

How To Stop Worrying



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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.

Hello my friend. Welcome to the podcast. So happy to be here with you today talking about how to stop worrying. Do you worry a lot? I used to worry so much and then I learned these tools that I'm going to teach you here today and I worry so much less than I used to. I'm not perfect at it, but it plays such a small role in my life now. I like to think of worry being something that's now like in the backseat instead of the driver's seat. When you feel worry and it's in the driver's seat, it can feel like all encompassing and almost like out of control, like you have to get something done about this thing because it feels like fear in your body and there's this urgency to it that feels very real.

And it doesn't mean that the challenge isn't real, but there is a way for you to go about navigating that real challenge in a way that doesn't feel so intense and so worrisome. So let's talk about it. Your default brain has a critical function that is to protect you, to keep you safe and secure. That means that it is always scanning for what's threatening and dangerous. So it can avoid it. You don't have to learn to do this as humans. Our brains do this for us naturally, but what this looks like in our modern suburban lives is that we are worrying about things that don't actually threaten us. This is why we pay such close attention to the news. Our brains can't help it. This is why we want to know what's going on in our neighborhood. It's a protective mechanism that's rooted in fear.

It's thinking, I need to know what's going on so I can react and make sure that I'm good and my family's good. It's a very primitive critical function of

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the brain, and I'm sure I do not need to tell you that modern motherhood was designed for worrying from the moment of beginning to start a family through the entirety of a child's life. You can worry about something. You can worry about fertility, about pregnancy, about development, about labor and delivery, about milestones and health and childcare in school and teachers and friends and education and learning delays, behavior, activities, sports personalities, decisions, interests. Later on, it's college and partners and careers and life choices and the opportunity to worry never ends. And this is because of the human brain. It's not because there is something different about having kids. It's just that when you have a child, they are such a part of you and your brain knows how important it is to ensure their safety just as much as it is important to ensure your safety.

So in our modern lives, that means the brain loves to worry about your kids. I personally have experienced this and like I said in the beginning, I have done so much work on it that it's just in the backseat. It's not in the driver's seat. So it's not gone entirely, but I do a better job at managing it because of these tools. If you think about the way that we talk and connect with each other, you'll notice how often we say things that reflect the fear and the worry that we're feeling. So you might hear someone say, aren't you worried about that? They're offering you an opportunity to worry about something. And on default your brain will say, oh yeah, that means I should be worried about this thing. Or you might come up with it yourself and say, gosh, I just hope that my child does X, Y, z or stops doing a b c.

I'm concerned that my child is around this friend that isn't a good influence. Or I just hope my child is a good sleeper because I wasn't. Or I don't think my child is eating the right foods. And that's a problem. Like our brain makes problems out of everything. And that's not to say that these things don't matter, of course they matter. But there's a difference between something mattering and being important, something that you want to figure out and navigate and being overcome by fear. And I think, at least if

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you're anything like me, the default way of approaching a challenge or a problem, typically, at least initially, that's why I call it the default way, is from fear and from worry. And if you use these tools, it can be really helpful because you can still solve the challenge, but you can do it from a way where you approach it from much more empowering emotion fuel, for lack of a better word.

So instead of feeling fear and worry and concern, you could feel emotions like confidence and connection and feeling empowered and supportive. And the result of that is you take much better actions. So I think understanding why worrying is bad can really be helpful to understanding and utilizing the tools. So I think that worry feels really important. You don't have to learn how to worry, it will do this on default, but the problem is that it puts you into a fear state. Your body will feel tense and that emotion is what you might call concern or worry, but it's coming from that fear-based emotion. And your emotions drive all of your actions. So if you feel worried, if you feel concerned, if you feel fear, you will take actions that typically will focus on the external. Your brain will become fixated on the problem, fixated on the circumstances.

Most often circumstances that you can't control, your brain will likely catastrophize and go to its imagined worst case scenario, right? We don't even know what a worst case scenario is a lot of the time. And yet our brain comes up with very fear-based scenarios that feel so true like they're going to happen. And I think it can feel very scary and that then puts you into a state of wanting to control and fix and change and solve. So then there's this added urgency to it. So let's take an example. Let's say that you feel really worried about whether your kids are making friends. I've coached some clients on this example where they think that their child is struggling to make friends. So on default, your brain will feel really concerned and that feeling will go into worry. And that's coming from fear. It will feel tight in your chest and your brain will go into overdrive thinking about solutions.

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But when it goes into overdrive thinking about solutions from this place, it really tends to focus on what you can't control, which is the child, the people in the child's life, maybe like their friends at school who used to be friends, aren't friends anymore, or just kids in the neighborhood, maybe talking to kids' moms or talking to your girlfriends about what you can do, kind of feeling disempowered and talking a lot about it, looking up articles. Um, I also see a lot happen what I call the fast forward thought error, where you project this into the future as a huge problem, that they are going to feel isolated and this is going to affect their self-esteem and it's going to have this terrible negative ripple effect for the long term. I don't know if your brain is like mine on default, that is what it would do in a situation like this.

So seeing it out, meaning seeing what that feeling does in your body to drive your actions and seeing how it actually puts you in a very disempowered place and understanding that that's not the only option can really help you see the downside of worry, when I think about my life, I can totally relate to the catastrophizing. I used to do this a lot when I was single and I wanted to date and marry an amazing guy and I would worry about dating and meeting someone and getting married. And that fear drove me to act more needy and more clingy. And this just made dating so much more difficult and painful, right? That worry, that fear that felt so useful was actually a form of self sabotage. So I think just having that awareness of how you show up from worry is a huge benefit because you'll see the downside of worry because in the moment it feels so real.

It feels so true and important, but it's from this place of awareness that seeing it really doesn't serve you and that even though it feels responsible and the right thing to do, it actually isn't. And it doesn't help you show up. It doesn't have the upside that your brain thinks it does. It's not necessary for your survival. It's not necessary for you to solve the challenge even. I think

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that our brain thinks that it's the only way because it's the default way, but in fact, you can feel really empowered and you can choose how you want to feel and how you want to act and be a very active participant in navigating the challenge from a more empowered place. That's really the goal. So the goal is not to not care at all. It's not one or the other. That's that black or white thinking.

Either we are really worried about it or we don't care at all. Instead, it's getting to the middle where you care, but you do it from feeling empowered and not only does it just feel better, but your actions are so much more useful for helping navigate that challenge. So to solve for worry, I have four solutions, four steps, four tools that I think can be really helpful for navigating this challenge. And I want to just mention here, I didn't mention it yet, that next month in April, I am teaching a brand new class inside Grow You called Anxiety, Stress, and Worry. So if you are struggling with feeling anxious, feeling stressed or feeling worried, I'm teaching new tools inside Grow U that you will get on April 1st. And then we'll have a coaching call call and you'll also get a workbook with journal prompts and some mindfulness exercises to help you navigate anxiety, stress, and worry.

So if you want to reduce anxiety, stress or worry and you want to feel more empowered around anxiety, stress, and worry, join me over at nataliebacon.com/coaching and you can get this class and inside Grow You. It is a membership, but you can cancel any time with a click of a button in your portal. Super easy. So you really have nothing to lose, and I know that so many of you um, want more resources for anxiety, stress, and worry, and by popular demand, that is why I am creating this course. So with that, let's jump back into the actual tools for this podcast. So you have something to get started with.

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The first tool is to focus on what you can control. The brain and default will want to focus on circumstances that you can't control my child, the people in my child's life, what's happening at school, in the neighborhood, and on and on. But you can't control all of that. Sure, you can have influence, but what you really can control is how you think, how you feel, and the actions that you take. So decide on purpose, how do you want to think about this? Instead of going with what your default brain offers, you come up with more empowering thoughts that you can think. You might think something like, I have everything I need to solve this challenge. I got this. Like if you just practice that thought, imagine what fuel, what feeling you would generate, instead of generating that concern and worry, you would generate confidence, you would generate feeling empowered, or maybe you wanna feel more connected to your child or whatever other emotion you get to choose. And you can choose how you want to think in order to create that emotion. And then from there you can decide how you want to act. Instead of myself, I'm so guilty of this acting from default from that worry or fear, which usually ends up in kind of like a controlling energy and taking action from that place where you're rushing and there's urgency and you're trying to fix everything and it's just not the most useful way to approach it. So if you can really pause and focus on what you can control, which is how you think, how you feel, and the actions you take, you can decide what you want to be in the driver's seat, we're still gonna feel some fear. It's still gonna be there in the back seat, but it's not in the driver's seat.

Tool number two, make peace with your imagined worst case scenario. Your brain, like all healthy human brains likely has crazy ideas of what could happen. And in these ideas, what I find to be so interesting is it almost makes you an inactive participant as if it's just happening in front of you like a movie and you are incapable of navigating the challenge. Does your brain do this where the challenge just gets worse? It goes to worst case scenario and you're sort of just watching it all happen and you're not taking any action. So I think that there's value in imagining worst case scenario because it doesn't feel as vague. But also in that exercise of

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imagining worst case scenario, make sure you notice that you are an active participant and you would be able to navigate it even if it felt terrible, even if it was really hard, you still would be able to navigate a worst case scenario. And I think even though this feels scary, it feels less scary because it's not a vague mystery of unknowns.

Tool number three, give equal airtime to best case scenario. This is one that I absolutely love to use. The worry and fear channel in your brain needs to be changed. So imagine your child being completely content as they are without more friends or imagine them having lots of friends or imagine that this isn't even as big of an issue at all as what you're making it. Imagine that they grow up very well adjusted with fulfilling relationships. Whatever your best case scenario is, imagine that supportive story. I think that so often our brains get really good at imagining a worst case scenario, and we don't give enough airtime, we don't change the channel in our minds to best case scenario. For me, this almost provides immediate relief of that feeling of worry, and I'm reminded of how it's just a story in my brain, so I get a little bit of distance from the story, which is also really helpful.

Tool number four, feel your feelings. I know I say this a lot, but the human brain does not wanna feel feelings. The human brain wants to solve problems and fix and stay in the logical brain, but when you get into your body and you feel a feeling, there's no feeling that you can't experience. So it's saying, I can do fear, I can do worry. And you just watch it in your body and you breathe through it. You can go through the Processing Feelings course inside grow you in the library. This will also be really helpful for any other emotions, stress, anxiety, fear, frustration, all of those difficult challenging emotions to feel when you watch your feelings, you gain authority over them so you don't resist them. You don't think, oh no, this shouldn't be happening, this is bad. Which then it can turn into panic.

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Instead what you do is you go into your body, you breathe through it, you allow it, and that is good, good once the feeling is already there. So once you're already feeling worried, just allow it and feel it. And you can use some of these other tools where you make peace with worst case scenario. You give yourself equal airtime to best case scenario and you focus on what you can control. One of my favorite questions to ask is, who do I wanna be here? It shifts the focus back to what I can control. I can't control other people. And I know that there are circumstances and there are challenges, and these challenges are real. And yet that's part of life. That's what I've signed up for. And when I focus on who I want to be, it feels so much more empowering because even with bad things happening, even with really hard challenges and circumstances, I can always decide this is who I wanna be. And I can feel fear. I can be in the backseat that worry can be there, but it's not gonna be the driver.

When someone offers me aren't you worried about that? I'm going to in my mind say, no. I'm choosing not to worry about that. I'm choosing to show up from a place of confidence and from a place of capability and strength and feeling empowered because I know that I take the best actions from that place. Steve and I go back and forth all the time about living in Chicago versus South Carolina, and we recently, um, decided to stay down in South Carolina and and buy a house. At least that's where we're at right now. And it is so fascinating to watch my brain worry about things totally outside of my control, like after you sign a contract, the whole process. And normally I sleep so well at night and it's been so fascinating to watch my brain think about things that it's just useless to think about them. There's no utility in it.

It's not helping me. It's not empowering me. It's not a decision that we're thinking about. It's just my brain feeling very active because there are some unknowns. And when I just allow that and say, it's okay, brain, we'll worry about it in the morning, I can do this. I can feel this feeling. It really helps me see and get some distance from what's happening in my mind. So I like

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to make peace with worry, and if you join me inside, Grow You for the April class on anxiety, stress and worry, you'll get a much more comprehensive class. But just know that worry is a part of the human experience because it's rooted in fear, which is rooted in the critical part of your brain designed to protect you. And instead of trying to get rid of it all together, if you just think of yourself as having the option to put it in the back seat where you're going to kind of buckle it up and strap it in, allow it to be there. But at the same time, you're not letting it drive. You are the decision maker. You are the one who gets to decide what you want to think, feel, and do, and have in the driver's seat instead of worry, which you can have in the backseat. That's what I have for you this week, my friend. Take care 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.