

## **Episode: Processing Negative Emotions**



**With Natalie Bacon, JD, CFP<sup>®</sup>, Certified Life Coach**

Full Episode Transcript

## Episode: Processing Negative Emotions

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.

Hey friend, let's talk about negative emotions. Are you ready? I think it's the perfect day for me to be recording this podcast because I'm a little bit under the weather and I was thinking about how long I've been recording this podcast over a year and I don't think I've ever really felt sick on podcast recording day. So it's been interesting today for me to sit down and record this while feeling sick. Now, sometimes I add so much suffering to being sick with my thoughts and that's what I want to talk about today, is all of the negative emotion that you feel and what to do about it.

I've recently been clinging to this new quote that I came up with because I think it really gets at my own growth and what Grow You is all about and I want to share it with you. It's "the measure of growth isn't how easy your life is, it's how easy you are on yourself when your life is hard". And I think that that's so important because a lot of times people will come to me and they want the thing over there. They want the external thing, the goal, the money, the job, the man, the kids, the house, the retirement, whatever it is. They want the external thing. And then they think that getting it will make them feel better. And the truth is that when you reach over there, you don't feel better because your feelings are always caused from your thinking.

So your brain is wired in a certain way on default. I kind of like to think of it as a computer and it comes with the bare bones minimum of programs and that's kind of like your brain. It has this software that came with it and you can install new software, but you have to go out and buy the new software. You have to go out and reprogram your brain. Otherwise what will happen is you can keep changing the external. You can change your circumstances, but with the same brain you will just recreate the same emotions.

So, let's say you right now are feeling a lot of stress in your job so you change jobs. Eventually you will create a lot of stress with respect to something else because your brain really loves stress, right? If that's the emotion that you kind of gravitate towards and when you have awareness of this, it's the best news ever because you can actually get a handle on what stress is, learn how to process it, and you don't have to change anything in your life and your circumstances to feel better. It's such a gift, but I still see it even in my most advanced students in Grow You it's like sneaky, we're constantly trying to remove that negative emotion and part of this is just thinking that happiness is the goal.

I heard on a different podcast, someone say that they heard an interview from a doctor, I think it was a psychiatrist, I can't remember. And he was saying that so many people were coming to him wanting to be prescribed medicine for depression. And while he acknowledged that depression is real, there was a disproportionate amount of people who wanted medicine. And what he found was that most people felt entitled to feel happy all the time. And if they didn't feel happy all the time they thought something was seriously wrong. And what life coaching has provided for me and why I'm so passionate about this is to help you understand that life is supposed to be filled with negative emotion and with things going wrong and with problems. And if you accept that, life gets so much better and you actually are happier because you're not expecting it to be all perfect and happy all the time. And if you actually go to the place where everything is happy all

## Episode: Processing Negative Emotions

the time, it's not very great because if happiness is there all of the time, then is there even sadness. And we call that the contrast of the world. So you need the negative in order for the positive to actually be positive.

It's interesting with Penny and when I see clients do this with their kids as well, they try to change the circumstances so that their children never experience negative emotion. And what I coach them on is that a better tactic would be to keep them in the same circumstance, you know, assuming it's safe and everything. And then if the child experiences sadness, then talking to the child about the emotion instead of trying to fix it with ice cream or something. Right? That external pleasure. No, it's like, okay, what were you thinking that created the sadness and how did the sadness feel? And that's a little way that I just coach parents on. But I found myself even doing this with Penny, like for sure my dog is never supposed to feel negative emotion. Or at least in the beginning I was doing things to kind of accommodate her, you know, maybe always having the food out or giving her treats like all the time. And then I realized like I don't want this little puppy to turn into a monster, not some discipline and negative emotion is actually going to serve her.

So for you, for your own life, not that of your animals or children, but for your own negative emotion. I want to just explore what it really is and how you can process it so that you're not adding suffering onto what's already painful. So a negative emotion is just a vibration in your body and it's caused by your thoughts. And I say this a lot, I've said it before, but I know from my own coaching and from coaching so many people that we tend to forget that we create all of our negative emotion. It is always from your thinking that you create your feelings. Nothing outside of you causes you to feel a certain emotion.

When I find myself for getting this, I immediately go to the example of thinking of a hundred different people being in that circumstance and how all of them would have varying degrees of emotion. And that's just a quick reminder for me, oh yeah, it's my brain. And that doesn't mean that I want to be happy all the time, right? When someone dies, when you know you go through a breakup or maybe your fired, you might want to feel negative emotion, but the difference is in how you process it. So the suffering happens when you make the negative emotion mean something that it doesn't mean. So I like to call this clean pain versus dirty pain. I first heard this from another life coach, so I didn't create it, the labeling, but it's, it's basically like regular emotional pain versus suffering. So you've heard the quote that pain is inevitable, suffering is optional. It's kind of like that pain versus suffering, clean pain versus dirty pain. So clean pain would just be, you know, you go through a divorce and you feel devastated, dirty pain or the suffering is when you add on thoughts like this is all wrong, this shouldn't be happening and you basically make the negative emotion mean that to something has gone terribly wrong and it adds on this layer of, it can be fear or anxiety or even terror.

So I noticed this and I did a really good job of it, thankfully, when my dad passed away and I constantly reminded myself, everyone dies, his life is complete, I'm sad, but nothing has gone wrong. And that just really helped me versus thoughts I could have been thinking like he did this, this is horrible, I should have had a different father or he should have taken better care of himself. Notice that all of those sentences are just thoughts, and if I believe them, they will create so much more suffering. So when you decide to give your negative emotion meaning that has a

## Episode: Processing Negative Emotions

story that's sort of the opposite of the truth, you add suffering onto your pain. And I say that it's the opposite of the truth because I love what Byron Katie says, right? If you argue with the past, you lose, but only 100% of the time. So the truth is always what's actually happening. If we add a story like this shouldn't be happening or something has gone wrong, it makes it so much worse. Instead we can say, of course this happened. Yes, this is horrible. Yes, I feel devastated. This is the way of it. And that feels so much better than trying to control what's uncontrollable. Yeah? So you want to be able to control the world and you really can't. So if you tell yourself that something's gone terribly wrong, you are going to feel so much worse that you didn't control it. If you say, oh yeah, this is horrible. I feel negative emotion, I'm going to allow the negative emotion, but nothing has gone wrong. That feels a lot better.

I want you to notice what negative emotion is and think about what's so bad about it. So, typically it's so bad because we resist it and it feels so much worse when you add that resistance to it. It can feel uncomfortable and it can feel warm and it can feel like a buzzing in your body, but it doesn't have to be so terrible. And this comes from being the watcher. So next time you're feeling negative emotion, even just something light like bored, or you wake up and you're a little bit anxious, I want you to separate yourself out from the emotion and name it. Naming an emotion is so powerful. I noticed that when I don't name my emotions and they're negative, I have like this added worry, like something has gone wrong. Even if I'm not actively telling myself that I make it so much worse. So I kind of take a time out and I write down, you know, a little thought download. I describe kind of what's going on. I describe the feeling of my body and I named the emotion.

And this actually happened recently. So Steve went out of town for a bachelor party and I had Penny to myself for four days and I gave her medicine that she needed to take. And I did not realize that the medicine would make her sick. I've learned so much in the last couple of months, that's for sure about puppies and giving them medicine and how they pretty much can always potentially get sick right from medicine, even if it's going to help them. So for four days I was kind of inside by myself with this puppy who was having diarrhea everywhere, not really house trained, it's freezing outside. So, you know, it's very difficult to go out even just to get out. And I couldn't really leave her alone at the time yet. So it was just a lot. And I noticed that I felt really frustrated. And it wasn't until I coached myself, I took a break and sat down on my bed and I was writing down all of the facts and I was like blaming Steve as if he had caused my frustration. And I'm giving you this example because it's a little one because I think that we do this all of the time and we blame our emotions on something external to us. So that's why I'm giving you this example.

So I want you to notice this in your life. So when I realized that what was happening was okay, I feel frustrated, I'm creating the frustration and I kind of want to be frustrated in this moment. So once you get some authority over it and you name it and you kind of describe it, you can decide if you want to feel it. But I decided I wanted to feel it, but I stopped blaming him. Right? I had to, I had to slow down and bring some awareness to what was really going on and it was hard, but it was so, so worth it to pause, take a break, write down what was going on, name my emotion and then I, you know, stopped blaming him and this is mostly just like the blame in my head, right? That I was projecting onto him as if he created that frustration. Right? Someone else in that situation may have felt a totally different emotion.

## Episode: Processing Negative Emotions

So for you, I want you to just pay attention to the negative emotion you feel on a regular basis. Yes, of course there's going to be bigger life events, deaths, job losses, divorces, you know, diagnoses, all of those things. But also pay attention to when it's the small things, when you get frustrated or a little bit angry or one that's kind of sneaky is when you're bored or when you're anxious, right? I'm bored because I have nothing to do or I'm lonely because I'm alone, or something like that. No, you are lonely because you have thoughts that are creating the emotion of lonely.

I remember when I was single and I would feel either bored or lonely on a Friday night and I always tried to kind of fix it and make plans before I brought awareness to it. And once I did, it was so much better. I said, oh, this is just boredom. This is just lonely. And what I want you to do is what I did is to get really good at experiencing that emotion so that you process it and you allow it. And that means that you say, okay, this is bored or this is frustration. I'm creating this and I kind of want to create it right now if that's the truth. Right. And then you allow it without making it mean something else.

I think back to when I got Penny and when I've quit my jobs, in all three instances when I quit lawyering, when I quit being a CFP and when I got Penny, on the day of like quitting, and on the day of picking her up, I had so much anxiety, like my heart was fluttering so much, I almost felt sick to my stomach, like adrenaline was on overdrive. And this is normal and it actually is more explainable when you understand your brain. So I kinda like to talk about two parts of the brain. You have your prefrontal cortex and then you have your primitive brain and your prefrontal cortex is where you make decisions. It's where you do your future planning, right? Penny, my dog, she is not planning for her future. I am. So when you plan ahead of time, you make the clearest, best decisions for your future. Then when you go to implement, your primitive brain is going to fight you. It is your survival brain. It's always seeking pleasure, avoiding pain and trying to conserve energy and this is just because it wants to keep you alive. It's really been useful for evolutionary purposes. It got us here today. Not so useful in terms of the avoidance that we're now doing, which is avoiding going after the things we want or our goals and we're all doing it in an effort to avoid negative emotion.

Let's take an example. Let's say you decide ahead of time what you're going to eat on a food plan. You do that, you decide, okay, for the next week, here's what I'm going to eat. Now in the moment when you implement that food plan, you are going to have urges to eat off your plan, but if you do this work, if you, if you have a life coach, a good life coach, and you're getting coached, you will know how important it is to trust yourself and your decisions that you made ahead of time. Meaning you will say, mope, I'm not going to eat. I'm going to allow the urge. I'm going to allow the negative emotion. I already made my decision. I call it decisions ahead of time. Yeah? Without making it mean anything.

So I did the exact same thing when I was picking up Penny. I never made my negative emotion on the day of mean that I made a mistake. Right? I made the decision very clearly. I had lots of time to think about it. I was using my prefrontal cortex on the day of that negative emotion I just allowed to be there. The same was true when I quit my jobs. Yeah? So when I quit my jobs, I was very, very anxious the day of. But I never made it mean that I had made a mistake in my decisions because I always trust my decisions ahead of time. That's why decision making is so

## Episode: Processing Negative Emotions

important. When you make decisions ahead of time and you get really good at it, you will implement and you won't make the negative emotion mean anything.

So notice this in the little things like in your relationships. I see this a lot with people who I'm coaching in Grow You. I love my clients so much and something that often comes up is feeling stressed or feeling stuck or kind of just feeling like something's wrong. And I just want you to bring awareness to your own emotions and I want you to name them and I want you to name them in one word. So is it fear? Is it anger? Is it frustration? Is it stuck? Is it anxious? And then can you allow that negative emotion to be there and process it? Like in the background? You don't have to sit in a room, you know, in the dark for a day, you can actually live your life and just allow the negative emotion to be processed in the background without resisting it. So I can always tell the difference between this, because if I'm allowing it, it will go away like within a day or less even. But if I'm resisting it, I will actually increase it and make it worse.

So I want you to be onto yourself and your negative emotions and the story you're telling about them and know that anytime you are upleveling your life, your primitive brain is going to start freaking out. It's going to create the doubt, the anxiety, the confusion. And this is just because your brain wants to stay alive and it would much prefer you stayed in the cave and didn't do anything. It knows that if you repeat more of the past, then you will stay alive because you've stayed alive up to this point. So it thinks if you just do more of the same, everything's status quo. You're all good. When you do new and different things outside your comfort zone, it has nothing to pull from. It has no neural pathways and it thinks that you could die. So, it's so important that you decide ahead of time what you want from a very clear minded place and then when you implement and when you feel those negative emotions, you allow the negative emotion without making it mean anything.

And I want you to describe the negative emotion without explaining it. So it would be like, this is fear. I feel fear and my chest, it's hot, it's uncomfortable, it feels urgent. Notice how that is describing it versus explaining it, oh, I feel fear because I'm supposed to sit down with my boss and have a review today, right? That's abdicating responsibility for your emotions. And we do this all the time, right? Just turn on the TV or go on Instagram or something and this is just what we've been trained to do, but it's not the truth. And it actually is the best news ever because it means that you have total control over how you feel all the time. And if you are willing to experience the negative emotion, the fear, the discomfort, the stress and just allow it, you will process it so much quicker and you will move through it and you will blow your own mind.

I know this personally and I see it over and over with my clients. The more willing you are to experience negative emotion, the more likely you are to design your dream life. You have to be willing to feel really, really uncomfortable through the process of it. Now this is very different than constantly being stressed and forcing it and feeling urgent. Right? There's such a difference because when you process your emotions and you allow the negative emotion, it's calm. It's not urgent and crazy and stressed all the time. I hope that makes sense so you can feel stress without projecting your stress onto other people without feeling out of control. You can just say, oh, this stress, I'm going to allow stress. It feels a little uncomfortable. I'm okay. I can go about my day and just process it. I'm feeling the stress because I'm making the money I made this month mean that something's gone wrong or that I should have made more money. Right? And then you can

## Episode: Processing Negative Emotions

say, oh, that's so interesting. I was never supposed to make more money. How do I know? Because I didn't? Right? And what does this mean? And how is this a good setup for next month?

So when you bring awareness to your feelings, you will then bring awareness to your thoughts as long as you are doing this work that your thoughts create your feelings. And then what's so fun is that you can see what story you are telling yourself and how it might not be true at all. And then you can just play around with your thoughts and the stories that you want to be telling. And it's really such a good setup for designing the future that you want, regardless of your circumstances.

So my hope for you is that you are not afraid to feel negative emotion so that you are so much more willing to experience your life as it is now and also to pursue greatness. When you allow negative emotion instead of resisting and avoiding and reacting to them, you will live so much more fully, knowing especially that the worst that can happen is that you feel a negative emotion.

I like to think of when there's someone who is yelling and how angry they are. That is them resisting and reacting to anger. That is not them processing anger. You can allow anger without reacting, resisting or avoiding it, and a lot of times we avoid it through the overeating, the overdrinking, the overshopping, the overworking. You can over-exercise, right? You can feel angry and every time you feel angry you go and work out. Now certainly that is better than going and drinking a bunch of alcohol every time you feel angry. However, I want to encourage you to just allow the anger and process it and notice it and kind of accept it as the human experience instead of trying to run from it and make it mean that something has gone terribly wrong and this shouldn't be happening. And I really think that you can get to a place of feeling more content and happier more often when you accept negative emotion.

I know that that's been true for me and it's been such a gift and it really has made the hard times like more manageable. They're hard, but they are not impossible. Especially, you know, when my dad passed, it was such a good example of using these tools in real life. But again, even with Steve, like there's little examples where this stuff creeps up and unless you're coaching yourself and unless you have these tools, you will blame your circumstances for how you feel and that's never true. So notice what you're feeling and then ask yourself what you're thinking that's causing the feeling. Allow the negative emotion and be willing to experience it and move through it without trying to change your life to feel better. All right, I love you and I will talk to you next week. Bye bye.

Hey, if you liked this podcast you really should check out, Grow You, my life coaching program. I coach you on everything I teach on the podcast so that you can uplevel your life. We 10x it so you get the results you want most. Just like a monthly gym membership to get your body in shape, this is a monthly personal development membership to get your mind in shape. It is an investment your future self will thank you for. Check it out at [Nataliebacon.com/coaching](https://nataliebacon.com/coaching). That's [Nataliebacon.com/coaching](https://nataliebacon.com/coaching). I will see you there.