My Thoughts On Ungrateful Kids, Holiday Stress, Being The Magic Maker



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Natalie Bacon

Hello, my beautiful friends. How are we doing today? I am in service mode. I am just reinventing my business. I am over-delivering to you all. I am bringing you new and good content. As you probably already heard from the announcement, the podcast is going up to two episodes per week, one devoted to motherhood, one devoted to weight loss. I'm all in. I'm so excited. I love using the last quarter of the year as a time to exponentially grow, because it's so counterintuitive. And I do that strategically. There's a little part of me that loves being the underdog, like, "Ooh, watch me just blow things out of the park for last quarter," which is so counterintuitive. And as y'all know, I am family first always, and that includes all of the holiday magic. It includes all of the birthday magic. And so there's a lot going on.

But there's something about needing my circumstances to be perfect in order for me to succeed that I refuse to believe, and I refuse to live by, because I know that that makes me dependent on perfect circumstances. So if I need things to be great, and I need a January circumstance in order to do what I want to do, then I can't win. I can't create more of what I want. And so because this time of year is so full, I think of it as the best time of year to double down and see what's possible. And as you already know, I've been dropping in these Black Friday promotions, and oh my gosh, it's just been so fun to see what you all have been loving, which is kind of all of it. And, it makes me think I need to do more of these other times of the year.

And that's just been really fun for me to see. So it's been really fun to welcome in so many new clients and the membership into the Holiday Seven Challenge, into At Your Goal Weight and the coaching. It's just been really awesome. Again, I started this by saying, and I'll reiterate it here, that I'm in service mode. I love it. I love you all. I'm so glad that you are here feeling good. And today, what I want to talk with you about is holiday and seasonally related. It is about what typically comes up during this time of year. As a mom, at least with myself and many of my clients and my experience, we tend to fall into some of these, I don't know, might we call it holiday traps that I want to address here so that you can get your mind right, so that you can have some tools to help you navigate these situations and to feel less overwhelmed, to feel more connection, and to, to live more intentionally through the season. I almost hesitated to say that because it sounds so cliche, like live intentionally, like we're going to write a journal prompt. That is not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the real life moment when it's the end of the day and your head hits the pillow and you have a racing mind and you're able to manage your brain out of that

Because you're saying to yourself, "I'm not going to do that to myself. I am the magic maker and I want to create more joy and peace and I'm going to give myself that gift right now." That, that my friend, that is like A level coaching, okay? And if you can do that during the

holidays, you can do it anytime. Okay? So let's just tackle these. I, I came up with kind of three subtopics that I want to talk with you about. Ungrateful kids, holiday stress, and being the magic maker. So let's start off with ungrateful. Did you know that there is no such thing as ungrateful? Isn't this crazy? We think that ungrateful means we give our kid a gift and the kid is mad that it wasn't the gift they want. Or what's often worse in our minds is kid gets a gift from grandma or an aunt and, kid is upset that it's not the exact gift that kid wanted and we are mortified and think that we're raising ungrateful kids.

Or you take your kids to the Christmas holiday market, it's what they wanted to do, it's so fun, they have a great time, and then they get mad and upset because they can't get the thing that they want or, on the way home, they're mad and upset because it was different than they thought or they want to go do something else and it's a no. And you're just thinking, "Oh my gosh, my kids are so ungrateful." And what I want to tell you here is that there's no such thing as feeling ungrateful. So just think of the word grateful. When I look up the word grateful, the definition is that it's a feeling. So what do we know about feelings? All feelings are created by our thoughts. It's a feeling created by the thought of showing thanks or appreciation. So for example, you think, "I am so thankful," and then you feel grateful.

So when someone gives you a gift, you think, "I'm so thankful for this." And you feel gratitude, you feel appreciation, you feel grateful. Now, when your kids don't feel gratitude, it's not that they feel ungrateful. That's impossible, right? If you just really think of that word, it's a feeling. So what are they actually feeling? 'Cause they can't feel un-something, right? They are feeling disappointed, they're feeling frustrated, they're feeling angry. For my kids, usually it's like disappointment. And then if they don't feel validated in that disappointment, then maybe they feel overwhelmed or frustrated. But I think at the root of it, when we think our kids are ungrateful, it's actually that they're experiencing disappointment. So classic example, kid doesn't get what kid wants during the holidays, maybe it's a specific gift

And we think, oh my gosh, my kid is so ungrateful. And what's really actually happening is that in that moment, that kid had an expectation and that expectation was different than reality. And so the kid feels disappointed and then it will pile on different emotions like overwhelm, frustration, whatever, based on your child's perception of what's happening. So why does this matter? Why is this helpful? Well, whenever my brain goes to, oh my gosh, my kids are so ungrateful or they don't know how lucky they have it, right? That's kind of what my brain goes to. I had, a wonderful childhood and also a very challenging childhood. And sometimes, my little brain has really unhelpful thoughts my kids don't know how lucky they are and they're so ungrateful, right? But I have to manage that because what it doesn't do is it doesn't help me teach.

It doesn't help me lead my kids. It doesn't help me validate them. It doesn't change how they're feeling, right? Just think about that. If you ever said to your kid, you are so ungrateful, I taught you better than this. In the history of you being a mom and the entirety of it, has your child ever said, "You are so right, mom. Thank you for pointing that out. I'm going to be so much more appreciative right now." No, of course not. It creates like this tug of war dynamic, this push-pull, you're against them, they're more upset because they don't feel seen and validated. And that's not to say that we don't teach manners. That's definitely not even to say that we don't teach gratitude and appreciation. It's just that in that moment when your kid is feeling disappointed or overwhelmed or frustrated, it's not the appropriate time for teaching gratitude and manners.

You want to have those conversations ahead of time and you also don't want to expect them to be perfect robot little mini adults, okay? And so I like to go into the holidays knowing that my kids are going to probably experience even more dysregulation than normal. So what do I mean by that? Not just they're tired and melting down from sugar. What I mean by that is because of being out of the normal routine, because of the extra stimuli, the holidays, they are more likely to experience bigger emotions. So I expect my kids to feel more disappointment, more overwhelmed, and more frustration. And I like untie that from their gratitude and their appreciation. And I make sure to have conversations with them. Obviously my kids are little and no, they're not telling me, "Oh my gosh, thank you mommy for sharing this with me." But I make sure that as the mama who I want to be, I want to have conversations with them out of the moment about appreciation and gratitude and, starting to get them to give gifts to other people specifically so that they can learn that it's not just about, them getting everything they circled in their little booklets that come in the mail, right?

And I get it. I like having my kids get what they want and I also really care deeply about them understanding like there's so much joy and magic, and appreciation and goodness in giving, right? Even more than in receiving. And so teaching that is one thing, but also expecting them to be kids, to have kid brains, to feel dysregulation, to feel disappointment. So the big takeaway from this part of it is that your kids aren't feeling ungrateful. Your kids are feeling fill in the blank, okay? So when your brain says, "Oh my gosh, my kids are so ungrateful," I want you to reply back to your brain and say, "That's not true. There's no such thing as feeling ungrateful. My kid is feeling..." I like to go to like, "My kid is feeling disappointment because of an unmet expectation." And don't convince yourself that the unmet expectation is unreasonable.

I'm sure it is unreasonable, right? Kids have, of course, unreasonable expectations. They're not supposed to have the expectations that we have, and that is obviously exemplified in their reactions, and that's okay. Making space for this will give you freedom to feel peace

and joy and connection and more magic for yourself instead of trying to control them. Doesn't mean you don't hold boundaries and you don't teach them, of course, but like when you're worried about them being ungrateful, when you're embarrassed by them being ungrateful, when you think thoughts and you get frustrated because you think they're ungrateful, that is a sign that you have thought work to do. That's it. And that's the part that you want to clean up first. Thought work is the skill that I teach in the Mom On Purpose membership that I use every day in motherhood so that I can think at a higher level, so that I can reduce my own stress and overwhelm and worry and frustration so that I can show up as the leader I want to be for my kids.

Okay. Let's move on to holiday stress. How are we doing, my friends? How are we doing? Do you feel stress? I was thinking about my own, like, overwhelm. I don't even call it overwhelm. It's my own mindset, my own list of to-dos, which are on my calendar, so it's not even a list. You might call it holiday stress, like the number of things that I'm doing. And what can happen, and I, I just want to speak to my own experience of this because it's, it's really life-changing when you understand it. What can happen is that you can spend time overthinking what is already planned and waste more time just because of the way your brain is just operating on default and it's unmanaged. So let me give you an example. Planning the holidays, planning all of the birthdays, and then we just found out kind of last

Last minute, we found out that my brother-in-law and sister-in-law are coming in. they live in Spain with their new daughter, my niece, and she is getting baptized and we are going to be the godparents. I am so excited. And this is going to be happening the week of Christmas, basically. And I'm so excited for it. It's all good news. My husband's equally just as excited. And of course, as the orchestrator of the holidays, my brain immediately went into, "Oh my gosh, how am I going to fit this in? This is so special and important and we're a central part of the baptism and that stretch was already, so jam packed. What are we going to do?" Like, all of these unhelpful thoughts, right? And what I noticed was that even when I put things on the calendar and moved some things around, like Steve's birthday, he turns 40 that weekend. We were going to go downtown for it. We still are, but we had to move the date, all the things, right? Even after it all worked out on the calendar, which it always does, my brain was still kind of spinning. And what I noticed was that there was not actually a problem, okay? So the schedule had been set, and there were still some open loops, but there's no problem that my brain was actually solving. But, my mind felt busy. Do you know what I'm talking about here?

Without these tools, my brain on default would say something like, "Oh my gosh, this is just so stressful. There's just a lot going on." And it's so justified. But when we actually look at what's going on, it's not Christmas week right now. There's nothing going on. I'm just living

on an ordinary day. It's not a holiday today, and everything's planned on the calendar. So the sense of busyness that I am feeling is coming from my mind spinning, and it's coming from these, like, thoughts that I'm not fully aware of. And that is what I want to draw your attention to, because that is indulgent thinking.

And if you don't unwind it, if you don't tell your brain, no, we're not doing this, if you don't manage your brain, then what you can end up doing is blaming this season being so busy and blaming time and saying things like, "I just don't have enough time. This is so stressful," when actually that's just a story in your mind. "This is so crazy. I do so much work on time, and I think it's, just one of the first and most important things or topics to do with respect to your own personal growth and development, because it's something we're all experiencing and we all continue to experience it. And I've been doing this work for a decade. And I'm telling you that I, I'm so much better at it now with holiday planning a- as I get my reps in. But even just this instance where Christmas week changed different circumstances, new and different plans, I noticed my brain go into indulgent thinking and I was feeling this sense of busyness and I had to get out of it because I, it was a lie.

It was such a lie. It's not a holiday right now. There are not things that can't be solved. Everything's solved for or is going to be solved for. It's actually totally fine. And it was always going to happen this way. And so what I want you to notice and just kind of take away from this portion of this episode is that your brain will spend a lot of time busying mentally if you don't manage it. And that is what we call a negative side effect of our modern lives, the modern lives that we love. I'm so glad that my in-laws are coming to town. I'm so glad that I get to be a godmother again. I'm so glad that we get to celebrate baby Sophia and her baptism. I'm so glad that the other cousins on the other side are coming in and it's going to be, a full fun holiday Christmas week.

I'm so glad for my kids, for myself, for my family. It's just going to be wonderful. And my brain was spinning on it. How's it all going to get done? Are we going to have time for everything? It's too rushed. I don't like to have this many plans. It's all nonsense. Nonsense. Do I have everything planned out to the extent that I can? Do I know what's not planned and kind of open loops and outstanding?

And am I managing my brain? You gotta do it, my friends. Otherwise, that holiday stress, it will, like, steal the joy. It really will. I remember there have been some holidays in the past where I've just, like, couldn't wait until January. And I've really challenged myself to not have that mentality, even though I'm the magic maker. My husband helps a lot more than he did before. And even that word help, right? You could have a whole episode about that. But I don't mind it. I like it. I'm the one who makes a bigger deal anyways about birthdays and holidays, and I take that lead role. So it is collaborative, but I'm definitely the one, the one

with the Google Doc, the one making the big decisions, the one kind of in charge. And I do that to myself and I'm aware of that.

And I want to make sure that I do it within the capacity that I have. And so there's this duality happening. I want to stretch my capacity, yes. And also, I have a human capacity, which means by definition, I'm not AI. I do need sleep. I do need water. I do need food. I do need self-care and movement. And we know this as high achievers, and yet, we are so proud of ourselves when we do the mostest, right? And I get it. I get it. But what I try to do is be really proud of myself for taking breaks, for slowing down, for letting the house be a mess, and for enjoying it. And every year, I like double down a little bit more on that. The last part of this episode that I want to talk about is about your expectations on circumstances, which means your expectations on other people, on events, on experiences, just on, the overall holidays.

I think as magic maker, you want it to feel magical and you want to create all of the magic, and you do that. And where we get into trouble, myself included, is when we think that means our kids should be happy. Our mother-in-law should show up, easygoing and not stressed, or our husband shouldn't be so critical and negative. When we have those expectations on holiday experiences, we decrease the magic. I really want you to see this because it's so, it's so hard to see. I get it, my friends, when you don't do this work regularly, it is so hard to see. This is not about not holding boundaries. You are welcome to hold boundaries anytime, all day, every day, and I strongly suggest you do, but it's not because someone caused you to feel a certain way. So if your husband's being really critical and negative, you are more than welcome and you get to make that decision, and I would encourage you to do so, to hold a boundary and say, "what?

I don't want to listen to this right now. I love you, and I need to take some space for myself." But you're doing that for yourself. And it might be in different language than that. I'm just using this as an example. The point is that you always get to decide if you're going to, like, leave a situation or leave a certain space or be around what it is that you don't like. But the reason why you do that isn't because the other person is creating your feelings. As soon as you think it's because of that, you are in emotional delegation. And then we have to control husband in order for you to feel better. And then you're giving him so much more power than he has over you. But that's not to say you want to be around it if you don't want to, right? I'm just kind of using an extreme example here.

The key here is that you take ownership of your emotions. So if you feel upset that your husband's being negative and critical, it's not because he's being negative and critical. It's because you have a story in your mind that he shouldn't be. So you have a thought like, "My husband's being negative and critical and he shouldn't be." Now, what I'm not saying, and this is getting a little bit into coaching, but I want to speak to it here. What I'm not saying is

that you should be happy and delighted that he's being negative and critical. What I am saying though, is that your emotions aren't coming from him. He is not that powerful. He says what he says. I don't know. Let's just say he, he said something like, "I thought you'd do a better job." Okay? He says those words and you have a sentence in your head, and that sentence in your head makes you feel a certain way.

Okay? It's so important that you see that for your own sake. And again, that doesn't mean you don't hold boundaries. You might want to hold a boundary, but that boundary is for love for yourself. You're like, "Hey, not cool, man. I don't want to listen to that. I'm going to take some space." Okay? Or whatever it is you want to say or remove yourself, that goes into a whole different topic on boundaries. The point here though is that a lot of times as magic maker, we try to control other people's feelings. So let's say that you were hosting Christmas Eve and one of your dominant thoughts is, "I just want everyone to have a good time." That thought sounds so lovely, and yet it is so toxic because it's trying to control other people's feelings. So what's a better feeling though to think? I am going to make sure that I have a great time and I just want everyone else to come and have the exact experience that they're meant to have.

That means mother-in-law is probably going to feel stressed, husband might be a little bit critical, kids might feel excited and happy, and then they might feel dysregulated and disappointed. Everyone is just going to feel exactly how they're going to feel because they're having the experience that they're supposed to have, and I'm not going to control that. I am going to work on controlling my thoughts and my feelings, right? When you do this, like the holidays are so much better, okay, because you stop trying to control other people's experience and you control more of your experience. And then you just let it kind of be messy. And what I mean by that is, human beings are complex and dynamic and we have a full range of emotions, as. But let's take a micro example, like you hosting Christmas Eve when you have a thought like, "I just want everyone to have a good time." You actually don't understand that everyone is supposed to feel how they're supposed to feel.

You're thinking they're supposed to feel happy so that I can feel like I did a good job at my holiday party. Again, that is delegating your emotions to other people and looking for external validation for your goodness. Do you see how this comes up everywhere, especially as women? Especially during the holidays, I always say it's like having a magnifying glass on anything you're working on for yourself, whether it's your relationships, whether it's perfectionism, whether it's your emotional experience, whether it's your racing thoughts or time management, there's just so much good work to do here. So the more you can own being a magic maker, doing exactly what you want to do, letting the rest go, being okay with things being undone, not looking for that external validation, letting people feel

how they want to feel and expecting The better experience you will have. And the more I practice thought work and brain management and these life tools, the better I am at it. And it is practice. And I'll tell you what, my friends, every single fourth quarter, it's like, another Super Bowl for me to practice them, and I'm not perfect at it at all, but I get better at it. I get better at letting things go because I know that the more I try to control, the more I sacrifice my internal wellbeing. So my last bit of encouragement for you is to double down on these tools in the last bit of the year during the holidays so that you can create the exact experience that you want, and you only need you to do that. All right, my beautiful friends, let's do this. Happy holidays.