

5 Parenting Mistakes That Quietly Weaken Connection With Your Kids (And What I Do Instead)



Full Episode Transcript

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, 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 back to the podcast. I miss you all. I have only been doing public free podcasts once per month. If you are brand new here, welcome. I'm so glad you're here. I am posting daily in stories and a few times a week over on Instagram if you want to keep up with what's going on there over @Mom.onPurpose. I also have been super busy creating more content for you that's upcoming. This year I am creating a brand new signature course called Become the Mom You Want to Be.

And I am deep diving into the frameworks that I use and have used for the last several years coaching thousands of clients. And I think you are absolutely going to love it. I have not got the wait list page up yet, but this is my reminder to myself that I will do that hopefully this week and I'll send you an email so that you can get on the wait list. You are going to want to be on the wait list, my friend, because I'm going to do like a special fun promotional offer with the big discount before I actually launch the course. And so you gotta be on the wait list in order to take advantage of that. If you're not on my email list, that is where the wait list will live. So if you don't even want to wait until the wait list is out, you can simply head on over to momonpurpose.com/subscribe.

Make sure you double opt in, and then you will, get information about the wait list. And by the next time I talk to you next month on the free public podcast, I should have the actual wait list up for you. I'm really excited about it. I have been kind of reinventing my business and just thinking about how I can create more opportunities for you to learn and consume the content that I find to be so life-changing in motherhood and just in life. And for me, I love weekly mom group coaching and I think that that serves

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its purpose, but alongside that, I, I want to have this space where you can just come and learn the frameworks in a deeper way. So inside the membership, I have monthly master classes that are about an hour. I try to keep them under an hour this month.

Side note, I was attempting to to just make it really clean and and shorter. That way it's more digestible. And of course it went an hour and a half. I just can't help myself. It's on parenting, I'm obsessed with it. It's my new connected parenting framework. But anyways, what I am trying to say here is that inside a course I can go much deeper because there are more lessons within each framework versus one masterclass where I'm really trying to get a core topic out to you in a way that is, digestible in one month. So completely different offers. I think they dovetail nicely with each other. Some of you will want to be in both, and others of you will prefer one type of learning over the other, which is why I want to have both there for you. So that is what's to come.

I think that's it. Life is amazing right now. keep saying you've heard me say it before, that I no longer have two kids and a baby. I have three kids. And I was thinking about toddlers and I was thinking about how the season is hard and and that's okay, right? I always say it's what comes after hard that determines whether hard is a bad thing or a good thing. And for me it's, it's hard and I can do hard things. It's hard and I wouldn't trade this kind of hard for any other type of hard. And, I was just thinking about how I don't even just have three kids. I kind of have three toddlers. Like yes, my oldest did just turn four, and that's technically outside of the toddler window, right? They say like age one to three. So your entire year, year one, entire year, year two your entire year, year three.

So it's three full years, those years from age one to end of your third year. So yes, my oldest did just turn four, but he just turned four. And so, you know, my experience of it is, oh yeah, I am experiencing life with three toddlers right now and it is so physical. And so it's, it's stretching me and I don't think that's a bad thing and I know that it's short and I know these years are, are precious and I appreciate them. And that's not from a way of,

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of, you know, let's just be positive about all the things. I do feel tired at the end of the day. They're all sleeping so much better, which is amazing. My friends, I never thought my second born would ever sleep through the night. And he's two and a half and he sleeps through the night.

And so I now believe that any child can sleep through the night. And my youngest one just gets up once, once in a while. He'll get up three times max, but even those other two times, usually it's just kind of like a little bit of crying here or there. And then he kind of puts himself back to sleep, which is great anyways. Sleep is life changing, even though the physical demands of having essentially three toddlers is at an all time high. I'm looking forward to spring. It's so funny, I love doing mindset work on the weather because it's, it's neutral, right? It's not as heavy as maybe doing, the thought work on your family of origin. For example, right? There's, there's not a lot of weight in it with the weather. And yet it's so interesting because this year we've had in Chicago so much more snow.

It reminds me of like a nineties winter when I grew up. There was always snow in December and just for the last handful of years, especially since we moved back from Charleston, they're, you know, most or most of the, I try to say most of the Decembers that I've been up here, you know, it's been cold of course, but not that cold and there hasn't been any snow. I kind of, I don't track it, but I just pay attention to, okay, December, do we have a lot of snow or not? And mostly we don't. And of course in January and February we'll have a couple big snowstorms and it'll get really cold, but that's it. And this winter there has been so much more snow. Like right after Jack's birthday, my youngest birthday is around Thanksgiving, like right after that we didn't even get all the leaves taken care of.

And most of our neighborhood didn't either. It's just so funny. As soon as the snow melts, you just see all these people like trying to get more leaves off their lawn. And so it has felt like, it has felt long and there's just been a lot of snow. And so trying to do thought work around it, in real time is really helpful because again, it's not heavy, there's no morality to it, and yet I find myself, you know, kind of internally complaining like, this is too long. I don't

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want to be here in this winter for so long. And, you know wishing away the weather and the season and noticing that first and separating my thoughts from the facts and getting curious about it and just deciding more deliberately what I want to think. It's sort of my three part thought work framework that I've been using so much.

So noticing, what I am thinking and understanding that I'm having thoughts and that those thoughts are optional and pulling those thoughts apart and deciding on purpose how I want to think it is an art my friend and I have spent years doing it and it continues to be the number one skill that I'm obsessed with and I truly believe is the secret to motherhood and life. Okay, anyways, I'm rambling today, I'll take it. That is not at all what we are talking about. We are talking about five parenting mistakes. These mistakes I see most often in the coaching that I do with moms. And I think they weaken the connection that you have with your kids. So the way that I teach parenting and approach parenting is connection first. It's my connected parenting framework that I'm teaching inside the membership this month. If you want to join, you can get it, it's momonpurpose.com/coaching.

And today I wanted to create a podcast that would really dovetail nicely with that. So for those of you in the membership, you are also getting this podcast as well so you can kind of pay attention to if you are making any of these mistakes. And so you can change them if you want to. So I think that most moms listening, especially those, you know, you're into podcasts, you are into personal development, you care about parenting, you know, generally speaking, that means you care about doing a good job as a parent, right? You're thoughtful, you're intentional, you are constantly probably reflecting on how you show up. Yet from time to time there's still this heaviness that is not what you expected, right? We all have this idea of what our lives are going to be like and then when our lives are different than that, oftentimes the feeling is a feeling of friction or of heaviness.

And I want you to know that you're doing nothing wrong. It is not because you've done something wrong, you, you know, missed a main point or you made a bad decision. It's none of that. It's actually all very normal. It is

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simply a result of the modern kind of world modern motherhood that we live in right now combined with the primitive brain. The primitive brain is quietly working against you. And if you're not taught this, which I wasn't growing up, and most of us are not taught this, then that becomes the default way of operating. And so very practically speaking, that means that you can be overly focused on the negative and hypercritical and always in that kind of doer energy and can connection can become something that you're having to remember to do, not the default. And that's really hard, because connection is what lasts.

Connection is what you have when your kids get older. Connection is also what fosters cooperation. And so I see these patterns over and over. I've been there myself. I do a lot of work to, you know, manage that and to show up differently to manage my brain. And I think understanding these mistakes, I want to go through five specific mistakes with you. I think we'll just give you some perspective and help you something to help give you something to go off so that you can make the change if you want. And with most of my content, especially for you, you're here, you're a busy mom. It's not about trying harder, it's not about doing more, it's about shifting where your effort goes, right? We all have a limited capacity and yes, you can expand your capacity, but also the high achieving moms I work with tend to overfill their capacity containers so that you know, they're not taking care of themselves.

And so with parenting, with motherhood, I like to think about making shifts instead of doing more. And I find that to be, to make the work so much more enjoyable and manager manageable. It's like you're already doing so much instead of doing more, let's just shift what you're doing to do it differently so it's more effective for you. Alright, let's dive in. The first mistake that I see is letting your child's happiness or your child's performance define your success as a mom, I see this so much and it will rob you of the joy of motherhood. It also is unhelpful for your child. And I think it's something that like we don't even realize is happening. And it definitely weakens the connection that you have with your kids and the connection that you have with yourself. So if you only feel like you are

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succeeding as a mom, if your kids are happy, or if your kids are performing well, whatever that means to you, right?

They're getting the grades you want them to get, they're behaving how you want them to behave. They are, you know, making the friends you want them to make, they're on the teams you want them to be on whatever it is, right? Performance just means that they're doing the things you want them to be doing and they're happy. It's typically one, two, or, you know, either or or both of those things. Happiness and performance, if you are using those to define your success as a mom, it makes you dependent on your kids for your own success. And that, gosh, it just, it makes motherhood so much more miserable because it's outside of your control. And it also creates this unfair dynamic for your kids where now they have to worry about mom's feelings with respect to how they're doing. They will then hide their discomfort or their sadness because they don't want you to worry or be sad.

Now, they won't articulate it in that way, but that has to do with attachment. And what is a much more helpful approach that will maintain the connection that you have with your kids, but also it's helpful for you so that you're not ruminating and worrying and thinking that you're failing as a mom is for you to create your own success standards for what it means to fail and what it means to succeed. And these need to be based on you as a mom, not on your kids. And I go into all of this and my Mom Like It's Your Job Framework, which is actually a completely different framework from my connected parenting framework for good reason, because I think they need to be separated. They're not the same. When you create your own standards for what it means to succeed, then you carry yourself with confidence and calm.

And that's what kids need. Let me just give you a practical example. If your child, let's say, is going through a period of really high dysregulation for whatever reason, you might not even know, but it's more than is typical for this child, and you start to make that mean that you are failing as a mom because you can't figure it out because you can't calm your child down,

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then you then become dependent on your child's emotions for your own success. This leaves you kind of focusing on what you can't control versus if you have the standard of, okay, I want to support my child, I want to validate his feelings, I want to hold boundaries. And you know, at the end of the day when I do those things and I know that I showed up as the mom I want to be, then that is a win for me.

It doesn't take away that your child is struggling and it doesn't mean that you don't care and you're not supportive, but you stop conflating your success with your child's behavior. It is so extraordinarily helpful for you as a mom because you'll step into a sense of leadership as a mom where you can support your child and love them and be with them, but you won't hang your emotions on whether they're happy or whether they are, like performing well, doing well in school. It's like you can create your own happiness and still support them when they are going through a challenge. And this, you know, typically comes from the cognitive distortion of taking things personally, right? We like to center ourselves, but also I think just, you know, as moms being mama bear, it's the default because we care so much about our kids.

But this is one of the, I think, most important shifts that you can make in your own parenting and it really impacts the rest of your life because you know, those of you with adult kids know that the way that you feel with respect to their decisions doesn't change once they are outside the home. You still have thoughts and feelings about them. And so if you have a child who is making decisions you wish they wouldn't make in their adult lives, you can still support them and love them without trying to control them, without worrying, without it making it mean you're failing as a mom from a really clean place so you can feel well and manage your thoughts and your feelings and show up as the mom who you want to be knowing that your child might be experiencing a challenge right now or going through a period of more dysregulation and you can help them, but it actually helps them more when you are not so upset and making it mean you are failing, right?

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It just puts this unnecessary added pressure on them where then they think they'll have to kind of, you know, "make you proud" based on their behavior, based on, their happiness. One of the things is kind of a tangent, but I just love to say to my kids is like, I'm so proud of you just because you're you, like you don't have to do something in order for me to be glad that I'm your mom in order for me to be happy, in order for me to be proud of you. I think it's so awesome you're doing all of these awesome things and it's awesome when you're laughing and having fun and happy. But I want you to know too, that when you're upset, when you're frustrated, like, I got you, my love for you is unaffected by that. And if you're having a struggle or a challenge, I'm in it with you.

I'm going to help you. We're going to work on it together. Doesn't mean that it's always going to be easy, but I don't want to make my success dependent on a child's performance or happiness because, it's unfair to them. It's unfair to me. So if you want the Mom Like It's Your Job framework, all you have to do is go to momonpurpose.com/job and you can actually just get that framework alone. This will give you a taste of what it's like to have masterclass to join the membership. All the things you'll get the Mom Like It's Your Job process in that specific masterclass, okay? Mistake number two is kinda not understanding that thoughts are the root cause of how you are feeling and you are never not feeling a feeling. Meaning when you are frustrated or overwhelmed or feeling worried and you don't know that your thoughts create your feelings, then the way that you will try to solve that will be through something that isn't going to address the root cause.

So most of the women who first kind of come into my world and consume my content, they will say things like, do you have a book that you can recommend? Or, I'm journaling and I'm working out and I'm doing the affirmations and I'm still just really struggling, right? They will try tactics that don't actually address the root cause of positively impacting your mental and emotional wellbeing. And it's not a knock on any of these things. I love a good journal session, love a good personal development book or podcast, love some affirmations, but that is not actually doing thought work.

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Thought work is a skill. It's not a skill you can just, you know, pick up from reading a book, you have to practice it. It would be the equivalent of wanting to learn how to ice skate and then reading a book about ice skating, it's like, no, you have to actually get on the ice and ice skate and you can't just do it once, right?

If you really want to get good at ice skating, you gotta ice skate every single week, maybe. I don't know. Every skill is different with respect to how much you need to practice, but that is what thought work is. That's why I am so partial to the Mom On Purpose membership is because like our brain thinks thousands of thoughts every single day. And so I need a place to go to coach and to listen to coaching every single week to clean out my brain every single week, even though I have studied and learned these tools and I know that thoughts create feelings and I know that, you know, the sentences that I'm thinking are just optional and then my default brain takes over and I still need to do thought work. I need to look at my thoughts, I need to pull them apart, and I need to choose better feeling thoughts.

It is both a science, the process and an art. And just like we shower every day or we go to the gym regularly, as long as we have a physical body, this is the art of working on your mental and emotional wellness as long as you have a healthy human brain. So this mistake is really thinking that like gratitude and exercise and books and affirmations are enough and they're really just not. The way that you connect with yourself. The way that you will connect better with your kids is when you are utilizing the tools of thought work. You are intentionally looking at your thoughts and creating new better feeling thoughts. It makes all the difference. If there's one thing that I would focus on if I really wanted to, just make a change in my life and the way that I show up as a mom, it would be thought work, hands down, best skill that I have.

The third mistake that I see is letting the fear of a future problem drive current present decisions. So it's, you know, your child is having a problem in school and now in your mind you're thinking they're never going to get into college and get a good job. So we project the challenge of the day into

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the future. We especially do this for our kids. And you know, this creates this sense of fear and worry and your kids pick up on that. First of all, it's not a good time for you, but second of all, it also takes you out of your leadership as a parent. If you had a boss who came in and was feeling really worried and afraid, of the challenge that you're facing, it would be very unsettling for you as an employee even if you never said anything. And so I just want you to think about that from the child's perspective when they're struggling in school or with friends and you are thinking thoughts like, oh my gosh, this was a challenge that I had with friends.

I hope they don't have this challenge. I hear this all the time from moms, right? It's like my kids are, or one of my kids is having this friend challenge that I had and I really don't want to pass that down to them and I'm really worried that this is going to affect them and they're going to have a negative experience. And even if all of that is true, you never have to think those thoughts because those thoughts create worry. And I think when you don't have the skill of thought work, you don't even realize that those are optional thoughts. You just as easily with the exact same facts could tell yourself something more helpful. A story like, you know what? I'm noticing that one of my kids is navigating this friend challenge and I went through something similar whatever challenge my kids are supposed to have.

I know that they are made for them. And yes, it was hard for me, but I believe that my child is the hero of her own life, and I'll support her through this and we will get through it. When you take yourself and your own history and stories and fears out of it, and you see your child as the leader of her life, you know that their challenges are meant for them and they will work through them. And you believe in their capacity and capabilities. And yes, the primitive brain likes to run wild with future fears for sure, but you can manage that. You can manage your brain so that you don't let the fear of something bad happening in the future drive your decisions in the present. Trusting yourself, trusting your kids is so, so important for you to stay calm and to really be connected.

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Okay? The the fourth mistake that I see is focusing on fixing behavior instead of orienting the relationship. Meaning fixing the behavior is the main focus for you. And connection becomes conditional. Now, I don't think anyone listening would ever say that their love is conditional for their kids or connection is conditional. But if I give you a practical example, you may find that to be true. So if your kids make a mistake or fail or get it all wrong or you know, they do something against the values that you have as a family and you both agree that that happened, do you punish them? Do you have a harsh tone with them? Do you kind of, take a step back, right? Then connection is becoming conditional. You're basically saying, you know, if you do whatever you did, then I take a step back from you.

I am less connected to you. Right? I like to think of punishment as if you don't obey me, bad things happen to you. And I don't want to use that type of parenting because I want my parenting to be about the relationship. Now I live in the world of real children who are developing skills and it is full of dysregulation and mistakes and the hitting and the kicking and the biting and the fighting and the all the things, right? I have three boys of course, but I still keep connection as the main foundation. And so the art of it is learning how to hold boundaries from warmth. And that is very different than focusing on correcting behavior. So if you're in fix it mode all day and you correct behavior with your kids as like the main way of being, I do think that negatively impacts the foundation of your relationship.

Just imagine if you had a spouse who was just super critical of you all of the time, right? And so you don't have that connection as the foundation. It's the same thing in parenting. You know, I do think that again, this is never intentional. It's just a product of either how we were raised or just not having the other skills to create that connection. And so you're in a lot of judgment, you're in a lot of fixing. You probably have some perfectionism tied in there, and the first step really is noticing it so that you can change it. It's seeing that connection isn't built through correction. It's not okay. When you are perfect and do all of these things, then I'm going to connect with you. It's, I'm going to connect with you. I'm going to prioritize the

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relationship. I see you. I love you just as you are than any teaching or correcting.

So connection is built through how the relationship feels before correction. This is a tool, my friends, and it can become something that you get really skilled at that I am so grateful to have done the work on. Because just as a type a firstborn daughter, former attorney, I definitely have the strength of correcting, meaning I know how to look for what's wrong, right? It's a useful skill if I am reading a legal brief. It is not useful when it's overused in my home with my kids. And so being able to turn that dial down, turn up the connection dial and connect with my kids, strengthens the foundation of a relationship and makes it a lot easier for me to hold boundaries and to correct, because I feel solid in our relationship. And so it feels very appropriate versus, you know if you're not connecting, if you're not seeing your kids, then it, it could feel like you're correcting all day long.

And so just notice that. Are you focusing more on fixing behavior versus prioritizing connection and orienting towards focusing on the relationship? Okay, the last mistake is just believing that more effort equals better parenting. I definitely fall into thinking this way on default. I think that just high achieving moms are especially prone to this because we always want to do more and learn more and try harder. And I just love to remembering, like doing nothing is also a great parenting strategy. Just being with your kids, resting relaxing, closing that nervous system loop, being with yourself, just telling yourself that more effort doesn't mean better parenting could really allow you to do less. I think that, you know, there, there's some people out there, maybe you're one of them who needs to learn how to do more and to calendar and to get out there and achieve goals.

But for myself and for I think a lot of my clients, it's the opposite. It's, we know how to get things done and we're doing all of the things. And for us, the real work is actually not to do more, but to shift what we're doing. So it's just more meaningful and intentional and just more of the life that we want to create. So we already use the hours in the day that we have, but is there a way that we want to use them that's more intentional. It's not filling your

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time with more to-dos. It's instead thinking, okay, how do I want to use this time? And then I think parenting is something that you can think about in a more intentional way. If you want to connect with your kids more, it might actually mean doing less. 'cause connection is about I see you, I hear you, it's validation.

It's also respect. It is loving your kids exactly as they are. I think that if nothing else, parenting and being a mom has taught me that it's all about leadership and relationships. And that's just so interesting because I could just as easily say the same thing about business. And that is truly why I love goals and I love growth journeys because so often, including motherhood and parenting, it requires so much of you to become that next version of yourself, to be the mom who you want to be. So my beautiful friends connection, connection is the foundation. And if you are falling into any of these mistakes, I think you can start by noticing them and then doing some self coaching or getting coached on them so that you can shift into creating more of what you want, which is genuinely what all of this work is all about. Keep doing the work, my friends. It will change your life. Until next month, take care.