

Being Triggered By A Mess



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With Your Host

Natalie Bacon

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Being Triggered By A Mess

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.

Hello, my friend. How you doing? Today I want to talk with you about being triggered by a mess. If you feel triggered by a mess, you are in such good company. I can totally relate to this. I have coached so many clients on this. It can feel overwhelming to walk into a room and see clothes and toys and whatever else on the floor. Followed by an immediate almost kind of compulsion, this urge to clean and "fix" the mess.

So today I want to explore what's going on when you feel triggered by a mess and give you some mindfulness tools to kind of solve this problem from the inside out. This is the work we are doing this month inside Grow You the topic of the month is Edit Your Life. We are decluttering on purpose from a place of wholeness, from a place of worthiness and contentment, not from a place of perfectionism and people pleasing.

So if you want my decluttering process, and if you want to Edit Your Life, join me inside Grow You for the month of February over at nataliebacon.com/coaching. Right when you join, you will get the Edit Your Life course. You will get the Edit Your Life Workbook, which includes journal prompts and some mindfulness practices you can do this month. Then you can join us for this month's Edit Your Life coaching call as well.

Lots more that you can learn about Grow You over at nataliebacon.com/coaching. I am so excited to do this work. I think that decluttering really allows you to let go of the past and really bring into the future more of what you want, which is so fun to do at the beginning of a new year.

So back to talking about messes and kind of how this is a similar topic and relates to what we're doing and Grow You. I thought it would be a good time to talk about it here, particularly because I coach on it a lot. So what is going on here? When you feel triggered by a mess, it's important that you

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see that it's not actually the mess that is causing you to feel what you're feeling in your body. That's the first thing that's really important to see.

If that were true, then every single person would react the exact same way to a mess. But as you know, and you've probably even seen in your family and your household, some people don't care at all about messes. So it's not the mess that causes you to feel what you're feeling, to have the reaction. You see the mess. You walk into the room, you see the mess, and what happens is your brain has a thought. Probably a thought you've thought a lot of times. So it's now a belief that happens so quickly.

It interprets the message in a way that causes you to feel tension, unrest, unease, whatever that feeling is in your body, and it happens almost instantly. But it is because of what's happening in your brain that causes that to happen in your body. So it's your brain and the thought that you have, the belief that you have about the mess that causes your feelings.

That's really important to know because of part of the solution that I'm going to talk about later in this episode. So just keep this in mind that what's actually happening when I walk into a room, it's not the mess that triggers me. It's that my brain interprets the mess in a certain way so I have thoughts and beliefs about the mess, and those thoughts and beliefs create the feelings in my body.

Okay, now let's get into what to do when you experience this. How to really navigate being triggered by a mess. Don't go into "get my child" mode. I'm putting that in air quotes. "Get my child" mode or even "get my spouse" mode, "get my husband" mode. That is when we focus on trying to get our kids to clean up better.

So it sounds like you walk into a room and you're triggered by this mess. Your first reaction is to think how can I get my child to clean up better? In this space, you're trying to control your circumstances so that you don't have to feel those feelings and deal with what happens internally for you. That's not even to say that what I'm suggesting is go to the opposite

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extreme and have no boundaries around keeping your house clean or organized. I'm not suggesting that at all.

But what I think is most helpful is for you to get to an empowered place before taking action in your house and with your family. If you're feeling triggered and trying to navigate a mess, it's stressful for everyone because your family is then at the effect of your stress. So what you want to do instead is take care of yourself and your feelings and get some better feeling thoughts to think so that you can show up in a way and kind of lead your family and your household in a way that's the most empowering for you.

So you're gonna stay out of “get my child” mode or “get my spouse” mode. Instead, as soon as you feel triggered by the mess, go inward. Your mind is not gonna want to do this. It's going to want to focus on cleaning or talking to whomever left the mess. It is going to want to react. Don't let it. Be onto your brain and go inward. Notice your feeling. Feel you're feeling. It might sound like this. I notice my chest is tight, my jaw is clenched, and my heart is racing. It's as simple as that. If you notice that it's one specific feeling, you might say to yourself, I'm feeling overwhelmed.

Acknowledging the feeling gives you authority over it. It creates a little bit more intimacy with it. What you can do then to take it a step further is really welcome the feeling. Hi overwhelm. I see you there. You're welcome here, and breathe into it. If you're in Grow You, use the processing feelings course for this process. The key is that you're going inward. You're allowing the feeling, and you're not reacting.

This alone will have a huge impact on the way you navigate being triggered by a mess. Because before you find this work, if you're like most people including myself, you walk into the room, you see the mess, and you immediately react. So what we're doing here is we're creating the pause, we're going inward. We're noticing what's happening internally for us. We're processing that feeling.

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The next part of this is noticing the length of time that you can kind of wait before taking action. So it's adding a space between the feeling that you're feeling and any actions you take. This is similar to allowing the feeling because, of course, allowing the feeling will take some seconds or some minutes. But I wanted to break this out separately here so that you can see the intention behind it. The first part, the intention, is simply for you to actually regulate and calm down your nervous system and process the feeling.

In this next part, the purpose and the intent is to just increase that space between the feeling and your action. So you're allowing an urge. It could be for 30 seconds. It could be for one minute. It could be for 10 minutes. You're acknowledging that you have the urge. You're allowing yourself to be with that discomfort. The more that you allow urges, the better you will get at having the reaction and taking action that you want to take.

So I would give yourself however much time that you're able. Let's say 30 seconds, one minute, two minutes, a specific amount of time to be with the urge and be with that discomfort before you do anything. If it's going to be that you're going to tidy up or you're going to ask someone else to clean up, whatever it is, the more that you can practice pausing and increasing the space between the feeling and the action, the better you will be equipped to take action that you want to be taking. You will be less reactive, but you have to build up your bank of unanswered urges.

Because right now you're probably just in the habit of feeling triggered. You feel that discomfort, you have the urge to either clean up or yell at someone in your family, and then you just do it. So what we're doing here is we're bringing awareness to all of the things that are actually happening. Your brain is having a thought. You're having a feeling. So you're going to process that feeling, then you're going to pause between the feeling and the action to allow yourself to process the urge so you can be a little bit more intentional about the action that you are taking.

The next part of this is to find the thought that you are thinking. Often, it's something about you. Most of the time, for most of my clients and myself

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included, when we're triggered by a mess, it's because we have this belief that how nice our home is determines our worth and value. I think this is because we've been raised to think that our home is an extension of who we are on the inside.

This is not really much of a problem if you are single living by yourself, and you have total control over how clean things are, how organized things are. But when you add other humans who have other ways of living into one home, it gets more complicated. People want to live differently than you. I don't need to tell you this. You know this. You live with your family.

It can become a huge problem because you can start to confuse your role in the family and their roles in the family. What I mean by that is that you start to see everyone in your family as an extension of you. Your home is an extension of you. Your spouse is an extension of you. Your kids are an extension of you. It really centers yourself. There's this perfectionism where we have to have everyone in the family behaving how we think they should behave, keeping the home how we think the home should be kept, all so that it can reflect positively on who we are.

The way that you can kind of clean this up and come from a much more connected place for your family and for yourself is to separate out the people and your home from you. The people in your home are not a reflection of you. They are separate from you. Even if someone says they're a reflection of you. They're not, right? We know this because one child will do one thing, the other child will do another thing, you told them the same things, right? They have their own agency.

People have different ideas of how they want to have a home be presented, how they want a home to be organized, how messy or tidy they want things to be. Everyone is a little bit different. Your kids and your spouse are not you. How they value organization and tidiness is not an extension of you. It's separate from you. Your home is not an extension of you.

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So what are your thoughts when your home is messy? Just come up with five or fewer thoughts. What do you interpret a mess to mean? Particularly, do you make it mean something about you? I would really suggest writing this down so that you can see clearly that it's these thoughts that you're thinking that are creating the feelings that you're having.

The reason that writing is so powerful is because when we're thinking about the thoughts, they're sort of like slippery. One thought leads to the next thought. Before you know it, we're thinking about something else, and we have to bring it back. So when you write down very clearly okay, here are five thoughts that I think when I walk into my child's room, and I see a mess. Or I walk into our primary bedroom, and my husband's clothes are all over the floor.

Now, for purposes of this podcast, I am talking about whatever your brain thinks is a "mess". But even mess isn't a fact, right? We couldn't submit a court document to a judge and say this is a mess. There's no scientific test for a mess. So when you are coaching yourself or if you're in Grow You and you get coaching, you will notice that I will say okay what specifically was on the floor? What are the facts?

This can be really helpful. It might be that your spouse left his pants, shirt, and three pairs of socks on the floor. On the other side of the bed, there were 15 clothing items. It appeared to be his laundry. That is much more what I call facty. It can be very powerful to do it this way, not to be nitpicky. There is a really good reason for this. Because when you separate out the facts from your thoughts, you see how much power you have in the story that you're telling. So you might decide, I'm not even going to call it a mess anymore.

Sort of a tangent here because I think it's fine to call it a mess. You just want to notice that there isn't some sort of scientific way to prove what is a mess and what is not a mess. It's okay to call something a mess. You just want to notice that that is optional for you. Along with interpreting the items on the floor or in your home as a mess or something else, it can be very

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powerful for the next part of this to come up with thoughts that you can think and practice in the future.

So this is the work that you would do outside of the moment. In the beginning of this podcast episode, I talked about what to do in the moment, which is feeling your feelings, allowing an urge, but then out of the moment, you're going to want to write down what your thoughts are on default, that your default brain is offering to you that aren't serving you. Then come up with new thoughts that serve you and help you show up how you want to show up.

Now, whenever I teach coming up with like a next believable thought, or just thinking on purpose, it can be very powerful, but it only is effective if you've done the first part in seeing what your default brain is thinking right now.

So make sure you do the first part and get really specific with the thoughts that you have right now about the mess. Your brain will have lots of thoughts. Just write down five. These are the thoughts that your default brain offers to. Maybe it's when I see a mess, I make it mean that I'm doing a bad job as a mom. Whatever it is. Our brains have all sorts of thoughts. You want to get clear on what those thoughts are.

Then from there, you can decide okay, that thought isn't serving me. It's not useful for me to equate the tidiness of my home to whether I am good or good enough or worthy or doing even a good job at my job. So how can I think on purpose in a way that still honors my values of wanting to keep a tidy home, but separates out my role and my job from the tidiness and how clean it is?

These are really powerful questions that you can ask yourself. So what do you want to think? How can you think in a way that feels like love, connection, groundedness, openness, strength, and doesn't feel so urgent and overwhelming and dysregulated? The best thoughts for you will always come from your brain. Always, always, always. I think that the more you practice looking at your thoughts and the more you practice coming up with

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new thoughts, the better you get at this skill, but I do want to offer you thoughts just to kind of get your brain moving here. Give you some ideas.

The first thought that I have is this mess means nothing about me, my home, or my parenting. It means nothing about me. That can be really powerful one if you're used to making the mess mean something about you. This second thought is one of my favorites. This mess is a sign of a lived in home with people who are comfortable being here.

Thought number three, this mess means that I have a family and a home. I like to think that the alternative is not a tidy home. The alternative is that my family doesn't live here. I want my family to live here. So this mess means that I have a home, and I have a family. The last thought that I will offer you my home is full of life. That means I'm doing a good job.

So all of these are reframes their suggestions. Try them on, practice them, see how they feel. Do they feel good and true and open to you? Do you think that they'll help you? You can just give it a try. The next time that you walk into a room and you see a mess, practice this thought. Now if the dysregulation comes up right away and you feel triggered, process the feeling. So there's this balance of processing feelings and practicing new thoughts. It's both.

Last thing that I want to talk about here are some actions that you might consider. Okay, so most of this is about going inward, processing your feelings, coming up with better feeling thoughts to kind of practice so you can show up how you want to show up. I wanted to add in something here because it comes up in coaching, particularly if you've been in "get my child" mode where you want your kids to clean differently.

What I notice is that the approach that your brain might offer you on default is from a place of control. Like I need to yell at my kids to get them to do a better job. I need to try to control them in the moment because I think that they should be doing things differently and that they should care more about the dishes and the laundry, and they know better. We have all of these thoughts that sound lovely, and yet they create a lot of disconnection.

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So instead of have that approach. I wanted to offer you another approach here. When you approach your home as a space to serve your family and you see yourself as one part of that family unit, and you don't see your family as an extension of you, you can include your family and take actions together that are collaborative. So what does this look like practically? Like, what am I talking about here?

Instead of trying to control your family from that place of they're an extension of me, and they need to do it my way. My way is the right way. It's having a more collaborative team approach. This might mean, for example, that you have a family discussion, and you ask for ideas of how everyone can both tidy up as well as live in a way that they are comfortable with.

It will look different for every family, but this could be that you decide during the week Monday through Friday everyone puts things away and kind of cleans up at the end of the day. But on the weekends, you take the two days off. You don't do any cleaning. No tidying up whatsoever.

Or it may be something different like all the common areas, we clean together and tidy up together, however you want to decide that. But the bedrooms can be kept however you want. So the kids don't have to clean up their bedrooms. Those are theirs. Or maybe you add in a caveat, except for a once a month clean so that things don't get really gross.

These are just kind of different ideas to get your brain spinning about what this might look like. The key is not so much the actions as it is I wanted to give you an example of what it might look like. Your kids, depending on their ages, but if they're old enough, they will have good ideas. If you come from a place of respect and collaboration. Like we're on the same team. I'm noticing that I'm doing more cleaning than I want to do, or that we're not cleaning in a way that works as a family system. Like let's sit down together and brainstorm ideas.

Maybe you try one way for a month. Then you say okay let's meet again and evaluate how that went. It doesn't have to be this let's make this one

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decision, and this is how we're going to do it forever. It's something that really is collaborative.

The biggest takeaway, I think, with this approach is that everyone is important and valuable in the home. You're not making the cleanliness or the organization of your home mean something about you, mean something about your worth, mean something about your role if you are the one who primarily takes care of the home.

Instead, you can kind of turn it on its head and make it mean that when your home is “messy” or when there are things all over the floor, that's actually a sign that you're doing a really good job because it means that you have a family who is comfortable at home, and you are all living a very full life.

So lots of reframes today. If you want the process to declutter, come join me inside Grow You. We are going to be really editing down our lives this month in a way that opens up and leaves space for the rest of the year and all of the goodness that we want to bring into our lives. All right my friends, I will talk with you next week. Take care.

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.