

Mom Worries



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With Your Host

Natalie Bacon

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Hi there. Welcome to the *Design Your Dream Life* podcast. My name is Natalie Bacon, and I'm an advanced certified mindfulness life coach as well as a wife and mom. If you're here to do the inner work and grow, I can help. Let's get started.

Hey mama, how are you doing? Today we are going to talk about mom worries. This is something that I have been helping so many moms with, and it's something that I have been applying to myself. So I want to share it with you here. If you feel like you are constantly worrying about your kids, I'm going to give you some tips on how to go forward and how to not let that worry really negatively impact your life.

Before we get started, I want to invite you to come to my new Ask Natalie Anything call. It's a free coaching call that I'm offering this year, and I will help you with whatever challenge you're facing right now. It's a space for you to get some free help and coaching as well as learn a little bit more about what it's like inside Grow You, my community for moms.

This is particularly something that I want you to try to attend if you are a mom who is worrying. I can coach you. It can be either in written form. You can type in the box and ask me questions that only I see. No one else on the call will see. Or you can decide to be brave and volunteer to come on live, which means that I will call on you and I will see you on Zoom and everyone else on the call will see you. That only happens if you actually volunteer.

So you can just join this call and simply listen in. No one will see you unless you proactively raise your hand. The beauty of this is that whatever you show up in, you can really get some help. I can show you exactly what's happening in your brain with the specific situation in your life. It's totally free. Head on over to nataliebacon.com/asknatalie. That's all one word. So it's just the forward slash and then ask Natalie. You will get all of the details there.

So let's start talking about what I'm calling mom worries. I've talked about worry before on the podcast, but today I really want to specifically talk

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about worrying with respect to all the worries that come up as a mom. I am seeing this not only with myself but with so many of the members in this community. It almost seems like there's this separate section of worrying that we allow and think is useful as moms.

So as a mom, it's a very natural instinct and natural mindset to worry. Your mind is wired to want to protect your kids. This is a good thing. It means that we care. It means that we want to be mama bear and take care of our kids. Where this gets us into trouble is when we let the fear part of this protective instinct take over. Worry is rooted in fear.

So you can show up as mama bear and be supportive and protective in a way that's very loving, or you can do it in a way that's rooted in fear. They feel very differently. What I notice is that on default for pretty much everyone, the way that we go about protecting our kids as moms is through that worry and fear.

The good news is that you can notice this and change it so that you can show up in a way where you are helping your kids, helping them navigate their problems, but you're also not doing it from a place of fear where it's creating so much worry for you. Which, of course, your kids pick up on.

So I want you to think about when you started worrying about your kids as a mom. Most likely this was from the moment you got pregnant or from the moment that you saw that little newborn at home in their crib. It likely hasn't stopped since. So here's the thing about worry. It seems really important, and it seems like what you're supposed to do as a mom.

So your brain prioritizes worry as something that will help your child either thrive or fail. So your brain's telling you, "Hey, worry about the future. This is something that's uncertain. We've got to figure it out. Your child's future depends on it." That's kind of like the subtext of that primitive brain. I also notice that this is a way we connect with other moms. We can do it in a way where we encourage the worry.

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So, for example, if you're worrying about whether your child will get into a particular school of your choice and what it will mean if they don't, you could apply this to anything. Whatever you're worried about. Often we talk with other moms about this in a way that makes the worry bigger. It seems like we are being really responsible and protective and caring even when that concern is coming from fear. I just want you to notice this.

I want to share with you what it was like for me. When I first found out I was pregnant, I started to worry. I had thoughts like what if I miscarry? What if the genetic testing comes back in a way that I'm not prepared for? What if I make it all past that and the baby's born, and then the baby doesn't survive? What if the baby does survive, and then he gets a diagnosis that I didn't see coming? What if he misses other milestones like crawling or walking or talking? What if he's diagnosed with something later that could have been prevented? What if he's harmed in some way?

These are all the thoughts that came to my mind. Then I stopped myself and realized that there wasn't a point ever, like not ever was there going to be a point in the future where I would stop having these what ifs. Because I kept thinking, "Okay well if I get past that, then what?" Then I thought about the next thing and the next thing and the next thing. I saw my brain worry about my child's entire life as I had just invented it in my mind, which of course is just the story that I'm telling about it.

I noticed that there was no end to the worry. That I could worry well after he was done with all of his schooling, college, getting married, having kids. Again, we don't even know if any of this will happen. My mind was already to the place that after every single thing happened, there would be another thing for me to worry about in the future.

Then I noticed oh, this is my default mindset wanting to protect my child from everything and make sure that he's okay 100% of the time. Which, of course, to some extent is entirely possible because we all have trials and challenges, including our children. That's how it's supposed to be.

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What really helped me here is that I paused and I realized that the truth was that all of these things could actually happen. They really could. Each and every one of the worries that I had about milestones, diagnoses, harm, any of it could happen. I don't know. That's the truth about worry.

It's my brain trying to control and create certainty for the future that is inherently unknown. There's no way to know it. So there's nothing I could do in advance. This was so freeing to me. I realized that right now when none of these challenges were present, worrying wasn't helpful. It wasn't useful. In fact, it was really harmful to how I was showing up in my own life.

So I decided to stop worrying. I decided to kind of thinking about my worry as my unmanaged mind and just label it as that primitive brain that really wants to control the future that can't be controlled. I made the decision that I didn't want to worry all the time. I am choosing not to worry about my kids.

Even when I say this out loud, it almost sounds reckless. Like there's a norm that worrying is good, and it's just what you're supposed to do as a mom, but it's not true. Worry robs you of the experience of connecting, of loving, of supporting, and truly protecting your child. I have decided that worry doesn't serve me as a mom.

So I notice it when it's there. I remind myself that I can't control the future. I can't control what happens, but I can control how I show up. I want to show up in the best way possible, which is half amazing and half mess and just do my best. No worry required.

So this doesn't mean that you go to the place of the other side of the spectrum, which is being apathetic. So if you think of a spectrum, on one side there is worrying and it's from fear. It leads to ruminating and trying to control outcomes. On the complete other side of the spectrum, there is apathy and indifference where you don't care at all. Neither is useful. So you don't want to show up as the mom who's worried all the time, but you also don't want to not care about it. You want to care.

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So what's in the middle is where you want to be. So the mindset is it's not the end of the world and something I need to worry and ruminate about, and also it's not something that I want to ignore and pretend isn't happening and not care about.

So let's say that RJ wasn't walking well after the recommended age to start walking. As a mom, I don't want to ruminate about the what ifs and worry myself into anxiety. I also don't want to just not care about any of it and say, "Oh, he'll be fine." Kind of live in ignorance there. Instead I want to meet in the middle and decide how I want to show up. I want to advocate for him. I want to talk with a pediatrician. I want to maybe go to an occupational therapist and do whatever else I can, but from a place of love and support.

It's like thinking about yourself as a mom who is the biggest cheerleader for your kids from this place where you feel connected and loving and supportive. You're their guide. Versus from this place of fear, which is where worry comes from. Oh my gosh, this shouldn't be happening. This is horrible. We have to fix this right now. The difference is in how you feel.

So if you are feeling very fearful and worried, you still might go to the pediatrician and see the occupational therapist, but you will know it in your body, how you're showing up, and your kids will notice it too. You will feel that worry. You will feel fear. I'm telling you because life is fully of challenges for all of us, and again there is no end to the potential worry, I want to invite you to decrease your worry. To notice that there's no upside to it, and instead to decision that you are 100% capable of loving, of caring for, and of supporting this child and protecting this child from a true place of love.

Part of this means that you see that worry feels so useful. I promise you it really does. I also promise you it's not helping you. It's not serving you. It's not serving your family, your kids, your marriage, any of it. So just think about how you show up when you worry. Notice how it's rooted in fear and how your energy is a little bit more frantic and maybe even anxious when you're showing up from that place.

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Notice too that you will be trying to control other people and the future. Whether that's what your child does, what's happening in the world, what other people are doing, etcetera. You are just in that state of fear, and your actions come from this place of wanting to control. Your kids will pick up on that. They can sense it. It creates this disconnection, and you can almost go into a panic.

Remember to remind yourself, and this is what I remind myself of as well, that you don't know what's going to happen. Yet that's the risk of life, of parenting, of having kids, of motherhood. We all still do it. Otherwise we would all just hide in our rooms in our beds under the covers and not participate in life.

So yes there is the risk that these bad things happen, but also there are going to be amazing things that happen. If you are worrying right now in the present moment about the future, you're missing the present moment, which you can decide is amazing. Which you can feel good about. If right now you're going through a challenge, you can always solve that current challenge. What's happening right now in the present isn't the true worry. The worry is what's going to happen in the future.

Even if you get that diagnosis, the diagnosis that you get creates fear and worry because you think thoughts about what this means in the future. In the actual moment, you can always feel any emotion. You can always experience your life exactly as it is, and you're always strong enough and capable enough and brave enough to do that. It's when our brains go into the future, which is unknown and uncertain. Your brain is kind of wired that way because it wants to help you survive. That's when you get into trouble.

So you want to just notice that and notice that your brain thinks it's so useful to worry as a mom. I think socially we connect in that way as well, which makes it seem like that's what you should be doing. You should be worrying because everyone else is worrying. It's just not true. So I want you to be brave enough to not worry, to be brave enough to see that whatever challenge comes for you, for your family, for your kids, you can always decide to show up in a loving supportive way without worry.

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A few tips here. If you do find yourself worrying because this is not something that you will totally solve just after listening to this podcast. It will help you get started, but your brain is so brilliant. So if it is in the habit of worrying, this is something that you want to get out of the habit of doing, which can take some practice. So notice when you feel worry and call it worry. Oh, this is my brain worrying. I don't have to trust my thoughts right now. I certainly don't need to take action from this place.

If you find that you're worrying a lot, you can give yourself worry time. I didn't create this too. I think it came from a book originally. I don't even remember which book, but it's something that I find helpful for my clients. So everyday you give yourself worry time. I encourage you to do this in the morning. So some time before noon. It might be right when you get up. It might be after the kids are at school. So sometimes before noon in between wake up and lunch.

You give yourself 10 minutes to just worry about all of it. Then the rest of the day whenever your brain goes to worry, you say we're not doing that today brain. We're going to table this worry until tomorrow during our worry time. This way you allow yourself space to be in the present moment, to enjoy your day, and to intentionally redirect your brain so that the worry doesn't become all encompassing.

A special note here about worrying at night. I think that our prefrontal cortex is sort of offline at night and worries seem bigger and harder to manage. So I don't want you to give yourself a worry time at night. If you find yourself worrying at night, allow the feeling. This is the work we do in Grow You. So you allow the feeling to be there, but you don't want to redirect. You don't want to fix. You don't want to intentionally give yourself worry time at night.

It's just a point in the day where your brain is more likely to go into that primitive state. You're not going to make decisions from your highest self. So remind yourself that you'll worry tomorrow. Totally fine to feel worry if you're feeling it, but we're going to think more about the worry in our brains tomorrow during our worry time.

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I also want to really encourage you to come to the Ask Natalie Anything call, and I will help you with whatever you are worrying about with your kids, your family, your marriage, or your life. You can get the details for that call at nataliebacon.com/asknatalie to join me there. Take care my friends. Work on not worrying this week, and I will talk with you next week.

If you loved this podcast, I invite you to check out Grow You, my mindfulness community for moms where we do the inner work together. Head on over to nataliebacon.com/coaching to learn more.