

Episode: Deliberate Discomfort



With Natalie Bacon, JD, CFP ®, Certified Life Coach

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Welcome to the Design Your Dream Life podcast where it's all about designing your life on your terms and now your host, Natalie Bacon.

Hello, how are you? I'm so excited to be recording with you. So this is really funny. I just got all set up to do the podcast, which is what I do. I record on Mondays, it's my content day. I get all my content done on Mondays and I'm laughing because I've been trying to make this sound better, which is kind of impossible because I record in my living room at my desk, which is where I like to record.

And I don't put pillows all around. So to the trained listener, it will sound a little bit more, um, echo-y. And you can tell that I'm in an open space and there are hard surfaces and all this stuff, right? It could be better if I was in a very padded room, so I've at least been trying to do a better job of, of putting this little, you know, sound popper thing I don't even know what it's called in front of my microphone.

And I'm, the reason that I'm laughing is because I was just getting it all ready to go and I realized that the software program I use to record on my computer has been set to the wrong microphone and not just like today, now it's set to the right one, right? I use a Yeti mic but it was set last week and I listened and I'm like, it sounds even worse. And so I'm just laughing because I was doing all of this extra stuff to like have the mic, you know, standing in the right place and have this like popper thing in front of it and do a good job speaking into it. And like the whole time it was actually using my computer in my headphones to record the podcast, not this beautiful mic that I was talking into.

So super fun, really fun to continue to learn all about technology and just have those little instances of like you think you know what you're doing and then you definitely don't. That is not what we're going to talk about today.

Today we're going to talk about deliberate discomfort. I created this tool and I want you to use it in your life. I see the need for this over and over and over all the time. I'm telling you, it's so good. So what it means to design your dream life, it means that you create something new and different in your future that you haven't done in your past. Okay? So I'm like giving you that as the background because by definition, when you're designing your dream life, you're doing something new that you haven't done before.

And if you've been listening, you know that what I teach is that your brain, the human brain freaks out. When you do that, it likes to keep you safe. It's a survival mechanism. It just wants to keep you alive. And it knows that if you keep doing what you've done in the past, you'll stay alive.

So when you try to do something new, your brain feels uncomfortable. It feels fear, right? And what we do is humans is we make the fear mean something. And I'm using fear, but it's not just fear, right? It's like all the negative emotion. We make it mean something. So I want you to remember that the circumstances that exist don't have meaning until you give them meaning. And I'm not really into being super like Metta or woo woo or whatever. That's just not me. But

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this is so important. I really want you to understand this. Nothing has meaning until you give it meaning. So be careful what you are choosing to make your emotions mean.

What I see a lot is that people set goals like, Oh my God, they want to lose weight or they want to make more money or they want to start a business or they want to have better relationships. Whatever it is, it's something new and different and it's super fun when they do this and they're doing it, you know, from their prefrontal cortex, they're thinking big and dreaming and it's amazing and you're using your imagination and then once you get into it, once you start to take action and you're doing the things, it's not so fun.

It's actually very uncomfortable. And then as humans, right, we love the story so we give meaning to things. And what I want to bring your attention to is that making your negative emotion mean something that is not supportive or useful is actually going to sabotage your likelihood of success.

So what this looks like is saying, um, I launched a product in my business and I didn't make as much money as I wanted to. So that must mean that I'm just like not good at business and I'm doing this wrong and I just feel out of alignment. I hear, I feel out of alignment so much that I, every time I hear it, I just want to like stop the person and be like, you know that, that feeling, that discomfort like your causing by your thoughts.

Like it's not that the thing happened and then it made you feel that way. You made yourself feel that way. So just notice this, you know, it's saying, um, I haven't lost weight on this food plan yet. So something like clearly isn't working. And what is really interesting is that it always seems logical, so your brain will try to like connect the dots and make up a story.

But what's really happening is that you're assigning meaning to circumstances that are totally neutral and you can assign any meaning that you want. So instead of doing this to your disadvantage, I want you to do it to your advantage. And this means that you stop making obstacles, failures, and this discomfort of pursuing your goals mean that you're out of alignment or that something has gone wrong.

So in life there is good and there is bad, but there's this, you know, positive emotion and there's negative and it's always going to be that way. I talk about problems are forever and this is how this is great news, right? It's great news because it means that you don't have to rush to get to your goal. You don't have to rush to think that your life is going to be better when you lose the weight or when you make more money.

It's not you're going to have problems there. I promise you. There is no place where you arrive, where your problem free and there's no place where you arrive, where you escape negative emotion. So negative emotion doesn't have meaning until you give it meaning. Feeling rejected after someone you like doesn't want to see you again, doesn't mean that you're doing it wrong and that you should just stop dating and that it's not for you.

Feeling uncomfortable when you give up sugar and flour as part of your meal plan to lose weight doesn't mean that something's gone wrong, right? And we make it mean something's gone wrong

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all the time. Anytime that you set big goals, you're going to be scared. And the fear is real. It's not like you're afraid to fail and then you're not going to fail. It's not like you're afraid of being rejected and then you're not going to be rejected.

You're actually probably going to fail and be rejected. So it's not like the fear is illogical, it's legitimate, but I want you to get good at feeling that discomfort, the discomfort of the fear and do it anyway. In my opinion, the point of living is to find meaning in how you want to contribute to the world and in so doing grow and evolve into the next version of yourself. Otherwise it's just very comfortable and you're just staying the same.

So as part of designing your dream life, it's going to be uncomfortable. And I want you to plan for that. I want you to plan on being deliberate about your discomfort. Not only is it good for you to know this and prepare for it, this discomfort, but it's also important that you plan for and practice experiencing negative emotion. So like I said, emotion is always caused by what you think it's not caused by other people or your circumstances.

Now often when something happens and you interpret it as bad, you think that it will, like that thing happened to you and that is what's causing you to feel that way. But that's actually not what's happening. Something happened and that triggered a thought and that thought is causing you to feel a certain way. So know this and know that this is true. When you are experiencing negative emotion.

Negative emotion is just a vibration in your body. So all that discomfort is just the feeling you're experiencing in your body. Most people do not know how to experience negative emotion. They will avoid it, resist it, react to it instead of experiencing it. And what I want you to know is that emotion isn't so bad. And the better you get at experiencing negative emotion, the more you'll design your dream life because you won't avoid it.

You won't resist it. You won't react to it. So the next time that you are feeling angry or sad or afraid, separate yourself from that emotion and watch it, notice it. How does it feel in your body? Where do you feel it in your body?

This is a really good exercise to do with that thing that you're avoiding the most with that emotion that you want to avoid the most, because that's probably the emotion that you need to experience the most in order to get you to move through this period, to get to the other side. So the next time you have a negative emotion, instead of trying to escape it, be with it for at least 10 minutes and just allow it in your body. I don't want you to eat or drink or turn on Netflix or try to escape it in any other way.

I want you to just be with it. So all of those ways of escaping, I call it, is a way for you to seek pleasure, right? Your body, your brain doesn't like when you're in pain and it's starting to like react and resist and avoid. But I'm telling you, the magic is when you allow it, when you allow the emotion and you feel it and you just be with it and then so much of it will pass and it's okay.

It's not going to physically kill you, right? If you think about it, what's so bad about it? What's so bad about fear and rejection, right? It feels big and scary and awful and like you're going to die,

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but you're actually not going to die. So when you do this exercise and you allow the negative emotion, I want you to memorize it. And then after it passes, at some point in the future, I want you to recreate that negative emotion on purpose, using new thoughts.

So come up with a new thought that would create that emotion. I don't want you to think about how you felt in the past cause I don't want you to like use the past as a way to feel negative emotion. I want you to do it from your future and I want you to do it with your thoughts. So use your thoughts to create that negative emotion. And you're probably thinking, why would you do that? I want to feel happy or positive emotion.

You can do this with positive emotion and that's great, but positive emotion isn't the problem here, right? We love feeling excited and love and happy and joyful and peace and all that stuff. What I want you to do is feel the discomfort on purpose. Be deliberate about it so that you can experience it and be with it so that you don't avoid it in the future so that you do hard things.

And when you do this, I want you to increase the emotion. So it's a very intense, and the purpose of this is for you to see that you're the one causing your emotions. It gives you so much power. You can do this. If you're feeling anxious or afraid, you can make the feeling really, really exaggerated and then you can let it go. And then you can see that you are the cause. Like your body isn't causing you to feel a certain way and then you give it meaning.

So what I mean is I will hear people say, I'm just out of alignment. This just isn't for me. It doesn't feel right in my body as if their body is causing their emotions. It's the other way around. So you have a thought. Maybe the thought is like, I'm just terrible at this, or this isn't working.

And that feels really, really bad to you. So what I want you to do is I want you to feel that discomfort on purpose and then let it pass and know that it has no meaning until you give it meaning. I don't want you to try to escape your negative emotion and feel good all the time.

That's not the point of the human experience and it doesn't work and it won't help you design your dream life. There's always going to be that good and bad. And that is true now. And it's also true on the other side of your goals. So I love thinking about what will be different in the achieving of your goals and what will be the exact same. So I love using like the three main niches to kind of give examples in which would be money, health and relationships. So you'll hear me always giving a lot of examples in those areas.

And I love the weight loss example because I think we can all relate to it and we all, you know, like food. So if you think about losing weight or being at your best physical health and shape, what would be different and what would stay the exact same, right? It's not like over there is all rainbows and daisies. You might fit into your clothes better. You might like the way you look better. You might feel more energized, right? Because you're healthier. Be really honest about that.

But like would your relationships change? No. Would your money change? No. So just think about what would be different and what would be the same in the achieving of your goal. What I see is like people think that over there is so much better. Like it's the rainbows, it's the daisies,

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it's the unicorns, it's a problem free, it's all positive emotion and it's definitely over there and it's not right now because right now is hard, right?

It's like no matter where. And I love just thinking like, Oh yeah, this is the way of it. This is the hard part for today. And that's totally fine. I want you to plan for this discomfort and I want you to expect feeling discomfort. When you pursue your goals and you know that the worst that can happen is a negative emotion. You have the world in your hands, you will be willing to feel anything, so you'll be willing to go for it.

So there's the discomfort of where you are now. And then there's discomfort of who you're becoming in order to get the result you want. And often the discomfort of becoming the person you want to become is worse than just staying where you are. And so I think about, let's say you want to lose 50 pounds. So right now there's the discomfort of not thinking that you're at your best weight and you want to lose the weight and it's just you're just uncomfortable at this weight.

Let's say you want to lose 50 pounds, but then you decide to set this goal of losing 50 pounds and you start doing some sort of action plan. Let's say you give up flour, sugar and alcohol, and then you stop eating flour and sugar and drinking alcohol and you feel worse, so you actually increase your discomfort. Okay?

And this is what I see for all people who set goals. They're uncomfortable where they are now and then they start on a plan to achieve their goals and then they feel even worse. And this increased discomfort is what it takes for you to get on the other side for you to actually lose the weight. Because if you actually stop eating flour and sugar and you stick to your meal plan, you will lose the weight, right?

It's like in business as well. It's like if you want to build a six figure business and you set a goal to do that and you start taking action to do it, it actually feels way worse than if you just didn't do it. You would still be uncomfortable where you are now, but you would be less uncomfortable than if you were doing the hard things of doing the work.

But that discomfort, if you have the discipline and the real self care, right? I like to think of self care as discipline. If you have the self care to have the discipline to have the deliberate discomfort, you will get to the other side. So I like to think about last year when I was in my last summer in Ohio and I had all these things that I wanted to do, right? I wanted to enjoy the summer. I wanted to do tons of things with my friends and my family and really just be present. And you know what I did instead, I worked all summer, I quit my job and I worked including the weekends. It's like 70 degrees and it's sunny or it's 80 degrees and it's beautiful.

And I'm getting invited to go do things and I know I'm moving soon so it's totally justified that I would do this. But you know what I did instead? I worked, I went inside that coworking space at 8:00 AM on a Saturday morning and I worked all day, right? I had the discipline and I was deliberately uncomfortable because I knew that it was for a season. I knew that that's what it would take to get me to the other side and now I make a lot of money. I run my own business, I

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live in Chicago and I get to reap the benefit of that. Right? People say to me, it must be nice and I say it is. Yeah cause I worked for it. And you can have that too.

When you deliberately feel negative emotion in the pursuit of your goals, you will be rewarded. Now be careful. I want you to use this intentionally. I don't want you to indulge in confusion or worry or self pity, those non useful negative emotions. I'm talking about the useful negative emotion that is required for you to experience, for you to get to the other side, for you to build the business, for you to lose the weight, for you to make more money for you to meet the person, right?

How many dates are you willing to go on to meet that person who you want to be with? It's not fun, right? So you have to know what emotions are required for you to feel. Because from emotion you take action or you don't take action. If you are not taking action on your goals, take a look. It's probably because you're indulging in self pity. You're worrying, you're obsessing over your problems, you're feeling confused.

That type of negative emotion is not useful. So I want you to think about what it is you're working on, your goal right now, that next version of yourself, and I want you to write down the negative emotion that you need to be willing to experience, to get the result that you want. Be deliberate about your discomfort.

What feelings do you need to experience? Is it fear? Is it rejection? Is it humiliation? Is it courage? Is it acceptance? Is it loneliness? Is it learning how to experience cravings and urges? What is it? This awareness will help you give the appropriate meaning to failures instead of self sabotaging and what I mean by that is the next time that you do something in pursuit of your goals and you fail, instead of making it mean that you're not on the right course, you will just make it mean that this is part of it.

This is the journey from where I am now to where I want to go. Be willing to feel the negative emotions on purpose. When I think back to law school, I was uncomfortable for three years straight. Literally, I didn't read, I didn't, I mean, let me back up. I read a lot. I didn't read for pleasure. I wasn't like learning the things I wanted to be learning. I was like reading about case law and I was in constant fear of being humiliated in front of hundreds of people every day in class. The Socratic Method in law school, the professor will just call on you at random and have you answer the question and it's not like a B or C answer. It's like answer and give your reasoning in front of hundreds of brilliant people. Okay? And I am a really hard worker, but like I am not the naturally smartest human.

So I'm telling you this because I want you to know that that was deliberate discomfort. I was willing to feel uncomfortable for three years to sit for the bar exam, to study for three months straight to feel miserable. Do you know the week of the bar exam? I was sick. I woke up every morning, literally physically getting sick in the bar exam room with hundreds of people and it's like a warehouse.

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They were making jokes at the beginning about getting sick and they had a whole table of medicine for people. I mean, that's insane and it's like funny now, right? Was it worth it? Absolutely. Okay. Now most negative emotion will not cause you to be sick. I was not physically sick during law school. I was only physically sick during the bar exam, but my point is that the discomfort was worth it, right? I knew I wasn't going to do this for the rest of my life.

I knew that law school was for three years. Same thing with medical school. You're trained to be miserable for four years. Go talk to someone in medical school or residency. Right? But it's on purpose. It's the self care. It's the discipline knowing that they want to become a physician or an attorney or whatever it is.

Now I see this with people in professional school and I don't see it with us in our own goals. I think it's because in law school or in medical school, we have this plan set out for us. Someone tells us, you know, go to school for three years and take the bar exam. Then you're an attorney and then you can get a job and this is the plan, right? Someone gives us that plan just like medical school or any other school. But when it's your business, when it's weight loss, when it's money, when it's relationships, it's up to you to figure out your own plan and decide what kind of discomfort it's gonna take for you to get to the other side.

And I want you to know that you have it in you to do this. You don't need someone else to give you the plan. You have the plan. It means you're going to fail for sure. It means you're going to feel uncomfortable. It means you might be humiliated or rejected. And it's totally fine. If you keep working on your thoughts and you keep becoming that person, you will move. It might be slowly, but you will move to that next version. And the more that you do this, the better you get at it, right?

So right now it's like I talk about going from zero to six figures. That was like the worst, right? It's just like the misery of it. But now six figures to seven figures is very uncomfortable. And I'm very deliberate about my discomfort, but I'm not making it mean so much and I'm not just saying that like it's a very uncomfortable like every day I'm like, here we go.

Right? Really? So just know that by practicing this you're building the skill of increased awareness about which types of discomfort are necessary, what type of negative emotion you need to get good at to get to the other side, right? And which is not necessary, which is not useful. That self pity, that confusion, that worry, that overwhelm, those would be non useful emotions.

But the useful negative emotions, the deliberate discomfort is going to be what gets you from where you are now to where you want to be. And it's going to be more miserable on that journey than staying right where you are. But I'm telling you that is the beauty of being a human is that you get to do that and you get to evolve and you get to grow and you get to contribute to the world in that way. It is amazing and it is so worth it.

But most people won't do it because they will not want to experience that discomfort and they will make the discomfort mean something. I actually see this even with people who think they

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really like personal development and they think they are willing to be uncomfortable. And the way that you know if this is you or not is look at your results. Are you getting new and different results?

If you're not getting new and different results, then you're not feeling the appropriate amount of discomfort. So if you've made the same amount of money in your business for the last five years and nothing has changed, do not just continue to do the same thing and feel bad about it. That is not what I'm talking about. I want you to set a new goal and then I want you to decide who you have to become to get that goal and who you have to give up.

You have to give up what I call your wubie. You have to give up the identity of who you are now that's preventing you from becoming the next version. So maybe you're like the hustler who makes six figures from their business and you work so hard and you associate time and money with working hard and you would have to totally give up that wubie that story to become the seven figure person and you probably got really good at talking about your wubie and loving your wubie and you just want to hold on to it, right?

You have to give it up. You have to be completely willing to give up that wubie to become this like next person, this seven figure CEO and you're going to be like confused and you're not going to know what's going on and you're going to have to work through that confusion and not indulge it and figure it out as you go and become a completely new person and it's so uncomfortable and I want you to do it anyway.

That is where the work is. That is beautiful, right? When you see someone and they are changing year after year moving towards their goals, getting those new and different results, they're doing it, they are constantly willing to feel uncomfortable.

Now you can be really good at this in one area and not good in another area. So notice where it's easier for you and how you're evolving and growing and being willing to feel uncomfortable in one area and then apply that to other areas. And if you haven't done this at all, it's totally okay.

Pick a goal, set a goal, figure out where you are now and the discomfort that you have now and then plan out that deliberate discomfort that you're going to need to experience to get you from where you are now to where you want to go. And stop assigning meaning to that negative emotion. Be willing to experience and allow negative emotion because that is the secret to getting to where you want to go and designing your dream life. Okay? I love you and I will talk to you next week. Bye bye.

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