Worrying In Motherhood

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Mom On Purpose with Natalie Bacon

Worrying In Motherhood

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 friends. Welcome to the podcast. I'm so happy to be here with you today. I recently signed up for an in-person business event that I will be traveling to and there was a questionnaire that I needed to fill out about Mom On Purpose and my business and my goals. And it had me reflecting so much on how grateful I am for this community. Specifically the podcast listeners, you right now listening to this because you know, hands down this is the number one favorite platform that I have.

You all consistently tell me, you DM me, you write reviews, PS thank you so much for those and you really just share with me in any container that I ever have, how much you get from the podcast. And so I just want to say thank you and you're on my heart. I appreciate you being here. As always, if you would like me to answer one of your questions, I definitely recommend calling the podcast hotline. You can do that over at 8-333-Ask Nat. That's 833-327-5628. Today I am going to be answering a question that came in through written form so you can email me. I get to those as well. It just takes a little bit more time. I do keep an inbox zero, but I just throw things into different folders and I have people on my team helping me manage that. And you can also send me a dm, but as you know with Instagram it's like, you know, getting to those is a little bit harder as well.

So your best bet is the podcast hotline and then email and then I try to answer dms but it's just not where I spend a ton of my time. 'cause I could be on there all day. So this question came in via email and it reads the following. "I feel like I'm constantly worrying about big things and little things. For example, if my toddler's not eating well one day I spiral. If my 8-year-old has a hard moment with a friend, I'm still thinking about it hours later. Even when everything is fine, I find myself waiting for the next problem. Is this just how motherhood is supposed to feel or is there a way

that I can stop worrying so much?" The first thing I want to say is I'm so glad that you wrote this question in because it just so happens that this month we are covering How To Stop Worrying inside the Mom On Purpose Membership.

There's a brand new class out, it's my longest class I've ever taught and it really deep dives into how to proactively stop worrying along with how to reduce stress and anxiety. And in this podcast we're going to talk specifically about your question here with respect to worrying. And I think it's going to dovetail really nicely for those of you who are in the membership and want a supplemental podcast episode about worrying. I also love this question so much because I personally have done so much work on worry that I'm a completely different person. I used to worry extensively and my mind was always racing with those negative worrisome thoughts that what if spiral of thoughts and I don't have that anymore. And that is not by chance. It is not a product of my default brain and my better circumstances. It's not because of any of that.

It's truly and exclusively because of the brain management that I have done that I no longer worry. I mean I'll say I used to worry, let's say nine outta 10 times and now I worry like, you know, two outta 10 times. So it's not that I never worry or that my brain doesn't have a single worrisome thought. It's just that number one, it's so much less frequently. And also when it does come up, I know exactly what to do with it so that it's not in control and it's not ruining my experience of motherhood and my life, which 100% is what worry is designed to do. So I want to talk with you today about worry, give you some tools and really help you understand the problem with worry, what's really going on and how to stop worrying, especially with respect to motherhood. Because I think with other things in our lives, sometimes it's a little bit easier to manage the worry because it's more focused on, you know, things we can control.

But motherhood is by design about something outside of our control, right? It's about our kids. And because of that and because we love our families and our kids so much, it can feel so useful, so responsible and yet kind of

like heartbreak at the same time. So I'll dive into what I mean by that, but I just want you to know that if you want to stop worrying about your kids and just have a better experience of motherhood one hundred percent you can't. So I do want to say that it's totally normal and typical to have a default brain that worries so much. That's what the brain is designed to do, is to scan for what's wrong. And that means it's designed to worry. However, I love the question is this just how motherhood is supposed to feel? Because the answer is no. It's highly likely that you have like a, if you have a high functioning, brain, you are someone who will naturally default to worry.

And yet that is not how you should experience motherhood. I think worry really robs you of experiencing a lot of joy and contentment and peace and fulfillment and that is available to you. I remember being in kind of like a more negative place years ago and thinking like, oh, this is just, you know how it is supposed to be and everyone has challenges. And so even though social media looks so great, you know, deep down everyone's probably like as negative and worrisome as I am and it's just not true. And I say that actually to be confronting and empowering at the same time because I want you to know that if you are just worrying more than you want to be worrying, that is something that you definitely can overcome. You can reduce it significantly. Again, it's like if you're worrying nine out of 10 times, we're going to get you down to like a two out of 10 and that completely changes your experience of motherhood in the most amazing way.

Alright, so let's dive into how worry presents. So you can get a really clear picture of what this practically looks like in everyday life. Worry typically doesn't sound like I'm so worried. Instead, you know, the, the word worry may be included, but it also may not be, but it typically is your brain being very overly concerned with an outcome that is or isn't happening. So your toddler isn't talking yet, your kid isn't, you know, eating the nutritious foods that you want them to eat. Your five-year-old doesn't have close friends and you think they should, your baby isn't sleeping, your teenager, you know, is making decisions that you don't want them to be making. And you sort of

latch onto the circumstance being a problem and then spinning about it negatively in your mind. It might present in a what if spiral. You might feel it in your body, you may have problems sleeping.

Again, this is just kind of the unmanaged brain doing what it is designed to do. And that's really what I want you to get from this episode is to like take a step back and understand your brain is going to do this on default unless you manage it and it's just going to steal your experience of motherhood because your brain is wired for survival. It's wired to keep you safe. And so it's scanning for problems, looking for anything that may be dangerous or threatening even when there's no immediate danger at all.

So in motherhood this translates to what if my kid's behind? What if this problem isn't solved? What if I can't figure it out? Should I do something different with them? Should I sign them up for this class? Should I, you know, do sleep training? You know, will they make more friends? What if they don't make more friends? What if they struggle in school? What if they keep struggling in school? What if they don't stop playing video games? What if they keep, you know, hanging out with these kids I don't like what if you know, like, it, it's, it's a consistent barrage of negative thoughts about something that either hasn't happened yet that your brain is trying to figure out that you don't like, right? We're not like worrying about how it's such a beautiful day, right? It's like your brain is latching onto the negative because it's supposed to do that on default. I cannot stress this enough. It's like when I realized that this is just the automatic negative default brain thoughts and unmanaged, they will take over my entire experience of life. And there's so much of it that's outside of my control and none of it means that my kids will never have challenges.

Said differently my kids are supposed to have challenges. That's one of my favorite all-time thoughts and beliefs. My kids are supposed to have challenges. Now this doesn't mean that I don't help them navigate the challenges, but it does mean that I manage my own worry so that they don't grow up with a mom whose main emotion is worry. I think my kids deserve better. I don't want to have them experience that. I have experienced that

personally. And it puts so much pressure on the child to take care of the parent's emotion because they can tell that any time they have a challenge, their parent is worried. And so then they try to hide those challenges or, you know, try to take care of the parent's emotion. It's just, it's totally unhelpful. But even aside from that, it's not useful. Worry feels really, really useful because it, it seems like that's the only option, right?

It's a little bit of all or nothing thinking either you worry and that's how you help solve the challenge or you just don't care at all, right? I call that like apathy. And so if you think of a spectrum, those are two opposite ends of the spectrum. That's an all or nothing thinking. And what I teach and believe in and have experienced in my life is in the middle where you do care and you do support, but you do it from such a confident connected place, more abundant, not from worry. And I'm telling you this is, it's work. It's like a skill that you have to practice because the brain is so practiced in being worried. And I'm not saying that you won't have new worries at first when you have a new challenge, but when you can manage your mind really successfully, then you can get out of worry pretty quickly.

So let me give you an example. When I recently found out about Jack's new food allergies, I had about, I don't know, 24 to 48 hours of really worry some thoughts. You know, it's like now I have to figure all this out and solve it and take on this new side hustle of becoming an expert in food allergies. And it felt like pressure and worry and what's this going to mean for him? And he's going to have to sit at a table all by himself and you know, what if he, you know, we can't have any of these allergens in the home and these foods that we love and are a part of our everyday life. How can you have a childhood without peanut butter and jelly? That was one of my thoughts, you know, and this is just my default brain doing what it does. And I decided no, we're not doing that.

I cannot control and change what is happening in the circumstance. IE that my son, my baby, my baby boy has had these reactions to these foods and I know that I don't want to become like a victim of my circumstance where I feel like I'm at the effect of it and then be fueled by all of this worry. That's

just not what I'm about. That's the opposite of what Mom On Purpose is about and what I believe in. So I decided, alright, I'm going to clean all of this worry up. I'm not going to worry about it. Isn't that crazy to think? Just side note here. We go around saying, should I be worried about this all of the time? It's just a terrible question. And the answer 100% of the time is no. Now that's not the same question as should I care about this? I of course care about my son's allergies and I'm going to be present and learn things and do it from a connected, confident, empowered place.

I'm not going to do it from pressure and I'm not going to do it from worry. That's a choice. It is the choice that my default primitive brain will make 100% of the time. But guess what? It robs me of joy. It robs me of connection. It robs me of like loving and delighting in motherhood. It will make motherhood feel so much heavier. Then I'll be fueled by thoughts like, my life is so hard, this isn't fair. You know, other families don't have to deal with this. Whatever the thoughts are totally unhelpful, making me even more a victim of my family and my life for something that's totally outside of my control and not helpful. Now again, it doesn't mean that I'm going to go to the other end of the spectrum, which is just apathy and I don't care about this at all. And the middle is I care about my son and his allergies and I want to navigate this with an open mind and be present.

And I don't want to take on becoming an allergist as a side hustle. That's just not my thing. And you know, I'm, I'm saying that little tongue in cheek here. Of course I don't mean actually becoming an allergist, but I, you know, a lot of times especially, and I was just coaching on this in the membership, it's like a lot of times any challenge our child has, we then take it on as now I have to become the expert in that. And if you feel called to learn more and to educate yourself and to become an expert in something, right? I really became a finance expert due to my student loan situation back in the day. And that was something I genuinely wanted to do from a place of abundance. If I did that for every single challenge my kid had, it would be exhausting and there would not be enough time in the day.

And you know what I'm talking about you high achieving type A moms, you do this and it's just, you've gotta manage your mind around it. So if there's something you genuinely feel called to help with and to learn about, do that. And then for everything else, lean on the experts. Allow yourself, or give yourself permission to do what you want to do and not more. And that was so freeing for me. It was like, okay, this is my son's challenge. It is not mine. And I'm the mother of my son who wants to support him in navigating this challenge and I want to learn more and I want to go to the experts and we're going to do this together. And it felt so much more empowering than being fueled by the worrisome thoughts and the weight of all of that worry. So that's just one example where it took me about two days to kind of get out of that, that, resistance to what is no, this shouldn't be happening.

And then all of the worrisome thoughts that I was having. And that was like a bigger, event for me in my life in terms of what was going on and how I felt so much worry. But on an everyday basis I don't have those thoughts at all, right? It was just something I wasn't expected. Took me about two days to overcome the worry. I didn't lose any sleep over it at all. Not one night. And I really managed my brain at a high level so that I get sleep so that I don't worry. So that I, keep those thoughts in check. And that's really what it is about. It's about doing the inner work, learning the skills of brain management and of emotional regulation so that when worry does come up, you can manage that as well. Two different skills there. The brain management and the emotion management.

So yours is going to look different, right? You may be in a state where you're worrying just every day about the little things or maybe something happened like a diagnosis or again, your child is having a challenge with back to school or friends or you know, you name it, it could be your husband's job. It doesn't necessarily have to be kids, of course, again, it's your brain fixating on something it doesn't like. And creating those worrisome thoughts that if not managed will make you miserable, make you feel out of control, try to get you to fixate on things that, feel useful but aren't. I love Eckhart Toll's quote where he says, "Worry pretends to be necessary but serves no useful purpose". How good is that? My friends

Worrying In Motherhood

"Worry pretends to be necessary, but serves no useful purpose". Your worry isn't useful. Now again, that doesn't mean we're going to go to apathy and just throw our hands up and we don't care at all.

But instead we're going to slow it down, manage the brain and decide how you want to think and feel more deliberately. And it's hard to do, especially if you've been in the habit of worry. But just think about your brain being in that habit loop and how it's really stealing your joy on an everyday basis. Like I could be having such a worse experience of motherhood with all of the things I could be worried about from sleep to, you know, allergies to friends and school and just all of the things. There is no end to the mom worries. I remember having this epiphany 'cause I've done work on worry for years, right? I, I haven't worried in a while, the way I used to anyways. And I remember getting pregnant and I've, I've shared this story before, but I want to share it again here because it's so relevant.

It's like I remember getting pregnant and worrying about my experience in my pregnancy and all of the testing and then labor and delivery and then, the milestones. And it dawned on me, oh my goodness, with having kids, there is literally no end to the worries. And in that instant I decided I'm just not going to worry. I just refuse. Now again, as I gave you the example with the allergies, it doesn't mean that my default brain doesn't take over from time to time for those bigger situations. It does, but I manage myself out of it. I do not trust my brain in that worrisome state because it's fueled by fear. It's fueled by my primitive brain just wanting to know that everything's going to be okay. And I just skip the part where I need to control the world and control everything. And then I just go to everything is okay, it's okay.

My kids are supposed to have challenges if they have a diagnosis or if they don't meet a milestone or if whatever is happening is their challenge that I didn't see coming. That's okay. And making peace with that is one of the biggest gifts you will give to yourself ever as a mom because there's so much that is outside of your control. There's so much that you could worry about and worry as a choice. Typically it's an unconscious choice because that's what your brain is designed to do. It's designed to worry, but you

gotta train your brain. It's okay brain, we don't need to worry about this. We're going to care about it and we're going to decide intentionally how we're going to think and feel. We're going to get coaching on it. That's, you know, everything that Mom On Purpose is about. It's about the brain management, it's about the emotional regulation tools and it's about coaching.

It's all we do inside the Mom On Purpose Membership. So that in a very real way, your experience of motherhood and your life is so much better. Like what do you want your top emotions to be? That's a super important question because if there's a mismatch between what they are and what you want them to be, the time is now to fix that, to change that, to do the work on it. And it is work, work, but it, you know, it's, it's work, but it's work worth doing. It's like it's work to go to the gym and exercise, but it's work worth doing, right? Because as long as you have a body, you want to take care of it. Same is true with your mind. As long as you have a healthy functioning brain, you've gotta take care of it and utilize these tools. And every day you don't is a day that you will be more fueled by the negative thoughts, the worrisome thoughts.

Maybe it's more stress for you. Again, the class this month is just gold. It's one of my favorites because it teaches you exactly how to reduce stress, anxiety, and worry. And you know what I will say about my approach compared to many other approaches, many other approaches just help you manage it in the moment. And I do give you tools for that. But to me, I think that's about like 20% of doing the work. It's the pausing, it's the deep breaths, it's the, it's naming it once those emotions are present. So once you're feeling worried, once you're feeling anxious, once you're feeling stressed, what do you do? Okay, that is a fair question. It's better than you know, letting your primitive brain run wild and not managing it all. But the reason I say that that's only 20% of the work is because it's sort of too late.

You can't manage your mind once those negative emotions are present. You have to manage your mind out of the moment when you're calm, when you're regulated, when you are grounded and you're deciding, okay, how

do I want to think and feel about this? So the work that I did to get to a place of confidence and support and love for my son and his allergies was out of the moment after I processed the worry. After I processed that fear, then I was able to decide intentionally how I wanted to think. I had to use the tools, the intentional thought creation and really create an entirely new and more helpful perspective for how I wanted to approach this challenge. That is not something you do in the moment, and yet it's one of the most important parts, dare I say it, 80% of the work. Because to go from your default emotions being stress, anxiety, and worry, let's say nine outta 10 times to, having those emotions be present two out of 10 times, that's all out of the moment work that isn't work that you do to rewire your brain to feel differently, to think differently.

So that worry isn't even there for you to process. I'm all for you naming the emotion and breathing through it and processing it and in all the tools that we have once it's present. But once it's sort of present, it's too late to manage your mind. That's what you do out of the moment with coaching. That's why I am so passionate about this work because I think there's just a gap in what we're taught. Like we are not taught this. And I give you, gosh, the most robust toolkit inside the Membership this month for navigating, worry, stress, and anxiety so that your experience of motherhood is so much better. You'll have a spiral from time to time, but it will be few and far between. It will be reserved for just the big stuff and you'll see it happening. Like I saw the worry happening and I said, okay, this is not useful.

Even though my primitive brain is kind of going wild right now, it's sort of having a little tantrum, right? Mom tantrum, totally fine in my mind. And once that passes, I need to do the work to get to a place where I feel confident and secure and know that I can help my child navigate these challenges without the worry, without the heaviness. So here's kind of the challenge, right? It's like your kids are supposed to have challenges and you are supposed to have challenges. We know this, right? You can take a step back and you can see that. And yet in the day-to-day life of those specific challenges, we have these subtle, unhelpful thoughts like, yeah, but I don't want them to have this challenge or they shouldn't be having this

problem, or now it's my job to solve this problem. And we take on this heaviness that really ruins our experience of motherhood because problems are forever.

And so how do you make space for accepting life, accepting the challenges and saying, this is who I want to be in those challenges. I want to show up without worry, but with confidence and love so that I'm not fueled by fear and worry for my own sake, but also for, you know, the benefit of my kids as well. That my friends is the million dollar question. And it's all done via mindset work and emotional regulation, both brain management and managing your feelings. Going back to the initial question that came in, I want to reread it here and then answer it very directly given everything we've talked about. So it says, "I feel like I'm constantly worrying about big things and little things. If my toddler's not eating well one day I spiral. If my 8-year-old has a hard moment with a friend, I'm still thinking about it hours later. Even when everything is fine, I find myself waiting for the next problem. Is this just how motherhood is supposed to feel? Or is there a way to stop worrying so much?"

My friend, you are not alone. In fact, I think you are in good company. I can totally relate to this. I used to feel this way and and be this way. And yes, there is a way to stop worrying so much. No, this is not just how motherhood has to feel. You can feel calm in challenges, you can feel connected, you can feel hopeful, you can feel inspired, you can feel however you want to feel, but it won't happen on default because your brain's number one job is to focus on the negative. So you gotta get that fear and that worry in check. And the way that you do that isn't generally by telling yourself this is nothing to worry about because your brain is really smart.

It will not believe that. So you have to take the micro example of, okay, on last Tuesday when my toddler didn't eat any of the meals that I offered, what were my thoughts and feelings and actions? And taking a look at that and deciding intentionally, okay, how do I actually want to feel and backing into the thoughts that you want to think that will create that feeling. And

then once you clean up the inner work and your thinking and feeling in a way that helps you show up as a confident, connected, strong, you know, energized mom, however you want to feel, then you take new and different actions. I promise you the actions you take from worry versus the actions you take from confidence and strength and calm will be different. Not only will they be different, but the worrisome actions that you take will feel exhausting at the end of the day.

The actions you take from more positive, useful emotions will feel energizing even if you feel tired. So it's a subtle but super important distinction. So, you know, the the phrase I like to think of is like I left it all on the field, right? If, if you just think of the stereotype of of playing a game, you know, a physical game with like basketball or something and it's like, or football, right? If it's if it's field or court, whatever you want to go with, I left it all on the court. I left it all on the field. It's like if you leave it all out there, that means you gave it your all from like a really positive place. I left it all out on the field, I left it all on the court. That feels re-energizing almost. It's like such a positive state. Even though you're still probably tired after the game, that's very different than if you're offering things from worry and from fear, it will feel exhausting.

So it's the best kind of example I have without you actually experiencing it. So it's not that you do nothing. And so at the end of the day you're like, I'm just ignoring all the challenges and I feel great. Not at all. You're showing up, but from a completely different set of thoughts and feelings, a completely different perspective that doesn't leave you feeling so fearful, so worrisome and therefore you feel so much better and your experience of motherhood is so much better as you navigate the challenges and you look at each of these challenges and you go through them until your brain starts to really decrease this worry loop. So with your 8-year-old having a hard moment with a friend, how do you want to think and feel about it? And how are you thinking and feeling about it on default? You know, 9.9 times out of 10, dare I say it, 10 times out of 10 clients ask me, what should I do?

Worrying In Motherhood

How should I help my child? What should I say to them? You know, what's going to help them? And it's always about the actions. And again, it's not that that's a bad question, it's just a bad first question. We gotta clean up how you're thinking and feeling first and then the actions will flow. Because when you are feeling how you want to feel, when you're feeling connected, when you are feeling calm, your actions are so different in the best way compared to when you are feeling fearful, worrisome, any sort of negative emotion that's unhelpful, frustrated. So cleaning up your thoughts and feelings first and then your actions is the order that I really want to encourage you to do with respect to how to stop worrying so much.

For all of the other tools. And there are many, this is one of the, if not the most robust, longest course I've created. Come inside the membership and this month you will get the complete class and toolkit that you can download immediately on How To Reduce Stress, Anxiety, And Worry. Alright, my beautiful friends keep doing this work. It is work worth doing. Until next week, take care.

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