomfort in changing how you feel. Like if you're someone who is pretty critical and judgmental for you to drop that and to not connect in that way, it takes courage. You have to give up a part of yourself. I've done this work and it has been so life changing. I'm just not that person anymore. I'm so grateful to myself. I'm like, no, we don't do that anymore. And it was never extreme. And I think, I think that's why it's so easy to not do the work, but at the same time, you know, right? It's not like other people are talking about you saying you're so negative. It's like you know that your experience just isn't as positive as it could be.

And you may have heard of tools that explain how life is positive and negative, and for sure it is, right? We, we don't even know what a positive life is or a positive experience or positive emotion is without the negative, right? Like you have to have it, otherwise it would just all be positive. But what I see people miss is, is their thinking that their negativity is the reality. And so this is just the way it is and they, they can't feel better at all because this is the part of life that just doesn't feel so great and that's just not true. So I want to encourage you to do the work to actually feel better, to become

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more aware of your current thoughts, of your current beliefs. And, that comes from you really getting deep in there. Like what are your thoughts on a daily basis that are creating your emotions of irritation, of annoyance, of overwhelm, of self-pity? What are the thoughts that create those emotions and be willing to be wrong about those thoughts? Because there are always hundreds if not thousands of available thoughts to you. And you can pick other thoughts that feel true to you.

But the way that you want to choose those thoughts is to back into them based on the feeling you want to feel. So if you want to feel excited, it's going to be a different set of thoughts that you pick than if you want to feel calm. So choose your thoughts intentionally, create those thoughts. For example, you might have a thought like, I'm not doing enough, and it feels so true for you, but yet, how does that feel? It feels terrible to think that. And we can pull it apart, like what is enough? What does that even mean? Let's just drop that all together. How do you want to think instead, I'm doing exactly what I'm supposed to be doing and the house is supposed to be half undone. It's totally fine. I don't know if that's your thought. Plug into chat, GPT brainstorming. Put your brain to work on intentional thoughts that feel believable to you. The only way you'll do this correctly is if you understand that what you're thinking in the first place is a thought.

And that is obviously the work that we do inside the Mom On Purpose Membership, the Inner Work Framework course. Do it over and over and over, do the worksheets over and over and over. I swear I am always saying do it at least every three months or every six months because circumstances change. And so you want to have that skill really sharpened. And that's what I want to really emphasize here, is that this is a skill. It's not one and done. It's sort of like learning how to work out and get your body in shape. It's something that you learn and that you'll do forever. As long as you have a physical body, as long as you have a healthy functioning human brain, you need to be managing it because your quality of life will be so much better if you manage it. Otherwise, you know, it depends on your brain's preferences.

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But in general, worry, overwhelm, negativity, irritation, frustration, those emotions will become your dominant main emotions. And they might be already. And there's no shame in that. Absolutely no shame in it. This is just the way that healthy human brains are wired. They're wired for survival, which means it's its main job to scan for what's wrong. And by doing that, you're pointing out what's negative to your brain. And that feels however you're feeling frustrating. It feels like resistance. It feels negative. However, your brain is interpreting your circumstances, that's the feeling it's going to create. And it doesn't have to stay that way. And I love that. And I think you already know that, but you might not know exactly how to make that happen. And then how to make it stick. And that's the work that we do with coaching. And I wish I could tell you it's just one and done, but it's not.

And you know that you have to do the work. I remember, like I said, in law school, listening to podcasts, thinking, okay, after law school, like I'm, I'm really going to like figure out how I do the work because yes, podcasts are helpful and motivating, but it's so different to actually do the work and to coach yourself. It's not even the same thing at all. And for me, there has been nothing more impactful than doing the work of feeling better because when my default brain does take over, and from time to time I'll feel either self pity or frustrated, I can just process and allow the feeling and then very quickly manage my brain and the everyday life that I'm experiencing with littles and the chaos of motherhood. I have so much gratitude for my capacity has expanded so much and I feel good, I feel tired for sure. But that has to do with sleep. My thoughts, I've cleaned them up and you can clean them up too, my friend. There are so many tools, so many ways I can help you with Visit momonpurpose.com and we can work together on it because you deserve to feel as good on the inside as your life looks on the outside. And with that, I'll 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.