

# Who Do You Want To Be In Your Circumstances?



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Natalie Bacon**

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

## Who Do You Want To Be In Your Circumstances?

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. Welcome to today's podcast. We are diving into the topic of Who Do You Want To be In Your Circumstances. This is one of my favorite practices because of how powerful it can be. Before we dive into that though, I wanna make sure that you know that you can join me live tomorrow. I absolutely love talking on the podcast with you here, but of course it is mostly one-sided. If you join me live for tomorrow's workshop on Stress Less, you will get a chance to interact with me, which makes it so fun because we can go back and forth and instead of it being one-sided, there is a sense of community there and we really take the teachings and practices that I talk about on the podcast to the next level.

So a lot of times it can be helpful and motivating and inspiring to hear a podcast, right? Otherwise, why do we listen? But after that, that can fade and we can sort of forget what we learned and we need another dose of it in order for it to make an impact. With coaching, you will find that you'll have epiphanies and realizations and little breakthroughs that are long lasting because of the way that I am trained, I can uncover kind of what's really going on with your specific challenge. All that is to say I would love to see you tomorrow at the Stress Less workshop. I am going to be teaching and providing you all of the good new research on stress, but I think even more compelling than that is coming so that I can answer your questions so that I can coach you live.

When you join no one will be able to see you or hear you. I always like to say that ahead of time because I don't personally like when I join a Zoom call, unbeknownst to me that everyone is on video. I prefer it when the teacher, the leader, the coach is the one on video, and then everyone else is sort of kind of listening. And then if you want, you can type in the q and a or raise your hand. That is how I run all of my public calls and all of my program calls. So that is what you can expect. It is tomorrow. If you're

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listening to this in real time, it is on April 20th. So if you go on over to [nataliebacon.com/stress](https://nataliebacon.com/stress) and register, you're going to want to try to come live to the extent that you can so that you really can ask me anything.

I can answer your questions and we can apply the specific tools there to what's happening in your life. If you can't make it live, there will be a limited time replay if you are someone who needs to watch the replay instead. But to the extent you can pop in those AirPods and join me live over at [nataliebacon.com/stress](https://nataliebacon.com/stress). I am just so excited to host this. I'm really looking forward to getting to know you more and to coaching you on the topic of stress. I was actually using some of the tools that I will be teaching the other day cuz I was feeling a lot of stress. And as you will learn, not all stress is bad. In fact, there is a time and a place for good stress and knowing that really helped me to not resist the stress, to not avoid it, and to embrace it as something that was actually helpful.

So enough about stress. For right now, if you wanna learn more and get help with something that you are going through, join me at [nataliebacon.com/stress](https://nataliebacon.com/stress). Now let's dive in to today's podcast episode topic on Who Do You Want To Be In Your Circumstance? So have you ever heard that there are no dumb questions? That's not true. There are lots of dumb questions. Maybe not dumb but bad. There are definitely bad questions. Bad questions are questions that when asked give you a bad answer. So if you ask the question, why is this always happening to me? That's a terrible question to ask yourself because your brain will look for the answer and it completely disempowers you in the same way asking, you know, how can I get my fill in the blank to do X, Y, Z? How can I get my child to, how can I get my spouse to, how can I get my mother-in-law too?

I call it get my fill in the blank mode, get my child mode, get my spouse mode. Whenever you are asking a question like that, again, it disempowers you because it's focusing on someone else's actions which you can't control. So I like to just notice on purpose the types of questions that my brain is asking and before answering them, or even when I do answer them, just notice, do I like this answer? Is this useful and helpful in my life?

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And if not, let me drill down and see what the question is and re-ask or ask a different type of question. So all that is to say, if you ask yourself better questions, you will get better answers. I do this all of the time in my own daily life. Like every day I pretty much question the questions I'm asking and try to come up with better questions and then I get better answers and that helps me live a better life.

So one of the best questions that I think you can ask is, given my circumstances, who do I want to be? Who do you wanna be given Father-in-law is like this or given the health diagnosis or given what's happening in the schools where you live, whatever you are going through in your life, it's a real challenge for you. And one of the most empowering questions that you can ask is, who do I want to be? I think that at first glance, this question sounds so obvious, and almost fluffy, but I want to point out that it is neither, it's not so obvious because on default, when we're actually in the thick of a circumstance, our default brain goes to fix-it mode. What should I do to fix this problem with my spouse? What should I do to fix this challenge that my child is having?

What should I do to make sure that we close on this home? What can I do to convince my coworker that they're wrong? And that is not the best question to start with because it's starting from the actions. And until you clean up your thinking and decide who you want to be, how you want to think and feel, you're not ready for what actions to take. So oftentimes when we're asking the question, what should I do, it's geared towards things we can't control and focused on how can I control them? And it really is disempowering because of course it doesn't work and it leaves us miserable when we focus that way. It's also not fluffy because there's a real way to answer this that really requires introspection. So it's not who do I want to be as some like vague question, the way that I teach it and use it.

I'm really directing you to go inward and take a look at you at your highest self. What does she think about this? What does she consider? What are her values? Who does she wanna be in this circumstance? How does she want to feel? And then what does she wanna do? It's not that we don't ever

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ask the question, what should I do? I just don't think that's the best first question, A really good first question is, who do I want to be in this circumstance? So notice when your brain just immediately wants to problem solve and go to what should I do here? And notice how that focuses first on the actions. And if you take action from your first set of default thoughts, oftentimes they won't be the most empowering. So if your brain is like most healthy human brains definitely like my brain, it immediately goes to fear and worry and overwhelm while taking action from that place isn't going to be as helpful and empowering as taking action from a place of confidence and feeling empowered.

So you wanna clean up the way you're thinking about it and clean up how you're feeling about it first, and then decide what actions that you want to take. You always can control who you want to be, and this is why I love the question so much because it really will empower you if you focus on external control, who they're being, what they're doing wrong, or how something has gone wrong in the world or the school system is wrong, or whatever it is. If you focus on trying to control things that you don't have agency to control, again, it doesn't work, number one. So that's not helpful. But also it leaves you feeling miserable. As someone who is a recovering people fixer I can confidently say that I was very miserable trying to control all of the people outside of me who are not controllable darn it, right?

I promise you, if there was a way to control them, I would say have at it, but there's not. So what this question does is it helps you focus inward on what you can control. And since you can control yourself, it can feel very empowering and be ultimately very helpful. So the idea behind this question is that you focus on the thoughts and feelings first, rather than the actions that you take. First, you get to a cleaner place, I like to call it cleaner, meaning you're showing up as the best you. So for me it's what is the best version of Natalie think and feel in a circumstance like this? What is the best version of me do? How does she navigate this? It really empowers you to ask this question. And I think that again, it seems like kind of an obvious sometimes even fluffy question, but when you're in a challenging circumstance, your brain will not default to this question.

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Um, at least in my experience as a coach coaching thousands of clients and and myself as well, we don't look to ourselves, we don't even know oftentimes that we can look to ourselves. And then once we do know, it's just often not a habit. So I try to consciously remember that I have the power to change how I think and feel about this. And what I wanna do if I can't change my circumstances is to change who I am being in my circumstances. So that's sort of the gist of this question. Um, I wanna go through some examples. So inside Grow You there is a 24 7 written coaching forum that's completely anonymous. Did you know this? It's incredible. It's incredible because the questions and answers are published in the portal for everyone to read through. It's got like a little search bar and it's organized really easily and and aesthetically pretty as well.

And you can search by topic. So if you are navigating something challenging in your marriage, you can search that, you know, irritated by spouse or whatever it is. And then all of the questions that have ever been answered on that topic will filter and you can read the questions and answers because they're anonymous. Everyone feels so comfortable asking exactly what they want coaching on. And I find it to be incredibly powerful to get written coaching. It's funny, I'm talking about this now because just this morning on Instagram, someone sent me a DM and she was saying that she's a Grow You member and how thankful she was for the written coaching. I gave her an ask a coach. She was going through the grieving process recently and having the question and answer for her to go back to and read through has been so powerful as she navigates a huge loss in her life.

And so I think there is just something incredibly powerful about written coaching because you have it, you can take that screenshot or copy and paste it and save it to your phone and read through it again and again. And that was, um, just so lovely to hear for her. Um, and, and I just wanna point out that that is something that can be incredibly powerful that I think we underestimate just rereading our own coaching that we get, um, to apply it to our life. And really living in the awareness of it gets you the transformation in a really powerful way. So I wanna take some examples



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from my extraordinary clients who have anonymously submitted to Ask A Coach. And I'm just gonna take sort of the gist of the circumstance without any of the, of the details and go through how you would apply this question in real life.

And then I wanna talk with you about some examples in my life. First, I do wanna point out that this is a question you can ask regardless of the gravity of the circumstance. So it might be that you ask this question when you are dealing with a major life challenge, like a health diagnosis that was unexpected for yourself or someone in your family, and it really feels like a huge life transition that you are going through, or, and or. You could also ask this question and I recommend asking it for the really little stuff as well. So it's all circumstances. It doesn't really matter whether they're quote unquote big or small. How you show up in them is what matters. So I just like to point that out and I tried to pick a mix of examples where they are what we would typically think of as like day-to-day challenges, but also some that would be, um, either once or twice in a lifetime.

Challenges. Either way, this question can be so, so very helpful. So this first example, I have been coaching a ton recently on in-laws navigating challenges with in-laws. In this specific example, this client was experiencing her in-laws being very pushy and demanding, asking them my client and her spouse to do things and commit to things. And when the client said no, um, the in-laws would continuously ask and ask. And so my client really wanted to feel validated, which understandably so that's what we want is this validation for our experience. But as her coach, my job is to push her to help her get to the most empowered place through this challenge. And that's exactly what I did. And we did it by asking the question, who do you wanna be? I wish that I could control her in-laws for her, but of course I can't. And of course she can't.

And the more that she tried, she said she did not feel so great. She said, even when they would say yes, she still wasn't happy. So either way, my client was feeling sort of, um, unhappy navigating her in-laws and saying yes or saying no to things. And so what I asked her was, who do you want

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to be in this circumstance? Assume your in-laws are going to be exactly the same as they've always been. Do you ever notice how people are very predictable, they've been this way that is a challenge for you for so long? Um, so the good news is that can be a really powerful way to do some pre-coaching and decide ahead of time, okay, given that I have in-laws who operate very differently from me and who, you know, ask things of us in a way that I don't particularly like, which I'm fully entitled to, who do I want to be?

And I think that sometimes, again, when I first ask this question and introduce it on the podcast, it sounds like such an easy question and, like a happy question. And yet when we apply it to a challenge, a real challenge that you're going through, oftentimes I don't think the answer comes up as quickly as we expect it to. Like a lot of times the human brain will go to like, I don't know, I just want them to change. Can you please change them? And I, again, I wish I could, but it doesn't work like that. So you may have to spend some time brainstorming a little bit like, what is the version of you? Who is you at your highest? What does she do in a circumstance with in-laws who are like this? Is she honest, but in a very loving way? And like what does that look like?

I think that some of the most challenging moments for us, or relationships for us are really an opportunity for growth. And there is an opportunity to step into that growth. So I don't know this at all, but maybe if this client was someone who, um, was having people pleasing tendencies intended to not want to be confrontational and not share what she was experiencing, then this would be an opportunity for her to decide, you know what? I actually want to tell the whole truth to my in-laws and say, Hey, this is what this experience is like for me. And again, when you say it like that, it's, this is how I'm interpreting things. This is my experience. We love you, we wanna see you, and also we do things a little bit differently. And also when you ask us multiple times, it's hard for me to say yes or say no.

And I just wanna share that with you. Like, I don't know about you on the other end listening to this, but when I say that out loud, even for me,



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someone who does this work, that's hard or because we have all of these thoughts about we wanna be a good person, you know, a good wife, a good, um, daughter-in-law, a good family member, and we care about what the other person thinks. So we don't want them to think poorly of us. We also don't want to cause anyone else discomfort or pain. We don't want to make things worse. And again, those are all sort of primitive default thoughts that we have because the brain wants to be included and liked and loved and, and that's fine. But I think noticing that and noticing that that's what's happening really can be helpful in allowing you to see it as an opportunity for growth. That even though it might be uncomfortable, you at your highest self is having a conversation at least to share your perspective on how things are going.

Another client example came from a client who felt disrespected by something that someone had said to her at work. And again, asking her, who do you want to be in your circumstances, it presents an opportunity for her to explore, how can I be who I want to be here? We can't change the other person, but we can decide how we want to show up. And she decided that her at her highest self is someone who is kind back, but also shares her experience of it. So it sounded like having a conversation with that other person and saying, Hey, you know what? I really didn't like that you said that. And to me it was a little bit disrespectful. So in the future I would prefer if you please didn't say that, period. There's no explanations, there's no, I'm so sorry. There's no avoidance, there's no drama and complaining. There just is. This is who I want to be in this circumstance.

Another client example came from a wonderful client who said, you know, every day after work when my husband gets home, he is so moody. So applying this question, the question then becomes, who do I want to be when my husband comes home and he is moody? Do I want to be someone who is compassionate and kind and loving and connected to the extent that I can? Maybe yes, some days, other days maybe you don't have that capacity. But she was focusing initially so much on how could she get him to not be moody? And of course, we can't control other people's feelings.

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Now that doesn't mean that she can't also talk with her husband about it and kind of share with him how that experience is for her every day and make a request of him that he not be so moody. Yes, 100% she can and should do that if she wants to. But the difference is in whether the question is being asked from the motivation to try to change and control spouse or whether it's being asked from the motivation of this is just the type of spouse who I want to be. In one case in the first you are trying to control spouse, and in the other it's focusing on controlling yourself. So regardless of how spouse responds, you will feel like just asking that question was effective. If it's coming from the place, this is how I want to show up. As a wife who has a husband who comes home, who is moody after work, if you are sort of in how do I get my husband to do this mode, then you will be focusing on the outcome based on his actions, which we can't control. So just something to notice and pay attention to when we make requests. What's the motivation behind the request? And are we sort of managing our minds first?

The next example from a client was experiencing pregnancy loss. A client had a miscarriage. Again, this is a circumstance that is very hard and challenging and something that you wouldn't wish on anyone. And the question becomes as you're going through such a hard time, how can I show up here in a way that serves me? Who do I want to be through this? I wanna give myself love and grace and I wanna allow myself to, to cry and grieve and I want to really take care of myself. That focuses, again, internally on who you want to be given a really challenging circumstance instead of what can be sort of the default brain going to questions that aren't that useful.

Why is this happening to me? Something's gone wrong, this shouldn't be happening. And that gets into experiencing a lot of dirty pain, as I call it, just questions that aren't useful and will add resistance to the suffering. So you can feel negative emotion like grief and heartbreak and even devastation and disappointment and loss, and process those feelings from a clean place without adding onto it. The resistance and the suffering that comes from thinking this shouldn't be happening. Something has gone wrong, this

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is terrible. Why is this happening to me? So all this question does is it helps you accept the circumstances and control who you are being in them, specifically in circumstances that you can't change. So if you don't like the weather where you live, you can go and live somewhere else with different weather, you can move, but you can't actually change the weather in the location that you live.

You don't have that control. So there are some circumstances we can change, like moving and others that we can't. And this question is really useful when you are in circumstances that you don't particularly like. So, um, whether that is because of, of someone else's actions and and how they're being, or whether it's just because of the, the sort of hand that you've been dealt, unfortunately, or whether it's because of something that you created, even if you're having a marriage challenge, that that is stemming from something that you did. This is still a really empowering question to ask. I just had a thought about an example from my life where I mistakenly texted. This was years ago, someone who I was dating at the time, and I texted that person instead of texting my friend, and you probably know where this is going, the text was meant to be about this person and go to my friend.

So I had written in a text, some not so nice things about this guy and sent it to him. And I have never done this in my entire life, and I just had this wave of shame come over me and the relationship, the dating relationship ended after that. And I remember using this tool at the time and it was so helpful. I still had the embarrassment and the shame and the guilt, and I processed those feelings, but I never thought this shouldn't be happening. Something has gone wrong. Now, of course, I showed up how I wanted to, I apologized profusely. I was, you know, just horrified. And, um, I learned so much from that. But it, I never resisted that it had happened. I don't know why it happened. It happened because I was careless in who I was texting. And from that I created that unfortunate circumstance, but I decided who I wanted to be.

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So I can't go back and undo the text. I just can't. So asking the question, why did this happen? How could this happen? Those types of questions are not useful. Instead I decided to accept where I was and just ask myself, all right, Natalie, who do I wanna be in this circumstance? So that example is a good one to point out that sometimes we are the creators of circumstances that we don't like, and yet this can be just as an empowering of a question to ask even in those circumstances as well. Some other examples from my life, you know, I remember graduating law school and looking at my student loan debt for the first time and seeing that I had \$206,000 of student loan debt and it would've been really easy for me to blame that debt on the system or my parents or just anyone who was not me.

And instead of blaming anyone at all, I just accepted it and said, this is what it is. Now what, who do I want to be here? I wanna be someone who slays this debt. I wanna pay off this debt and see what's possible. And of course, that's what I did. I started a business, paid off all my debt. It was amazing. Okay? So, you know, it's turning challenges into opportunities to learn and grow, even those really hard challenges that seem impossible to work through. You can still ask a really empowering question like this, who do I want to be? So when we were navigating trying to have kids, Steve and I, I remember having so many fears and doubts that I wouldn't be able to get pregnant or conceive. And it took us, I think, what was it, four months with RJ and six months with baby number two.

And so, you know, depending on your experience, that might be a long time if you got pregnant right away. And for others of you who either are still trying to have kids or haven't had kids or won't have kids and have tried, that might not be long at all. So, you know, know there's, I'm not trying to um, compare at all here, but in my experience when I was going through that, I always came back to the question, who do I want to be? I wanna be someone who continues to believe and keeps trying. That's who I wanted to be. I can't control it. And if we get to the point where we needed extra help, then we would navigate that. And in this case we didn't. But again,

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instead of focusing on external things that I can't control, it's who do I want to be given this circumstance of we're not pregnant yet.

Um, the same thing with being single in my thirties and wanting to get married and have a family. It was who do I wanna be? And I wanted to be someone who continued to date and, and try and that served me really well. So there are challenges that are unforeseen. The health challenges or the challenges that are created by other people. There are the challenges that are the day-to-day small stuff. Um, there are the challenges of the big stuff, the once in a lifetime stuff. And no matter what type of challenge it is, redirecting your brain to who do I want to be in this challenge is one of the most useful and empowering questions because it allows you to decide on purpose. Make sure that when you answer the question, you focus on you at your best. You focus on future, you, you focus on your highest self. We don't wanna go to the past and what you've done in the past to navigate a similar challenge. We wanna go to you in the future. Who do you want to be in this circumstance? This question, my friend will empower you, I promise. And with that, 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](https://nataliebacon.com/coaching) to learn more.