

How I Use Leadership In Motherhood



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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 were 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. How are we doing today? I'm really happy to be here with you. I have had something on my heart about motherhood and about leadership and about how I am embodying so much more of leadership skills and tools and feelings and actions in how I show up as a mom. And I have been talking a little bit about this inside the membership. I think I'm going to do a masterclass on it in 2027, but I wanted to do a podcast on it to start because I really just find that it's been such a positive impact on the way that I show up as a mom.

And I don't have everything flushed out about how to teach it because those of you who are educators understand that to know something and to learn something yourself and to do that thing is very different than being able to teach it. And so I've been teaching and coaching for many, many years, almost a decade. And, you know, I know well now that, it takes some time to really flesh out the way that you want to teach something. So I'm really sitting with that and I'm giving you that kind of as a, as a preface to, this conversation because it might come off more as a conversation than, you know, me teaching you some sort of like framework. But I hope nonetheless, it's just as valuable because, it's been so valuable to me. I just, you know, I just can't hold it in. So I want to talk with you about it.

First I'm going to talk with you about kind of what I've been experiencing personally and how that has showed up for me in a positive way as a mom and for my kids, presumably and then I'll kind of, kind of explore it more and, and break it down in terms of what I think is happening and how I think you can start to apply this. So, I have just been experiencing this nudge to hold myself accountable to a higher standard. Okay? Now, when we hear in the universe of social media and content that high achievers and

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perfectionists and, you know, the kind of typical firstborn or the type A'er, they are perfectionists in a negative way. And we typically see a lot of content about that. And it's all about, kind of doing work on that so that you can love yourself and enjoy your life more and feel more comfortable taking a nap and all of those things.

And that is work to do. So I have already done that work. I feel very comfortable doing nothing and taking a nap and letting the laundry sit. Okay? My type A self is, is very proud of me because I sort of can toggle, you know, intentionally and, you know, I'll say even quickly between the two, between my ambitious side and my slow, motherhood side. So that's not what I'm talking about. What I'm not saying is if you haven't done that work and you're already someone who is a high achiever, I'm not talking about you raising your standards even more so you feel even more exhausted or not good enough. What I'm talking about here is my internal nudge to raise my standards for myself because I've already done that work. So this is not coming from lack. Perfectionism comes from lack.

It comes from, in order to be a good enough mom, I need to throw the most exceptional birthday party ever. And if I don't, then something's wrong with me. Perfectionism is, you know, I'm not good enough unless I do these things. It's, it's really sort of like chasing your goodness based on external outcomes. That is not at all what I recommend, what I teach, what I suggest. In fact, I do think there's work to be done to unravel all of that so that you can work on having a better relationship with yourself, having a sense of self-worth and self-confidence and ease and play and joy. And once you've done that, then it's like, okay, now what? If you are ambitious and you are a high achiever like me, that part of you still lives in you and you want to foster that.

I mean, seeing my three boys and how different they are in terms of internal motivation and how, you know, one of them is much more just ambitious and passionate and strong-willed and, you know, has that innate sense of enjoying competition compared to maybe, you know, the others, like that has given me such a reflection back to myself to really honor and acknowledge that part of me and not to be afraid of that. I think if you

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overwork, right? There was a time where I did overwork and the thought of working less felt like terror, right? And I got my sense of joy and safety out of productivity. So very simple example is like, I could never imagine going on a walk and not listening to a podcast or not, you know, consuming an audiobook or a course that I'm taking just to go on a walk and like enjoy the environment and myself just felt like, well, that's kind of a waste of time, right?

I find a lot of safety in having my laptop open. So after having done a lot of work on that, what I am left with and what I know that many of you are likely experiencing is that you do have a sense of self-worth, of self-trust, of self-love, and you want to embrace some version of a slower motherhood, but you also have this sense of ambition, however that manifests for you. I'm not talking about necessarily in a career or in a job, but you are innately someone who enjoys working or creating or having high standards or producing in some way. This really is independent at all from a career. It could be that you work in the home, you work out of the home, you're a brain surgeon, you are a stay at home mom, you are someone who just has this sense innately in you of ambition, of competition, of drive.

And like letting that part of you be an asset and be something that flourishes in motherhood, I think is an opportunity you may not see. So this is kind of still the intro setting the stage for you. I'm going to talk here in a second about how I really apply this, but I think it's really important to see where I'm specifically coming from. I'm not coming from, okay, you're a perfectionist who now needs to add something more to your plate. I'm coming from the perspective of you are a high achiever, you've done the work to really take a look at what your purpose is, what your priorities are, how you want to live your life, things are going well. Of course there are challenges, right? Maybe you're managing your mind with the tools from Mom On Purpose, the thought work tools, and that's really awesome. And I want to add another tool here into your tool belt of how you can think about leadership and motherhood simultaneously.

How I specifically, that's what I'm talking about today, lead myself as a mom. But it's, it's even more than self-leadership because it is broader. It is

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leadership in terms of my kids as well. A lot of it's self-leadership, but it's also just general leadership too. So this has been super fun for me and it is an expression of my ambition. That's what I want to kind of offer to you here. This is not another thing to add to your plate. This is not something you have to do. For me, it's really been a way for me to have a more positive attitude, for me to feel more confident holding boundaries and validating feelings, for me to lean in to the chaos and the messes, for me to, be less frustrated and less reactive, for me to, you know, lead the day and move things along, but not from a place of overwhelm or frustration or like there's no end to this, but from a place of, yeah, like there's no end to this.

Let's go. What kind of leader am I going to be today? And I find myself internally pushing myself. I don't even like that phrase. If that is a phrase that triggers you or feels uncomfortable for you, swap it out. But it's the first thing that came to me because really throughout the day, I am pushing myself sometimes. When we have little kids, and it doesn't really matter their age, right? But I'm going to speak to little kids because that's what I have, but it could be big kids just as well, right? They're, they're kids in your home and they're not doing what you want them to be doing. Of course not, because they're human beings with God-given agency and they're supposed to be acting however they're acting. And it's your job to lead that. That is not the most comfortable experience, right? Because they're about to color on the wall.

They're about to smash a car on their brother's head. They're about to throw their water bottle for the third time today. They're about to, feel like their life is ending because you said it's bath time. They're about to ask for the most unreasonable thing for them to do this weekend as a teenager that makes no sense and that they know that even though they're, you know, dead set on it. And leadership is about you, like, expecting that. And that's why I say pushing because there is some tension and they're supposed to be, right? They're supposed to push boundaries and, and do whatever they are doing. That does not mean permissive parenting at all. That means it's an opportunity for leadership. And so that's the perspective

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that I'm embodying. And how I've just been thinking about it is this is an opportunity for me to lead every single day.

I'm like, what kind of leader do I want to be? How do I want to show up for my kids? It's my job to have a good attitude. Let's move things along. I noticed that, you know, especially at the end of summer, I mean, we're past that now, we're into the school year, but for us, there was this period, it was, it was like most of August, right after my middle son's birthday, but before school started, there was like a month where it felt really slow. And a lot of this started to develop during that time where I wanted to lead better because yes, I am all for boredom and letting kids feel bored, but I think that that messaging is a lot for, people who just are so far on the other end of the spectrum where there's no boredom at all being allowed.

Whereas I was finding, okay, this is most of our days now are boredom, and I want to just create more rhythms. I want to move things along. I created this summer dailies list inside the Mom On Purpose Membership and I've really held onto that as like, a dailies list, a motherhood dailies list that I want to pull from. And it has shifted my mind from clock watching to productivity. I also just coached on this inside the Mom On Purpose Membership where I was talking about the difference between clock watching and productivity. It's the yin, yin and the yang. You cannot be clock watching, drudging through the day and simultaneously be productive. It's impossible because productive is about what you're producing. Productivity is innately like this intentional focus on the outcome. It's not on like busying and it's not on time spent. So I can be working or I can be producing a podcast.

I can be, you know, playing with my kids or we can be building a castle. Now, if you feel content and present when you're just playing with your kids, I'm not suggesting that you need to have sort of this like outcome based, approach to your days or even your time with your kids. I'm talking about for the moments where, you know, you might not even say it out loud, but internally you're just like, okay, how, how long have I been doing this? Or this feels a little bored or my kids are, are getting overly bored or like there's, there's this sense of like, what are we doing right now? Like we just

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gotta make it to bedtime. We just gotta make it through the day. And that is something that I want you to take as a sign that you can use what I'm teaching here and to create more leadership for yourself to just think more about how you can lead, not so that they feel differently.

Like I promise you my friends, this approach has helped me so much and I see my kids differently, but they're still the same, right? Now, there are some, I think, spillover benefits for them, but I hesitate to encourage you to ever do something because you want a specific outcome for your kids because that just tells me that you're kind of, entangling your emotions with your kids. So if you're thinking, okay, if I do this, then my kids will be better behaved and then, you know, they won't have as many outbursts. Well, the only reason that you want them to have fewer outbursts is because you think that your experience somehow would be better. Like what would you be thinking and feeling if they had fewer meltdowns and outbursts, right? You would be thinking, okay, like my kid is regulated, my kid is, you know, responding in an age appropriate way, like my kid's doing well.

Whatever your thoughts would be would create your feelings. When you're trying to do something like what I'm teaching now about leadership in order to change your kid's experience, you're only ever doing that because your experience would be different based on theirs, which means that you would change their, your thoughts and feelings based on how they're thinking and feeling. And that's just kind of like a, little bit of a dangerous place to be in because then you're emotionally dependent on them. It's not fair to them, it's not fair to you. That's a topic for a different day. My point though is that to just check your reason. So for me, this leadership and motherhood concept and idea and really philosophy came about because it was more aligned with who I want to be. Now, I don't pretend that there is not a positive impact on my kids.

I think there absolutely is, but it's not measurable. It's not something that I'm tracking. It's not something that I necessarily am doing it for because, you know, we all know kids from other families, from our own family, from just being alive in the world that have had wonderful parents and, you know, end up making different decisions for their lives or getting into trouble

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or having a much harder life. And that's not to say that parenting doesn't impact our kids, of course it does. And also, we just want to be careful for, how we approach showing up as the mom who we want to be. We want to make it more about because this is just who I want to be and less about, okay, I'm trying to control my kids' outcomes, you know, and how they turn out because that's just kind of like a slippery slope of dependency that will really leave you feeling miserable, disempowered, controlling, all those things.

So I'm doing this for myself and yes, there are some benefits for my kids, of course. So for me, it is all about I'm leading myself. What kind of attitude do I want to have today? If I'm going to be a 40-year-old woman who is around three small children all day and I am ambitious and I'm competitive and I am driven and I also know how to rest and play and enjoy myself, there are going to be moments throughout the day where I'm stumped, where, I feel like, you know, this is harder than it should be, where I am struggling. And so I need to be prepared for that and have mindsets ready to go so that I can turn it around, right? You can have difficult, challenging moments and you can still have great days. I really just love the idea of leadership because it's about you taking responsibility for your thoughts, for your feelings, for your actions, for your reactions.

That is self-leadership. So often in motherhood, we have these expectations for our kids that they can't meet and we try to control them to meet them. And I always say, have higher expectations for yourself and lower expectations for your kids. Now, I'm not saying don't have rules. I'm not saying hold boundaries. I am saying that, but when you think they should be listening more, they shouldn't be doing this, when you have all these shoulds on them, it creates a lot of frustration like, oh, okay, this is what they're doing today. They're going to push boundaries. All right. I'm the, I'm the mom for the job, right? Like I, I got this. There's this sense of empowerment. There's this sense of joy. There's this sense of play. But, the, really, there's this sense of leadership. I feel like I am a leader. There's this internal mindset of, I've got this.

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I'm the adult. I can handle what's happening here. Not because I always know the answer, but because I'm willing to lead through it and figure it out. And it's not going to be perfect. And sometimes I'm going to snap or react and I'm going to need to repair, right? And, you know, I'm not saying that every single moment I feel this way, but I can say that a large majority of the time I do feel this way. And it's been just so helpful for, like, being the mom who I want to be. There's this sense of groundedness in my own, like, authority as a leader in my family. It's not proving I'm in charge. It's definitely not that. It's not, having power over my kids. It's not trying to control. I know whenever I fall into that energy or taking those actions, it leads to power struggles.

So if you think that you are leading, but you find yourself often in power struggles, there's a small, simple shift that I can help you with in the membership where you need to shift out of that controlling energy because a really good leader, like if you think of a company or even politically, right, any environment where there's a really good leader, you, you have power with, you have connection to. The leader's still making decisions, the leader's still moving things along, but the leader respects other people. There, not this power struggle. There's not this control. And so that is not leadership. It's like a misapplication of leadership. And I have been there. I think being on the other side of that and being aware of that, has been really helpful for me to notice it and be able to, just like get out of that, that, that energy, those actions so that I can hold a boundary, so that I can move things along, so that I can be who I want to be, without the control.

So let's just go with an example. Let's say that, it's time for dinner. I'm going to start making dinner and my kids want to go play in the basement like a power struggle would be, you know, kids saying like, "Let's go in the basement." And they're all kind of excited about it and they all go run over to the basement door. And I say, "Nope, we're making dinner right now." And they say, "No, we're going in basement." And I say, "Nope, we're making dinner right now. I'm not going in the basement." All of a sudden, we are in a power struggle. They want to do one thing, I want to do another thing, okay? When they're pushing for one thing and I push for another thing, I always think of like a tug of war. And as long as you are pulling on

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one side of the rope and they're pulling on the other side of the rope, now we have a battle, a power struggle.

And you're the mom. Even with older kids, as long as they live in your home, you can pull that rope so hard that you will win. But what's the cost? The cost is fracture in the relationship always. Now, I'm not saying I'm perfect at this. Please do not use this against yourself. We're not supposed to be perfect. That's why there is repair. But I want you to just notice what that looks like because there's a difference between control and leadership. So in that exact example, my kids want to run over to the basement and start playing and they're all excited about it and I know that it's time for me to start dinner. I have so many different options if I'm leading. I might say, "You know what? I love that you want to go in the basement. That sounds really fun. I can open the basement door.

You guys can get started playing. I am going to, make dinner upstairs and I can join you after." Or if I really don't want to join them, I can say, "I love that you want to go in the basement. I love playing in the basement too, and it's time for me to start, cooking, you know, the chicken and vegetables and pasta and who wants to help me?" Okay? And if whatever. It's not necessarily about the actions and the words. And I know we all love a good parenting script and we hate hearing like, "Well, it's about energetics or it's about like the feelings underneath." But I want you to just slow down your thoughts and feelings and just start to notice how your tone is with your kids because you can say the exact same thing and have a tone that's rooted in control and power over versus a tone that is embodied leadership and power with.

And I hear you, I see you, I know that's what you want. I love you and it's a no right now. This is what we're doing instead. I hold boundaries and say no to my kids a lot, okay? Now I try to say yes and get into their world. And sometimes I'll even go, you know what? Like in my mind in that example, like is there a downside to playing for 10 minutes or 15 minutes in the basement and then doing dinner in 15 minutes? Like sometimes I'll do that. Like I don't ever want my kids to feel like I'm just arbitrarily being, this dictator who doesn't value their thoughts and their opinions. And also, right,

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we're going to cook dinner because I know that if I don't cook dinner and it doesn't have time to cool, all of a sudden they're hangry and no one wants hangry kids.

You know that my friends, right? And so oftentimes in that situation, I am going to start dinner on the early side. And so whatever they want to do when it's dinner time, I'm going to offer to them. They can help me. I'm going to offer that they can do self-play. I'm going to offer alternatives. And I'm going to say, essentially, mommy's cooking dinner for our family. This is something we do as a family together. You're more than welcome to contribute. I would love for us to make meal together. And if not, totally fine, you can go play maybe the basement's okay, maybe it's not, depends on the day. And, you know, Jack's almost to the age where they can all go down there, but not quite yet unsupervised. And so, there are definitely different approaches, and that's why looking at your thoughts and feelings first is so important because if I'm thinking, I'm leading this family, we're on the same team, I love my kids, there's no rope, there's no battle, I'm dropping that rope, then I get creative with my solutions.

I add in play. I add in connection. You can be very connected and have a warm tone when you're saying no and holding a boundary. I know that most of us were not raised this way and it was just a product of the generation. So any no was very cold and firm and disconnected. But if you keep the firm part and you add in warmth and love and connection, it's like the best parenting tool that I can offer to you because the relationship stays intact even if it's a no. I teach this masterclass in the membership called How to Disagree Better and maybe that's not what it's called actually. It's called something else, but that's a big section in there. And I love it so much and I'm often referring to it because we have been taught that disagreement is threatening, right? That's how the primitive brain views it.

If you disagree on values, and you know this, right, family, this is why the holidays and family gatherings are so challenging. If you have different worldviews or political views or religion, like it can create separation in the family and that feels so life threatening to your brain. Your brain feels safer and creates safety and sameness. And so if you train your brain to

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understand there's nothing life threatening about this and we can disagree better, then you will have higher quality relationships and make more space for people with differing opinions. Again, a topic for a different day, kind of a tangent, but I think it's worthwhile to mention here because there's that overlap. Like if you're doing that in your adult relationships, of course you would be doing that with your kids. It is totally fine for my kids to want whatever they want. Wanting is not the same as getting.

My kids want to eat ice cream for breakfast. They want to play when it's time for me to cook dinner. They don't want to go to school. They, you know, whatever. I want them to keep wanting and wanting is not the same as getting. And I tell them that and I tell them it is so hard to not get what you want. It's still hard for mommy. I tell them that. It's, it's so hard for me not, not get what I want. I am passionate and driven and ambitious and one of my mindsets is like I will find a way to get what I want and that serves me so well. But when you're a kid and you have that and you want to do things that are not good for your health or wellbeing or, just the day, the family, it's so hard to understand and I express that to them.

But that's so loving and warm and I feel so proud of how I show up in those moments. But I want you to know, my kids aren't like, "Great job, mom." They're like, "No, I really want this thing." But I feel like I'm showing up as the mom who I want to be. And I know you know you have that capacity in you. It really is just a skill. And it's so interesting because until you have that shift internally where you feel differently and you feel more internally motivated to show up and lead and have the attitude you want to have and get more comfortable with holding boundaries, like it is just going to be information that you're like trying to work on, which is, is a good start, right? But keep going. Don't think that there's something wrong with you or that you just can't get it or like maybe that works for me and not for you.

It's just a skillset that you can keep practicing. So the more that you're managing your thoughts and your feelings and the more that you like have this as an intention and a focus and a mindset, the more you'll be getting your reps in and practicing because a lot of it is about personal responsibility, looking at what I can control, taking ownership of how I show

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up you know, I see it's three o'clock or something and that's sort of the start of the decline of everyone's, you know, prefrontal being on board. And so it's, it's the pre-witching hour to the witching hour. And I know that I need to move things along and if I have different things and it, it's really stretched my creativity, right? Because it's fun to be creative in my business. You know what is not super energizing and fun for me is to come up with ideas for different types of play.

But I've really challenged myself to do that and I feel so much more motivated about it and it makes such a difference. It's 3PM. Okay, let me get out the like Halloween crafts that we haven't done yet and let me put them in a different area for us to do. Or let me get out this. And like my kids love it. And please don't hear this and think like now all of a sudden you have to be their event coordinator or their party planner or, again, it's not anything you have to do. It's an embodied leadership where you are deciding how you want to show up as a mom. And I, I just want you to know, I have a lot of resistance in the moment to all of this, but I know that at the end of the day, I'm going to be so dang proud of how I showed up.

And in the moment, it, it makes things better. It really does for me and my experience, even though right before it feels a little bit challenging. Like it would be easier to just mosey around the house and we're all sort of just playing with whatever and not take the extra energy and the extra effort to bring something new out and figure it out and offer this type of play. And, you know, I've really just been like, okay, what else can we do that's different and getting all the cushions off the couch and jumping on them or, doing like indoor camp outs, like really stretching myself to just lead and have fun. One of the mindsets that I have for my weight loss clients and that I use to lose 50 pounds, in four months after having Jack was that every bite counts and I'm losing weight today.

And I've really taken, I've really taken that philosophy and tried to apply it to so many other areas of my life. And it works extraordinarily well, like in my business and then also in motherhood. And so when I think every moment counts and I'm creating their childhood today, it's a completely different energy for me. And I show up more as the mom I want to be. Not from a

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place of pressure or obligation, but from a place of, oh, if I really think it's just an ordinary Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday and it doesn't really matter, like compounded, that's most of their childhood, that's most of their life are just the ordinary days. And so instead, if I flip it, right, it's the same thing with weight loss. It's like if you just think, oh, it's just one bite, it doesn't matter. That's exactly why you're not at your goal weight.

And so if you do the opposite, you will lose weight so quickly. And I've really found that that mindset along with the others that I've sprinkled in here about connection with and warm and firm and being on the same team and holding myself accountable to having a good attitude and not being reactive, really helped me show up and lead through motherhood. And I do think that they get like a different experience of their childhood. But again, not doing it necessarily for them to have a certain outcome because I do believe that my kids are supposed to have the challenges that they are meant to have, which means that some of them might not like what we're doing or one of them might, you know, just be in a season of whining more or being more contrarian. One of my boys is definitely more contrarian. And, just allowing space for that and not making it mean something about me because it would be easy to go into resentment.

Like I do so much for you kind of energy and this is not what that's about. This is about, okay, this is the kind of mom I want to be because every moment does count. This is their childhood. And, it doesn't mean I'm supposed to be perfect. I often say I'm not supposed to be a robot AI mom. They are supposed to have me as their mom. I am the mom who was chosen for them, a human mom, a mom who makes mistakes, a mom who fails and gets it all wrong. And I'm the one for the job. And so how do I want to show up and lead through it? All right, my beautiful friends, come inside the Mom On Purpose Membership so I can coach you on this momonpurpose.com/coaching. It's kind of life changing. I'll talk with you next week. Take care.