

When Your Child Has A Challenge You Wish They Didn't Have



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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 we doing? Today, I am bringing you one of my most highly coached on topics inside the Mom On Purpose Membership and in my private coaching. And that is when your child has a challenge you wish they didn't have. There's something about challenges when you really don't want it to be your kid's challenge, that makes it so much harder to manage your mind around. And I think that's why I end up coaching so much on it. So I'm talking about, you know, in my personal life it's like when, you know, I found out that Jack had a lot of nut allergies.

To me that is just one challenge I really did not want him to have because I grew up with a family and my sister had nut allergies and we could never have peanuts in the house. And I just have all of these negative thoughts about it. And so for me personally, I did not want my child to experience this challenge. And so I had to do a lot of work, which I'm going to share with you in this episode, about how to clean up my thinking so that I felt so much more empowered and confident and capable for supporting Jack, which I did. I did do a lot of work on it and it found to be really, really helpful. A lot of times this comes up with respect to friend challenges. So I coach a ton of women, like I'm not even thinking of a specific example.

This comes up so often on their kids having challenges with friends. And just like in the example I gave you about it, tying back to my story of my family of origin with my sister, similarly, when I'm coaching on a client's child, having a challenge with a friend, it, you know, 9.9 times out of 10 ties back to them remembering what it was like for them in school and either not feeling popular or feeling left out or any sort of experience that they had as a child and not wanting their kids to have to go through that experience.

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So that's one part of it. And then on top of that is sort of what I call like the fast forward error where they take what either is a challenge now or what isn't a challenge, but could be a challenge. Like there's signs being shown that there could be a challenge and it's projected into the future.

So for example, let's say your child is invited to a birthday party and she doesn't want to go and you've noticed some other instances where she kind of sits back and doesn't feel either included or doesn't want to include herself or participate. You're just sort of noticing these little signs. You're not really sure if it's a problem yet, but your brain is sort of making up this story that this is probably going to be a problem. She's probably going to have some social anxiety, she's probably going to struggle with friends. And you're thinking back to, you know, how it was for you and then you're projecting your suspected challenge of hers right now into the future. So now you're like, okay, she's eight, let's say you're thinking about when she's 16, when she's 20 now she has no friends in college and she, you know, drops out and her whole career and her social life is you know, a big, big catastrophe.

And so what happens is we end up taking what is either a challenge or even not yet a challenge. And I do it, I, I call it the fast forward error where it's like we are looking into the future about what might happen if this is a challenge and it's completely unhelpful. So it doesn't matter if it is a nut allergy, it doesn't matter if it is a friend challenge. The other one that I obviously coach on a lot is academic challenges. It's usually one or the other with with families and moms specifically that I'm coaching on. So if your child is struggling in school, same thing, you know, you're projecting it into the future, you're thinking back to your own challenges in school and you are kind of catastrophizing going to all or nothing thinking really forecasting that the child's career is now, going to be, going to be not what it should be.

He's not going to be good enough and is going to drop outta college or not go and you know, you're sort of spiraling and that's coming from worry, which is coming from fear. And I think, I think why this is so pervasive and

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why we don't stop it on default unless you like are a part of my world and doing thought work is because worry feels like caring. Just let that sit. Isn't that true? Doesn't it feel like we care more when we are worrying about something? It feels like you are being a responsible mom by thinking about your child's challenge and about their future and about how you might want to support them. It sounds so lovely, but it's really just fear and worry wrapped up in sort of this negative story where you're imagining the worst case scenario and playing it out over and over in your head.

And then typically my clients, I see you high achiever, you go into fix it mode and it feels urgent, you know, and your body is kind of telling you this needs to be solved now. And so you jump in, you research, you give advice, you ask, you know, your peers for advice or experts for advice. You, take action from this place of this is a problem, I need to fix it right now or else really bad things will happen. Okay, that's obviously a simplified version. Yours is going to be specific to what's going on. So for me it's like, oh my gosh, this can't be happening now. My child's going to have to sit at the table that's nut free away from all the other kids. And you know, or worse he's going to be exposed to it and it's going to be life threatening and we're not going to get it in time and this is going to impact his whole childhood.

What's a childhood without peanut butter and jelly? I mean these are real thoughts that I had. I love peanuts and peanut butter and all the things like it's one of my favorite foods and I can even talking about this, like I can tell how much bigger and more problematic I'm making it because of the story I have and my experience and my upbringing about how we couldn't have peanuts in the house because of my sister's allergy and a little bit of my brothers. And, how that was so unfair. And you know, I'm just noticing, oh yeah, this is like not even about Jack's allergy and his challenge. This is like all about me. And that's typically like the first entry point of doing thought work on a challenge that your kid has. So like if your child is having challenges socially with friends, you have to clean up your story about not being popular, about feeling left out about how bad it was that you had to go through this and this subtle, you know, terribly toxic thought that sounds

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useful, it sounds helpful, but it's actually completely unhelpful and dare I say toxic And it is the thought.

I don't want my kid to have to experience that, you know? And sometimes it's, I don't want to have my kid to have to go through what I went through. Doesn't it sound like such a lovely thought but it's so heavy. Like check in with your body. I don't want my kid to go through what I went through. It sounds like such a loving thought, but it's, it typically not always. 'cause every thought feels different for everyone. I'd have to coach you on it. But typically when I'm coaching a client, it's coming from the space of fear and of having a really unhelpful story about their experience that they haven't retold in an empowering way so that it's now projected that fear is projected onto their kids and it comes out in terms of fixing. So you have this whole story about how things were awful and that doesn't mean that's not true.

It's just that now your child who is a completely different person who's having a completely different experience, even if there are some similarities in the challenge now you are, you know, projecting your challenge onto your child and trying to fix it so that your child doesn't have to go through what you went through. It doesn't work. That's why, that's why I am saying it's so toxic because it doesn't work and it turns you into a crazy person. Why? Because it keeps you focusing on things you can't control anytime you are in someone else's business. Meaning in someone else's thoughts, feelings, and actions instead of your own. I call it like get my child mode or get my spouse mode or get my fill in the blank mode. It it, it makes you a little bit miserable and crazy because you're trying to control something you can't control.

It feels useful. It's like that worry, right? It feels useful, it feels responsible, it feels like you're caring, but the alternative is not apathy. The alternative is that you care from an empowered open, connected place, not with an agenda. So when you have an agenda, you're really thinking they shouldn't have this challenge. But the truth is, and you know, it goes back to the title of this exactly what we're talking about. When your child has a challenge you wish they didn't have, the truth is they do have this challenge and that

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is the most freeing thought that you can think. This is supposed to be my child's challenge right now. Oh, so for me, I think thoughts like Jack was always going to have peanut allergies. I just didn't know it. He was always going to have allergies, that were a little bit environmental and to cashews and some other nuts as well. And he might have others, I don't know. He was always going to have eczema. That was always going to be his journey.

Everything is happening the way that it's supposed to be happening. Now this isn't, to suggest that everything happens for a reason and that, and that I don't have any agency. In fact it's the opposite. It's looking at the past and looking at the present and just getting into full acceptance of what is. So if your child is struggling in school, let's say the last year their grades have all been C's or D's, okay? And, you are worrying and you are fixating on how to change it and solve it and fix it and all the things you are probably in a little bit of resistance and rejecting what is. So acceptance is okay, this is where my child's at right now. This is their challenge. Me thinking I don't want Jack to go through having nut allergies and having eczema is a terrible thought.

Why? Because he does have eczema and he does have allergies. Now that doesn't mean that I go to the opposite end of the spectrum and am apathetic and am not interested in solutions. Absolutely I can do that. But it starts from acceptance. If it's starting from rejection, if it's starting from resisting what is there's going to be this need to fix to control instead of wanting to help him, I would need to fix it. Just notice the energy difference between those two phrases. I want to help and I want to support my child versus I need to, I have to, they shouldn't have this challenge. It's so heavy rooted in control, rooted in kind of resisting what is. And so what you want to do is you want to get to acceptance of the current challenge. And it just sounds like being wrong about the story that you had.

Oh, I thought that none of my kids were going to have allergies. I guess I was totally wrong about that. Okay, your brain is always making up stories of what we think things are going to be like. And that's not a problem as

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long as you're willing to be wrong about it. It might be that you had a lot of friend challenges. I mean, how common is that, right? Did any of us not have any friend challenges? I mean maybe there's some of you listening, but I just think that we tend to like blow it up in our minds that catastrophizing so much so that it makes it so much worse for our kids instead of, oh, I thought none of my kids were going to experience friend challenges. I guess I was wrong. My daughter is and she is right now and it looks similar to mine and it looks different than mine.

And it's her challenge. I'm not trying to fix it. I'm going to sit with her and support her in it. It's like that energy difference between sit, don't solve, sitting with your child in their challenge is where you believe in them to solve it if they even want to. But either way you're showing them respect. You are connected, you're open. That's a very different energy than how do I get my child to make more friends and not have social anxiety and how do I fix this for them? It's like rooted in control and fix it mode and get my child mode. And it unsurprisingly makes kids want to close down anyways. It's not very fun to talk to a parent who thinks that, you know, this is the worst thing that's ever happened and they need to solve it even though it's coming from such a loving place.

And like, I get it. I hear you. I coach so many people on this and, and I've had that experience too, like I said, with the nuts, with the, with the food allergies, it's like you understand intellectually that your kids are supposed to have challenges, but it's just this one challenge you really wish they didn't have. I get it, I'm with you. It's just that when you think that thought, it creates so much resistance in your body resistance to what is okay, let's do some thought work on circumstances we can't change my friend, I cannot change the fact that Jack has had eczema up to this point in his life and has had food allergies up to this point in his life. And I say it that way intentionally because maybe some of this will be resolved. So I'm not suggesting that, we just, you know, think about these challenges as one way and that we can't make improvements or work through them.

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Absolutely. But when you work through something with your kid from this place of belief in them, from this place of confidence and love and curiosity, it's so much more effective for them and it's a way better experience for you and it maintains connection in the relationship. Your kids are intuitive. They will pick up on your worry. I can think back to my childhood so much and just think about sensing when I had a parent who was worrying a lot and how unhelpful that was because it made me want to not share the challenges, right? Because if your parents are only happy when you are happy and things are going well, that teaches kids to kind of try to hide their challenges to some extent because they see that if they share those challenges it makes mom really worried or unhappy or whatever it is. Of course they're not going to articulate that and I couldn't have at that time either.

But if you think about it in your own life, we call our friends who are the most open and easy to connect with and talk with and supportive. You know, we don't call the friend who is going to start worrying and freaking out and try to fix our problems. It's the same exact thing with kids and above and beyond that. It's really just about being the parent who you want to be and focusing on how you want to think and feel given this challenge. And I think it's okay to say, yeah, you know what? I wish they didn't have this challenge. And because they do, I'm going to do thought work on it. I'm going to change the way that I think and feel about it for my sake as a mom so I can show up less controlling, less fix-it mode, less worrisome. And for my kid's sake and for our relationship, it's way more effective if I show up for more positive emotions, way more helpful and it maintains connection in the relationship.

So let's go back to the friend example. Let's say that your child comes home and she says, I didn't have anyone to play with at recess. If you are worrying and going into fix it mode, your brain is going to jump in and offer solutions. Why don't you play with this person? Do you want me to call this person's mom? Do you want me to write a note to the teacher? Maybe you should join this club. Like you're going to just offer all of these solutions almost automatically. And if you just pause and think about the energy

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that's behind that, it's a very worrisome kind of like frantic busy energy in your body. Like, like that fear, like something's gone wrong, I need to fix this. And while it seems helpful, your child is left with the message. Mom doesn't believe I can figure this out.

She doesn't think I'm okay as I am. She doesn't think it's okay to not have anyone to play with. And instead of learning that friendship struggles are normal and solvable, your child probably ends up feeling like something is wrong with her. So, you know, please know I'm not speaking to you from my ivory tower. I have done all of this and, and I continue to make mistakes with it, and work through it because I think we learn from from our upbringing. And so what was modeled to us is what we continue. And I'm so grateful for these tools and coaching because I continue to practice them in my own life as well. And so what you want to do is just think about these situations and ask yourself how you want to show up. So for me, I want to normalize whatever challenge my child is having.

Normalize doesn't mean there aren't things we can do to change it. Normalize doesn't mean, you know, that all of a sudden we are just going to give up and not do anything about it. But it does mean that we accept it as just part of life. Like how cool is that, that your kids get to have friendship challenges or homework or school challenges under your roof and you get to be a mentor, a guide to them to show them, oh yeah, this is part of it. When you go to school every day for 15 years of your life or however many years, sometimes there are challenges with subject matters, with teachers. Sometimes your teacher doesn't like you, you're not the favorite. Sometimes homework, you know, gets lost and forgotten. And again, it doesn't mean that we just throw our hands up in the air and we don't care.

But there's a completely different energy behind, you know what I was just describing versus, oh my gosh, are you sure the teacher doesn't like you? What do you want me to do about it? I'm going to call the school. I don't think that's right. Maybe we need to switch schools or switch classrooms and, and you go into like fix it mode before you even given your child a chance to talk about it. And again, this is not me saying that you never call

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the school or you never jump in. It's the energy behind it and how quickly you do it. So for example, you might have a conversation over the course of a week with your child about their experience at school and they're struggling and you know, asking them like what do they want to do about it? Or is there a way that you think you could be helpful?

Would it be helpful even for you to have a conversation with the teacher? But even presenting it like that as a conversation piece and as a suggestion is so different than I'm calling the teacher right now. This is unacceptable, right? You, know what I'm talking about. I know what I'm talking about. And I haven't even done that before and yet I have it in me, my friends, I'm with you and I've coached on it a ton. It's just mama bear coming out and we have to calm down and remember this one thought. Are you ready for it? It's my favorite thought. My kids are supposed to have challenges. Oh yeah, I thought my kids weren't, I thought they weren't going to have this challenge. I was wrong about that. You have to be willing to be wrong if your kids are struggling socially or academically or, you know, I coach a lot of, of moms of adult children or empty nesters.

If your kids are struggling in their relationships or their marriages, oh yeah, I was wrong about this. I thought they were going to be happily married and apparently my child is going through a hard time in their marriage. I would never wish this on them. I feel sadness for them. And also this apparently is one of the challenges that they're supposed to be going through. You will feel so much more calm and grounded. When you are in worry and fix it mode. It feels fast, a little bit crazy, a little bit like your brain can't focus and it's jumping from one thing to another and you're in your mind a lot of negative thinking, spiraling worrying. When you are in acceptance, you will feel calm and grounded and connected from that place you will maintain the relationship. And that is the most important thing because this challenge is here and you don't want to damage the relationship because you are in fix it mode because you have your own thoughts about how your child shouldn't have this challenge.

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So I love, and this is another one of my favorite thoughts, just telling myself I was wrong. Oh, I thought all of my kids were going to excel academically. I was wrong about that. One of my kids has academic challenges right now. Okay, now what, who do I want to be? How can I support him? I'm not sure yet. I gotta think about it. I gotta figure it out and I gotta communicate with him and have conversations from connection, from respect. Again, it's slower, it's more grounded, it's calm. The underlying belief that you have will be belief in your kids. You don't need any evidence. To the contrary, I remember coaching a mom maybe last year on this. Her teenager was struggling academically and she said, you know, he's just kind of lazy and not disciplined and he just doesn't want to do his homework. And I said, okay, well tell me something that he's really disciplined with.

Tell me something that he's super committed to. She was like video games. And I was like, there, it's, he knows how to do commitment. He knows how to do discipline just not with school. And I'm not saying that all of a sudden that means there's not a challenge. I'm just saying that, you know, it kind of broke her brain that she could believe in her son being a disciplined, committed person. And, I think that's, that's the default, right? We look externally to our circumstances to determine how we think about our kids, right? So even if you know the teachers or someone at school or it could just be that you picked it up based on their habits or their grades suggests, oh yeah, you know, your kid isn't disciplined, your kid isn't doing well in school, your kid's falling behind whatever is said to you or whatever you interpret from their results from the circumstances.

If you take that on as identities for them, it's so much more likely that they live into that which is a worse experience for you and worse for them. That's why I teach as a core foundational component to my motherhood teachings and my parenting teachings, which is to come up with the statements that you want to believe about your kids. You are disciplined, you are strong, you are capable, you are resilient, you are kind. What do you want to think about your kids? Even if you can't immediately find evidence for it, you can just believe whatever you want. I'll tell you what I went from feeling like Jack was sort of at the effect of his life, at the effect of

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this prognosis. Is that the right word at the effect of this, you know, allergy discovery at the effect of his health and his body and really kind of in my mind, just feeling like he is a victim here, like this is happening to him is basically the story that I was telling myself.

But not in those words. You know, this isn't fair. He shouldn't have to go through this. You know, what's a life without peanut butter and jelly and childhood and you know, and then, and then the fear and fixing and worrying and what if something happens and I'm not there to administer the EpiPen, just all the things, right? It's so unhelpful. And what I got to was peace and it feels so good because I have so much more belief in Jack. I see him as capable and strong, and just like powerful. I'm like, oh no, Jack is perfectly made. This is exactly the challenge that he was supposed to encounter in his early life. And I believe in him and us to figure this out together. Nothing has gone wrong here. This is just one of the challenge that he will have that he's supposed to have that is happening that we are working through.

And those thoughts keep me connected to him and most importantly see him as not in that villain victim hero cycle. If he's the victim and the villain is, you know, his allergies and I'm playing the hero, that only makes it worse for him. It disempowers him. So with this thought work, with this coaching, with reframing it for myself, now I see him as the hero. That's the goal we want to get to. That's where we want to get to with all of our kids, is believing in them. This doesn't mean we don't support them of course, but they're the ones that are going to be best equipped to figure things out in their life. 100%. It feels so much better. It's so much more peaceful, so much more empowering and so much more connecting. So my beautiful friend, if your child has a challenge that you wish they didn't have, I get it.

And you know, Jack's baby, there are going to be more challenges and I just use that example. But my other kids have challenges I wish they didn't have. You know, it's going to continue. My kids are young, I coach on this. I used two of the main ones that come up often, which is academic challenges and social friendship challenges. There are, you know, an

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infinite number of challenges that our kids will have. Some of them will be easier for us to navigate with them. The ones that will be the hardest for us are the ones that we wish they didn't have. And it will be because we are telling ourselves a story that is unhelpful, that is resisting the reality of the challenge. And that oftentimes will tie back to something of our lives. So our family of origin or our experience in school or our experience as young adults or in marriage or whatever it is.

When we make our kids challenges mean something about us and then project that onto them, it, centers us in their challenge and it creates disconnection and then leads to people pleasing and all the other unhelpful things that come up. And that's why I love parenting and motherhood and doing this work and this container so much because it's a growth opportunity you can grow and clean up those stories so you can get to a really clean place and then support your kids from there. Alright, my beautiful friends, that's what I have for you today. Keep doing this work. It's not only going to benefit you, but it really will have a positive impact on your kids. 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.