

Mom On Purpose Foundations: Negative Thoughts



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With Your Host

Natalie Bacon

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Welcome to Mom On Purpose, where it's all about helping moms overcome challenges and live their best lives. My hope is by being here, you are more inspired to become the mom you are made to be. I'm Natalie, your host, a wife, 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 friend. Welcome to the foundational episode about negative thoughts. Oh my goodness, I used to have so many negative thoughts in various areas of my life. So I can think back to before I was married and really wanting to get married and the thoughts that I had about myself, about men, about the men I dated, about whether it was likely for me to get married were all so negative. I mean, I really thought it was impossible for me. I thought something was wrong with me or that I was damaged.

I thought I dated men who were emotionally unavailable. All of the thoughts that I had were mostly negative. And I can think back to when that really changed for me and it was through kind of working with a coach and a lot of the tools I'm going to share with you here. But I just want you to know that if you find yourself having a lot of negative thoughts in a specific area of your life, it is 100% normal because the brain is wired for survival. So it's literally your brain's job to just scan for problems all day long to solve them, to make sure that you are safe and secure. So you know, a little bit less of a dramatic example is my brain when it thinks about time and going into time scarcity, like never having enough time, or I teach and coach on weight loss and I have done so much work on this for myself to really get into a much more sufficient and abundant mindset around body image.

How many of us grew up with such negative thoughts about our bodies and about what bodies are supposed to look like? And it's nothing that you are doing wrong, but it is something that you probably want to pay attention to and change because of the negative impact that negative thoughts have on your life because the brain is wired to look for the negative. Typically, research suggests that there's a four to one negativity bias. So your brain is going to pay attention to the negative at a rate of four to one. So this means

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that for every negative thought your brain has, you really need to override it with four equal weighted positive thoughts. I like to think of this as needing to brainwash yourself to be more positive. Not in a delusional way, but in a really true way for you, in a way that you believe.

But I just share that with you because I want you to know it won't happen on default because your brain is wired for survival. It is not wired for happiness. And 9.9 times out of 10, the problem that your brain is focusing on in our modern everyday lives is not life or death. So the survival is not at stake when you're scrolling social media and your brain is kind of going to that comparison trap or when you are in fight or flight because your kids are, you know, overwhelming you or whatever it is. All of those emotions that we experience in our normal everyday lives come from that part of the brain that is just trying to make sure you survive. And so there's nothing wrong with you if you're having negative thoughts, you just have a normal healthy human brain. To be clear, the work that we do in the Mom On Purpose community and on this podcast is with respect to healthy human brains.

So if you think that you need medical or clinical treatment that is kind of outside the scope of this, and I definitely recommend seeing a psychiatrist or a psychologist or someone who can help you with kind of that spectrum of things. But for everyone else who is listening, who has those thoughts where you're thinking, gosh, I just feel negative, I'm thinking all of these negative thoughts and I know it's not serving me and I'm not sure what to do about it, I want you to know that it is so normal and normalizing it is a really important part of the process. Most of my clients come to me and they say, okay, I have these negative thoughts, let's change them. And there's sort of this urgency and rush to change them. And of course anytime that we are in a rush to change anything, it's coming from the false belief that we think that over there is better.

We think that by changing our thoughts, we will be somehow better and more worthy. And this is just a little bit of scarcity. So kind of a side note, but I want to mention it here, that there is no rush and the more you

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normalize having negative thoughts, the more likely you'll be to take a look at those negative thoughts with curiosity. Curiosity is your best friend when it comes to negative thoughts because you can approach your own brain with love and compassion and non-judgment. It's, huh, I wonder what that's about versus, oh no, I'm about to negative spiral and then being mad at yourself and making it so much worse. I not only have had negative thoughts in the past with respect to dating or not having enough time or my body image, I also had negative thoughts about money before I found any of this work and really kind of transitioned from being a lawyer with all of my student loan debt.

For those of you who have been around for a while, you remember I used to talk a lot about that and I have completely changed my mindset around money and I don't really need to do a lot of work on my mindset with respect to money anymore. And that doesn't mean I don't have negative thoughts. I definitely have negative thoughts as I did get married and became a mom, I had a new set of circumstances to do this work towards. And what has been so amazing is that I've been able to do it so much more quickly. So it's not that I am able to completely get rid of that human part of my brain, which that's not the goal. It's not trying to remove the negative thoughts entirely, it's just trying to redirect and focus on more empowering thoughts. So I just want you to know I am human and I have negative thoughts too.

Some of my negative thoughts in this stage of life sound like this. Oh, this isn't fair. This shouldn't be so hard. I should have more help. Why can't I figure this out? I wish I wasn't so tired. I am not going to be able to do this. Okay, it's just a handful of what it's like to be inside my brain on default. Now I don't let those negative thoughts take over. So you may be hearing that and thinking, oh my gosh, Natalie, I have those same thoughts too. Well, there's a difference between having those thoughts and doing what I call letting them be in the driver's seat versus putting them in the backseat. So I've become so much better at finding my negative thoughts, noticing them and putting them in the backseat, meaning I talk back to my brain more than I listen to it. So for example, if I'm thinking a thought like I'm not

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going to be able to figure this out, I really don't let that be the main thought that leads me towards my actions.

I don't over examine that thought. I don't wonder where that thought came from. I'm not focused on that thought because the more you focus on your negative thoughts, the bigger they become. This is why if you just journal about your problems, you can make them a lot worse. What you focus on expands. So your brain will focus on whatever you direct it to focus on. This is why I love the work we do in the membership and all of the journaling tools that I offer to you there, like the journaling course because it helps you direct your brain in a much more helpful, useful, and positive way. So I decide to think differently and focus on something else, focusing on a thought that is more helpful for me, like, well, maybe I'm going to try anyways. Do you see how that is closely related to the thought but much more empowering?

So the first thought was, I'm not going to be able to figure this out. It feels so stuck, so negative, so disempowered, and it feels so true. But there are so many other true thoughts that are much more helpful, like, well maybe, but I'm going to try anyways. I love that. To me, that feels so much more motivating and that that's what I mean by coming up with these new intentional thoughts that then go in the driver's seat. There's still that other thought that's like in the backseat, like maybe I won't figure this out. And in the driver's seat though, where I'm going to take action from is the main thought that I'm choosing. It's like that saying, you may have heard me say before, you're not responsible for your first thought, but you are responsible for what you think next, that second thought. So your brain is always going to have these first thoughts that are survival based, that are fear-based, that are maybe true but not that helpful. And the work is to come up with more helpful, positive, empowering thoughts that you make stronger and more believable.

Often we think that thoughts happen to us and it sort of feels that way, but when you create new thoughts, you have to practice them. So if you think about, you know, learning a new exercise routine or learning how to do a

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yoga pose or a handstand or something like that, it's one thing to watch the video of it. It's an entirely different thing to do it. So I can watch a video on how to do a handstand and I can think I know it intellectually and I do know it intellectually, but it's going to take me maybe 30 days, maybe 60 days, maybe 90 days of practicing handstands daily before my body memorizes it. And it's not because there's something I don't know, it's just because I haven't made it a habit yet. My body, my muscles, the movement isn't a habit. And so it requires practice.

It doesn't require knowing more. And that's what it's like with doing thought work. It's not that you necessarily need to know something new and different and consume more, but you do need to practice those next believable thoughts more. It's so important to practice, practice, practice your thoughts, particularly as you grow, as your circumstances change. So I coach a wide variety of women and moms inside the Mom On Purpose membership with kids of all ages. And coaching becomes really important during transitions. So whether you're transitioning to becoming a mom, transitioning from kids, being at home, to in school, transitioning from, you know, um, early childhood to later schooling to junior high to high school, that transition from high school to college, the empty nester transition, all of these transitions are new circumstances where your brain is going to go to look for the negative focus on what's not working because of that survival part of the brain that's focusing on the negative.

So it's going to look for problems to solve even when there aren't problems and it's going to create unhelpful thoughts that leave you feeling stuck, defeated, overwhelmed, or kind of any handful of negative emotions that aren't useful. And how you can coach yourself and use coaching to help you is by brain management. Using brain management. And these tools will really help you get unstuck, reduce those negative thoughts so that you can think more deliberately and create the life experience you want. So for example, one of my clients right now, she's an empty nester and her kids are all in college and she finds herself worrying a lot. That is so normal, but it's unnecessary because it's not useful. You can show up as a really

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empowered mom whose kids have all left the home and minimize that worry, put them worry in the backseat, but that won't happen on default.

That's only going to happen with brain management and coming up with new next believable thoughts that you practice. So what to do about negative thoughts, how do you get rid of them? Well, instead of trying to get rid of them, I want to offer you some tools that will help you put them in the backseat. So you're not going to be mad when they come up. You're just going to have this visual of naming it and saying, oh, that is a thought, a negative thought that I don't want to focus on that I don't want to be in the driver's seat anymore. I'm going to put it in the backseat. And I think there are a handful of ways that you can do this. I'm going to name them individually and then go into a little bit more detail.

So number one is changing your mind, doing the actual mindset work. Number two is changing your environment. Number three is talking to someone else. Number four is changing your physiology, and number five is starting a proactive intentional practice daily. So let's talk about each of these. Number one is changing your mind. And I already went into some detail about this. It's getting awareness of your current thought, observing it with non-judgment. You're not mad, you have the thought, you notice the thought, you name it, and then you ask yourself, is this thought helpful for me? Often we struggle with mindset work because we think our negative thoughts are facts.

My clients will tell me, Natalie, you don't understand my mother-in-law is so difficult. And while that may be true, thinking about your mother-in-law in that way isn't helpful if it's creating a lot of resentment and frustration for you. So if the answer to the question is, is this thought helpful for me? If the answer is no, the next step is to choose a next best believable thought. This is where you're going to want to go from that negative thought to a more positive thought. The way I teach this tool is just with NBT next believable thought. It has to be believable to you. So we're not going to go to the thought that Mother-in-law is the best mother-in-law ever. She's amazing, she's lovely, she's easy. Those thoughts don't feel true for you.

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But there are other thoughts that will feel true for you and this is why it's important for you to do your own thought work because you know your mother-in-law best.

And so you are going to come up with a next believable thought that feels more helpful for you and still feels true given who she is and who you are. So your next best believable thought might be something like, my mother-in-law is different than me and that's okay. Something like that, right? Test and find out what thoughts feel more helpful to you. The next step is to practice your new thoughts. Practice, practice, practice my friend. Write 'em down, put it on your phone. Um, write it on your mirror. However you need to do it. Just think of yourself as practicing the handstand. You know what the new next believable thought needs to be, but now you need to memorize it and redirect your brain. So that that's the thought in the driver's seat. And the other thought that primitive brain thought is in the backseat.

That's the main process for becoming aware of and identifying new thoughts so that you can get rid of, reduce, minimize those negative thoughts. But there are a few other ways that you can really work on changing your mindset for helping you with negative thoughts. That is to come up with mantras, like little mantras that help you feel so much better and redirect that focus. They could be as simple as, I'm not going to entertain that brain. I am stopping the spiral. Or nope, not today, brain not focusing on the negative. Another mantra that I really love. There can be hard moments in great days. So come up with mantras as a way to minimize those negative thoughts and redirect your focus. The next way is to practice talking more positively to yourself. Give yourself the validation you deserve. In motherhood especially, we are not validated externally in the work environment.

Often we are, we get praise for doing a good job. We don't get that praise in motherhood. And so more than ever it's important for you to give yourself that praise for you to give yourself that self validation instead of looking for it externally. And I really do mean it. Talk to yourself in the mirror, look at

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yourself and say, I'm doing a great job. I'm a human mom and I make mistakes and that's okay. I love me. I'm a really great mom, or whatever it is. You can get even more specific. I handled that tantrum amazingly well today. I'm so impressed with myself. Talk positively to yourself just like you would talk positively to your kids. So often we talk so positively to our kids and then we neglect ourselves.

The next point that I want to make with respect to changing your mind is just that you've got to stop the momentum of the negative thoughts. It's really not a problem to have negative thoughts at all. The problem is when you attach to those negative thoughts, when you focus on them, when you overthink negative thoughts, no one ever comes to me and says, I'm overthinking positive things. When we talk about overthinking, we're talking about focusing on negative thoughts and spiraling. So those are just a few ways you can stop the momentum of negative thoughts. The next category that I want to talk about with respect to minimizing negative thoughts is to change your environment, get outside or go somewhere. It is so helpful to just immediately shift your environment to the extent that you can because it requires your brain to interpret a new environment. And often that is enough to just get you to start thinking in a little bit more helpful, positive way.

The third category is to talk to someone else. Talk with a friend who has a positive mindset and who is compassionate. So you don't want to talk to the friend who's also negative. You also don't want to talk to a friend who sort of ignores negative emotions and has more of a toxic positivity frame of mind. But you want to talk with a friend who has a lot of compassion for you and is helpful with respect to moving forward and having an empowered positive mindset. And talk with a coach. Get a really good mindset coach. Come inside the Mom On Purpose membership. We have weekly group coaching that you can get coached specifically on anything you are going through from me. I do all of the coaching in the membership. There's also 24/7 Ask A Coach forum where you can get written coaching from me anytime day or night.

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Take advantage of this because so often I hear people talk about mindset but then they don't really offer specific tools or resources for how to change your mindset. And that is exactly what we do inside the membership. The next category is changing your physiology, improve your posture, move, go for a walk, put on makeup and a nice outfit. I talk about this all of the time over on Instagram @mom.onpurpose. How every single day I'm getting dressed, I'm putting on makeup, I'm doing my hair, I'm focusing on my posture. It makes a big difference. Research shows that when you intentionally change your physiology, you will reduce negativity in your life. If you just think about being hunched over, sunken down, it's sort of um, encourages that negative thinking. And if you just put your shoulders back, you sort of have your hands near your hips, um, you put a smile on your face, that is a big one.

Smile my friends, I promise you I talk about this with respect to marriage coaching, but it's true in motherhood as well. Just smile all day and see what happens. It is such a game changer to change your physiology. The last category is to start a proactive practice. Instead of reacting to the day, to your to-do list to the problems that you know you'll find. Start every day with an intentional mindset. Decide on purpose how you're going to think about the day. Write it down in a journal. Don't write down what you're going to do that day, right? That will create that low grade. Focusing on your to-do list scarcity energy. Focus on how you want to think about the day. Focus on how you want to feel about the day.

If you want to mix up the way that you do this, you can also go on a rampage of appreciation and write down a few things that you genuinely appreciate. But remember, it has to be done with the right feeling. State. If you just quickly write down a few things you appreciate my kids, my home, my life, my health, and you feel rushed, like you need to get this over with 'cause you gotta get ready, it won't work. It's better for you to just not do it at all than to do it from a place of negativity. What will work is if you get into a feeling state of appreciation and say, I appreciate today. I am healthy. I am blessed with the most incredible family and we have a home, a beautiful home. I love my life. And when you write that down or or say

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those things that you are grateful for and you feel appreciative in your heart, that is a proactive practice that will create momentum of appreciation. So starting your day intentionally is so important because remember again, that survival part of the brain, it is going to look for problems. And so on default it's going to get into the negative. And so you can kind of combat that by creating that proactive practice.

Remember, this is a skill. This is a skill that you want to think you have a certain capacity for. Just like you have a certain capacity to do a handstand or not a handstand at all. And you can increase that capacity. The more that you practice this work, the more your body memorizes it. So yes, it works, but it is work. One of my private clients, she's been married for like over 30 years and she's talking with me about how life changing it was to coach herself. She said, it's work, but it's also magic. And I just loved that because it's exactly my experience and what I hope that you can see as well. Yes, it's worked just like working out or exercising or learning to do that. Handstand is work, but it works. I can't tell you how many clients come to me and say, I'm a completely different person.

I feel better after 30 days of just doing this work inside the membership, I feel better and happier. I had a client send me a message recently and she said, you know, I was on the fence about joining and I thought I'm just going to join for a month and see what it's about. And she had no intention of staying longer and she was blown away. So much so that she had to send me a message to let me know how impactful it had been and how she will be staying around as long as the membership exists. Because in 30 days she felt so much better and happier. That is because she practiced doing the work for 30 days. And so it's just like if you think about doing a handstand for 30 days, how much better you'll be at the end of those 30 days, it is a skill and you will expand your capacity to get really good at that skill, at reducing those negative thoughts, reducing the focus you have on those negative thoughts, feeling more empowered and more positive in your everyday life.

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This podcast is all about negative thoughts and how we want to minimize them. So I don't think that that is anything controversial, but I do want to mention that a huge part of this process is the assumption that you're able to thoughts as thoughts and not facts. So here are a few examples of thoughts. My husband is quieter at home than at work. My child is disrespectful. I don't have enough time to do that. My mother doesn't take care of herself. I recently had another baby. My kids don't like me. My sister-in-law is very dramatic. Now all of these thoughts may be true, however, they have words in them that make them summaries or interpretations. So I recently had another baby that is true, but what do we mean by recently? So to make it a fact, it's six months ago I had a baby or my child is disrespectful.

That's an interpretation of whatever your child did. So on Monday, my child hit me. Okay, that's a fact. Um, you know, my kids don't like me. Maybe your kids said to you, mom, I don't like you. But in order to change your mindset and why this is relevant here at all is because when you think that thoughts are facts, you won't try to change them. You'll think I can't change the fact that my sister-in-law's very dramatic. And it's true. You can't change your sister-in-law, but it's a thought that she's very dramatic. It might be a true thought, but if you're focusing on that thought, it's not helpful for you. Now what I'm not saying is that you go to the other end of the spectrum and think My sister-in-law is the most positive, enjoyable person. But seeing that my sister-in-law is very dramatic is a summary of your sister-in-law's actions. And not a fact is actually really helpful for you because then we can take a look at that thought and come up with a next best believable thought. Maybe it's just something like, my sister-in-law is challenging for me to be around and that's okay. It's not a problem for me that sometimes she's more dramatic.

When you come up with new thoughts that are believable to you and more helpful, you reduce negative thoughts. And the upside of that is that you will not feel like your life is happening to you. You will be completely equipped to navigate challenges. You will reduce anxiety and overwhelm and that kind of low grade dissatisfaction with your life. And those are just kind of

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the general benefits. But if you just apply it to specific categories as well, you have those benefits too. So if you have a lot of negative thoughts about your body, cleaning up the way that you think about your body will drastically change the relationship you have with yourself and your body. Same thing with time and work life balance and your kids and motherhood and your marriage and money and career and all of the big life categories. When you have negative thoughts about any area of your life and they are in the driver's seat, they make life so much worse and it can feel like it's the only way because you're so attached to those thoughts.

So seeing that they are thoughts and then knowing it's not your fault, you're not to blame. It's just your brain doing what healthy human brains do. Look for what's wrong, look for the negative and focus on that thinking that it's helpful. So the work really is to notice that know it's not your fault and replace those thoughts with better feeling thoughts. When you do this, you will change your life because you will have this skill of reducing negative thoughts in any area of your life, which will make your life better. You will be happier and you will feel more fulfilled. That is the work, my friend, and you can do it. I know it.

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.