

Feeling Tired



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Natalie Bacon

[Design Your Dream Life](#) with Natalie Bacon

Feeling Tired

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.

What's happening, my friends? Welcome to the podcast. I'm so happy to be here with you. I just want to say thank you so much for tuning in week after week, for being such loyal listeners and followers, and being so engaged in this community. This podcast continues to do so well because of you. So I want you to know that you, yes you specifically who is hearing this right now, I genuinely appreciate you being here.

With that, I want to talk with you today about feeling tired or exhausted. So I recently finished the first trimester of my second pregnancy, which prompted me to do this episode after having a much diminished capacity and being more tired than my typical self that is not pregnant. I've also coached on this quite a bit, and it's not just for women who are expecting.

It could be that you just had a baby, or you are now working nights or one of your kids is up a lot more than they used to be or you have something going on physically that has made you so much more tired than normal. So I'm going to give a lot of examples from my life in terms of pregnancy, but it does apply to being tired for any reason.

So when your body is tired, it's showing you signs that it needs rest. I think we all know this, but these are usually just physical signs that you can pretty quickly identify as being tired. I do think that that's a really important first step. I think so often we don't take a pause and just acknowledge that we are tired.

By not doing that, we ended up feeling kind of irritable and overwhelmed when really if we just check in with ourselves and acknowledge oh I'm feeling tired right now. That can be a huge sense of validation that we can give ourselves so that it doesn't get to the place of irritability.

Feeling Tired

So let's say that you have acknowledged that you are tired. You know that you are tired. So if you are like me, what I tend to do once I feel tired is I make it worse. I add on negative thoughts that resist feeling tired. Now, this is so counterproductive because it doesn't actually help me. It doesn't get me the rest or the sleep that I need.

Yet, my brain kind of does this on default. My mindset will be something like this I can't do this. This is too much. It's so hard being tired. This is like so hard with little ones. I'm never going to sleep again. All of these sort of thoughts that I would describe as not useful or helpful.

The result of me thinking them is that my experience is now much worse. Now I'm tired, and I'm in self-pity, right? Self-pity is feeling sorry for myself because I think that my life is happening to me, right? I'm feeling sorry for myself because I'm tired. I'm thinking for me. So now I'm tired, and I'm thinking for me. So I've made it worse.

I think just having the awareness, if you do this, if you're like me, can be really helpful. Because you see the impact of it is that it doesn't get you rest. It doesn't help you. It probably makes whatever you're doing harder. I think that if you see that it's making it harder, you have a chance at stopping it and getting out ahead of it and having a much more empowered mindset around being tired. Yes, that is possible.

So if you do this, please do not beat yourself up. Adding judgment also won't help you change this either. So I think just noticing it. Huh, it's really interesting. I make it worse when I'm tired with my thoughts. Right? It's so important for you to see because you can just be tired, or you can be tired and mad, tired and irritated, tired and in self-pity. All of those emotions come from what you are thinking.

So once you have the awareness and you can see the impact of those thoughts and how it's making it worse, then I think you can decide on purpose how you want to think about being tired. For me, I'm often tired and unable to give myself sleep in that moment. So for example, I am with RJ most days. During the first trimester of this second pregnancy, I often

Feeling Tired

wanted to take a nap in the middle of the day, and wasn't really able to easily.

So instead of being mad about it or feeling sorry for myself, I had some go to kind of thoughts and mantras. The first one is being tired isn't a problem. Did you know that you can just think being tired isn't a problem? We often think it's such a huge problem, and we find evidence to support that. But you could just try on the thought I'm tired, and it isn't a problem. That feels so much better. It allows you to ease in to the tired, and you don't make it worse. You're still tired, but you're not tired and in self-pity. I promise you, it actually makes a really big difference, at least it does for me.

The second thought, I'm tired, and that's okay. This is very validating of my experience. It's me saying yes to me and my body. I'm tired, and that's okay. The third thought is I will sleep again. This helps me remember how I'm feeling right now is temporary. The brain loves to project your current state into the future indefinitely. So sometimes it can feel when you're tired like you're going to be tired forever. So when I think the thought I will sleep again, it gives me some reassurance and helps me remember that this isn't permanent. I will sleep again. This is temporary.

The last thought that I like is I can do tired. This helps me feel really empowered and think of being tired as a skill, almost like I'm increasing my capacity of what I can do while tired. Now, this doesn't mean I'm going to push myself. It just means I'm not adding resistance to my body's state of being tired.

Once I have this mindset, I then can take better actions to care for myself and give my body what it needs. But the order is really important here. I'm not trying to fix the problem by taking actions to solve tired right away. First, I look at my thoughts, I question them, and I choose better thoughts. Then I take the best action from the place where I'm feeling more empowered and accepting of what is.

So typically, from this place of cleaner thinking, even though I'm tired, I try to look at my day or my schedule, and see if there are any spaces to get

Feeling Tired

more sleep. I have personally really been using the saying of sleep when the baby sleeps now more than I ever did during the newborn phase when RJ was a baby. So now when my son goes to bed around 7:30 p.m., I make sure to also go to bed pretty early, like between 8:30 and 9:30. This way, I can get close to nine or 10 hours of sleep at night.

Now, when I'm not pregnant, I don't need this much sleep, right? Seven to eight hours is amazing, especially of straight through sleep, which, of course, isn't always the case. But being pregnant, at least for me during the first trimester, I definitely crave more sleep. So a lot of times I would prefer it kind of throughout the day. Like I would get tired after lunch and want a nap. But if I can't get that, I want to make sure that at a minimum, I'm going to bed early.

Sometimes I have to really remind my brain that this is the most important use of my time. Because in the moment, after the kids go down, it can feel a little bit like freedom and you want to relax and do whatever you want to do. Even if it's just watch a show or maybe do a little cleaning or work on a personal goal or hobby or talk with a friend. Whatever it is that's enjoyable for you at night is so great. However, if you're really tired, prioritizing sleep in the moment is the most important thing.

At least that's how I've experienced to be, and I have felt the urge to stay up after RJ goes to bed. Instead I just remind myself sleep is the most important thing right now. The next day I never regret it. I'm always so glad that I hooked my future self up. So that's really what you're doing. You are in the present saying future self, I got you. Let's get some more sleep.

Now one other thing that I also do with sleeping while the baby sleeps is if RJ takes a nap. It's not always the case, right? He's transitioning right now. But when he does, I try to sleep when he sleeps during the day. I don't always do this, but I check in with myself. I would say about a third of the time or half of the time I sleep.

Now, even during the "fourth trimester", those first three months after he was born, I didn't sleep during his naps. I really didn't need it or want it. I

Feeling Tired

wanted to work. I wanted to do some other things for myself. I liked being awake. There's just something about that first trimester during pregnancy where all I want to do is sleep. So for me, personally, there's just nothing like being tired during pregnancy.

So looking for little ways that I can adjust my calendar that I can adjust my life has been really helpful. This has meant that a lot of times, I'll work on the weekends. I would rather work on the weekends when Steve is around to kind of help out with RJ so that I can sleep during the week when it's tiring taking care of a toddler during the day. So that's been working right now, but I think kind of another point that I want to make here is that it's always changing and evolving. I'm really acutely aware of intentionally redeciding and making those changes.

So I know for a lot of you, if you've had a diagnosis and you're more tired, or you're on new medication and you're more tired, or you just had a baby, or there's been a change in your capacity that has left you feeling more tired.

I want you to give yourself permission to redecide how much sleep you need. Redecide what your 100% is. Redecide when you want to take naps. Redecide if you can cut out some other forms of self-care and replace it with sleep. A lot of times we love or other types of self-care, and me included. But when my body needs that extra sleep, I make sure to make that a priority.

Now let's talk about variations of this. What about extreme times when you really believe you can't get more sleep? Let's say your spouse works nights. You're up with several kids, and you're also pregnant. Fill in the blank with whatever circumstances are making it really challenging for you to get the sleep that you need. So you're just perpetually tired.

I think the most important thing to do you hear is clean up your thinking. Because if you're feeling really disempowered, like this is happening to you, and there's no way out, it's so much harder to come up with solutions. It can even sound like this. This is so hard for me right now, and yet, I know

Feeling Tired

that my life is happening for me. I know that I'm getting stronger, and I can figure this out.

Whatever it takes to get you to drop any self-pity or martyrdom or judgment of yourself and really just get into acceptance is going to be the most important thing because you'll take action that will lead to helping you and benefiting you from an empowered place.

If you are in self-pity, for example, you will probably stay stuck. Your brain won't look for solutions, and you'll make the experience worse. So from feeling more capable and empowered, and yes, also extremely tired, now what? What can you try that you haven't thought of? I think brainstorming a list of 50 things. The brain loves confusion. It loves I don't know. But I promise you, you can train your brain to come up with ideas you never would have thought of. This only comes from directing your brain to list 50 things or 25 things.

So just some examples off the top of my head. Maybe you give yourself some boundaries around your own screen time so that you know you can more instantly fall asleep as soon as the opportunity arises. I know that for me and what they've shown in studies is that the more screen time you have right before sleep, the harder it is for you to sleep right away. So maybe you limit screen time.

Maybe some other things you write down are asking your spouse for help for a few hours on a certain day so that you can sleep, even if it's the weekend. Another thing you might write down is just being more direct with what your needs are. A lot of times I think that we take on this role as needing to do everything for the family because we are mom. So we look for validation for doing a good job in not asking for help. Like we think by not asking for help and by doing everything that that validates we are somehow good.

I just like to remind myself I'm a human. I'm a human being, who yes is a mom, yes is a homemaker, but also need sleep and water and food and rest and lots of other self-care, movement and showering and friendships

Feeling Tired

and relationships. I am a human being. Just reminding myself humans needs sleep.

So being direct with what your needs are and being very clear about them, I think, can be a skill, like a confidence building skill that can be so helpful when you are feeling tired and not having that need met. You might write down another idea of even taking some PTO.

In this example, I'm just thinking that you work and maybe you have some PTO built up. During this season, maybe for the next four Fridays, you take the afternoon off, and you sleep. Or maybe you asked your neighborhood Facebook group if anyone can babysit or volunteer to kind of help for a couple hours a week so you can sleep.

I think a lot of the solutions, particularly if this is an instance where you have little ones, will be asking for help. I think for so many of us, this is so hard because we see it as a sign that we are doing a bad job. I want you to take it to mean that you are just a human mom. You are a good mom who is doing a good job, and you also are a human who needs sleep.

So just notice if you have any hesitations about asking for help. Getting better at asking for help and being direct with your needs can really have this impact in your life where you end up taking such better care of yourself. That, of course, has the ripple effect onto your family as well.

So that's an example where you're feeling extremely sleep deprived from little ones and family. But what about in a different scenario where it's not about your kids. So I've coached clients who have personally struggled to go to bed earlier and really get a handle on their sleep. Like they want to sleep more, but in the moment, they have the urge to stay up later. They regret it in the morning and then it's a cycle.

So what I would say here, and one more example also would be if you have a diagnosis or you're on medication or something that impacts your sleep negatively. I still think that doing this work can be really helpful, right? Because you're getting a handle on having some discipline and what you're

Feeling Tired

making everything mean. So your thoughts and your feelings, which you do have control over.

So in this scenario where it's not about family, it's not about kids, it's not really about those extra demands. It's just about another circumstance, maybe medical, or it could also be just that you don't have those things, but you still are going to bed later than you want to be going to bed.

I think making a decision and committing to an earlier bedtime, to lay down in bed. Just doing that no matter what, even if you just lay there and can't sleep, that will lead you to a better relationship with sleep because you're showing your body that this is what you do. It will become a habit, but it will just take some time.

So let's say that you are going to go to bed from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Let's say that you've tried this before in the past, and from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m. you're pretty much awake. So in the past you've journaled or you've scrolled social media or you just get up because you can't sleep. What I want you to do is decide that 10 p.m. is your bedtime and commit to it. So you get in bed, and you stay laying down. You don't scroll, you don't journal, you just try to sleep. Even if you fail, you're conditioning your body that this is what we do.

In the other examples, if you say yes body, we're going to try to sleep at 10. Then at 10:15, you're like well actually, just kidding. Let's scroll. Your body remembers that, and your body says well scrolling is more fun. Let's get this dopamine hit. So it will work against you in your efforts to try to sleep during that time.

So what you want to do is really condition it to go to bed at the bedtime that you decide. This is a decision that you've made ahead of time. This is a commitment. So there's no drama. There's no willpower. You're just doing what you say you're gonna do. You may fail at it. You may just lay there from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m. But I promise you, eventually you'll condition your body to sleep.

Feeling Tired

Of course if you have sleep challenges that require medical help, this isn't going to solve it. But outside of that, I'm talking about the typical I'm staying up too late scrolling, and I'm mad about it, this will solve it. I also think that if you do have some of those conditions, it can be very empowering to just decide and commit to the times that you are going to sleep.

Now, of course, this assumes that you don't have little humans getting you up in the middle of the night. But aside from that, where you do have that control, committing to that bedtime will be beneficial if that's something that you want to work on. Again, it comes up a lot in coaching.

I think that we think because it's hard that we should just get up or get on our phones or wait until our bodies will go to sleep. The problem with that is every time you journal or you get on your phone, and you have all that light in your face, you're just making it harder. So you want it to just be as hard as it's going to be at 10 p.m. without doing any of that and train your brain and your body that this is what we do. We go to bed at 10 p.m. It'll take a little bit of time. How long will depend on your specific body and brain, but it will be an improvement.

So the last thing that I kind of want to mention here to think about is it is harder to manage your mind when you're tired. So it's just your prefrontal cortex sort of goes offline, as I like to say. So when you wake up, and you feel better or more refreshed and your most thoughtful part of your brain, that prefrontal cortex is online, you can think about your future. You can think about your plans. You can think clearly.

As the day goes on, and you're making decisions and you get decision fatigue, and your brain gets tired, that part of the brain really goes to sleep, for lack of a better phrase, which means that your primitive brain is online. So if you ever do like mindless eating or drinking at night, this is sort of why, right? It's those primitive desires. They are winning and dominating at night.

So if you're like me, and you worry or you get anxious or you have thoughts about a goal or your family that feel heavier or worrisome at night, I like to

Feeling Tired

remind myself that I'm tired. This is not the highest functioning part of my brain that is thinking these things. So I'm going to sleep on it. I'm going to think about it in the morning. I cannot tell you how many times that whatever I was thinking about at night isn't even something I care at all about in the morning.

So my primitive brain will sort of make things bigger and more dramatic, and more of a problem, like that scarcity comes out. But when my prefrontal brain, my clear, future focused, thinking part of my brain comes back online, that fear based brain is so much quieter and somewhat controlled. So if you experience this as well, just remind yourself oh, I'm tired. There goes my crazy brain again. It's totally fine. That way you don't have to believe those thoughts. You can just tell yourself okay, I am going to re decide about this or think about this when I am I more rested.

Give yourself permission to do that. Because when you do think about it again when you are thinking more clearly, it will be a completely different experience. Even if it is something that you want to continue to think about, you will be so much more clear minded and able to focus on real solutions and working through whatever it is that you are thinking about in a way that is productive and useful.

So yes, it is harder to manage your mind when you're tired. But doing some of this work out of the moment ahead of time in terms of the thoughts that you want to have about being tired. Instead of I can't do this, this is too much, it's so hard. You can have thoughts like being tired isn't a problem. I'm feeling tired, and that's okay. I will sleep again. I can do tired.

Planning those thoughts, writing them down, having these mantras can help you embrace the tired particularly when you can't get the rest that you want in that moment. It's still going to be tiring, but you won't have tired plus self-pity, tired plus irritation, tired plus anger. So my friend if you are feeling tired, I hope that these tips were helpful for you. Let me know and I will talk with you next week. Take care.

Feeling Tired

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.