

Episode: Stress



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

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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, my beautiful friend. I am thrilled to be here with you today. So many fun changes going on in my business and I wanted to kind of talk about that, especially for the new listeners who haven't been around so long. There's lots of you here.

Welcome to life coaching with me. I am a certified life coach. I was certified at The Life Coach School, so the tools that I teach are based on everything that I learned in my training and from Brooke Castillo. It is causal life coaching. This is very different than other types of life coaching. This means that I focus on helping you solve the cause of your problem. Instead of putting your broken arm in a sling, I make sure that I reset the arm first, right, so we're getting to the root cause of whatever it is you're going through. When this applies to your mind, it means that I'm teaching you how to change your results from the inside out because I believe that when you change your mind, you change your life.

I do this here for free with you on the podcast and for most of you who have been around for any length of time, you end up joining me in my virtual coaching program called Grow You. I like to think of it as an analogy to cooking. So here is where I give you a lot of free recipes but in Grow You, that's where you come into the kitchen with me and I show you how to cook.

It's not always clean, it gets a little bit messy, but the result is that you actually know how to make a meal. So typically, right. I want to say typically because if this doesn't fit you totally, you're still welcome. I just get a lot of questions about who the members are. Most of my members are women, they are high achievers. Most of them are married with probably zero to three kids.

Some are working full time and others are stay at home moms. Now if this is not you, it's totally fine, right? That's just kind of generally who I'm helping the most. I help them with all of their problems, stress included, which we're going to talk about today. And I also help them set and achieve big goals. Maybe it's weight loss, right?

So I'm also a certified weight loss coach. Maybe it is, um, with their kids and their relationship with their kids. Maybe it is with money and wealth, maybe it's starting a side hustle or whatever big goal that they want to work on. That's what I'm helping them with in Grow You. It's like personal development on steroids. I really wish that when I first started learning about personal development, something like this would have existed. I remember reading so many personal development books and listening to podcasts and not seeing any results change.

So if that's you, it's okay. It's still better than listening to kind of the trashy stuff that isn't going to help you at all or at least help you change your mindset. But I remember thinking, wow, the last five years I've devoured so much content, but I haven't applied it to my life and I didn't really

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know how to do that. And now it's such an honor and a privilege to be able to help so many women do that in their own lives.

So that's a little bit about me. You know where I'm going, my business, I love Grow You so much. Have some other programs coming out as well, but that's the main one and that's where you can work with me to kind of deepen your personal development, work on your problems set and achieve big goals from this causal coaching that I apply to all of my work.

One of my own coaches, right. I am a big consumer of life coaching myself. I think everyone needs a life coach, including life coaches. One of mine, she did a webinar on stress and in that webinar she recommended the book, *The Upside of Stress* by Kelly McGonigal. So I picked up the book, devoured it, and I highly recommend it. And much of what I learned about stress and the science of stress comes from that book which is based on new scientific research regarding stress.

Kelly McGonigal is a professor at Stanford. She has a PhD she has researched stress extensively and it was reading her book that led me to research stress and do my own, um, thinking about stress and I wanted to bring that to you here. In *Grow You* this month. We are deep diving into fear, anxiety, stress and worry. It is some of the most important work, whether it's right now kind of with stay in shelter and Covid 19 or if it's a different time in your life where you are experiencing some of these emotions that we typically think of as less fun and something that we don't want a lot of in our lives.

So today's kind of free little life coaching lesson here on the podcast is about stress. And I want to start off with what we typically think about stress. So we're told it's a problem and we're told that it's a problem to be solved. And generally most content out there is teaching you how to reduce your stress, right?

We just kind of assume it's a given. That stress is a problem. This comes from and originated from the research from Hans Selye in the 1930s. He did a lot of experiments on rats. I am going to call it the torturing of rats because it far exceeds our stress that we experience in modern society. So he put them in containers the size of their bodies. He blasted them with noise, he put them all together in really tight containers like all in a group, kind of like the opposite of solitary confinement.

He forced them to swim or drown. He gave them drugs and electric shocks and even severed their spinal cords. And what he found was that the result of this type of stress, reduced muscle tone caused immune system failure and many of the rats died right in a very short amount of time. This is actually what our stress research and knowledge was based on pretty prevalently until the last decade or so.

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And it's really important to think about that type of stress versus the type of stress we talk about when we are typing in to Google how to manage our stress, right? Certainly there are people today who experienced that severe type of stress, right? Survivors of crises or traumas. If you think about surviving a kidnapping or something like that, that is the equivalent to the type of stress that these rats were under. But when we're talking about what most of us experience in our day to day lives, we're talking about our careers, we're talking about our marriages or our relationships with our children or friends.

We are talking about politics, pregnancy, money projects, passing a test or a certification, helping our aging parents. This type of stress, this modern day stress is so different than the type of stress that Selye did and conducted in his experiments on these rats.

So if you are tortured and deprived like these rats were, that type of stress on your body will likely have irreversible effects and be really bad for you. But if you are like so many of us who are suffering from the normal type of daily stress we have in modern society, then I want to offer to you that it's not a big problem. The caveat is unless you think it is. So the truth is that modern stress is only a problem if you believe it is and it's a big problem. If you believe it is right in the book McGonigal says that the belief that stress is bad for you is actually the 15th leading cause of death in the United States, which is above cancer, HIV, AIDS and homicide.

But if you don't believe that stress is harmful to you, then you have a completely different response and experience and it actually works to your advantage and you live longer than even people who have no stress in their lives at all. This work, learning this work, studying this work has completely changed my life. It has expanded my mind and I am so excited to bring it to you, especially if you are experiencing stress or you know your family is experiencing stress. I just think this work can help you so much.

So in a more recent experiment and research, Karen Parker of Stanford did a study on monkeys where she separated baby monkeys from their mothers for one hour per day and she actually predicted that they would end up more dysfunctional and emotionally unstable. The result of this was the opposite. They were more curious. They were more resilient, they had more courage and more self control all the way until adulthood and they even had a larger prefrontal cortices.

This blew my mind. Right? And I had this epiphany where I immediately understood where my own resilience, curiosity and courage comes from. So my dad was an alcoholic, he lost his dental practice and was even in and out of jail for DUIs. And my parents divorced when I was 12 now I experienced challenges that I had to overcome because of that, I feel very resilient.

Like I would pre this book right before reading this book, I would have described myself as someone who is very resilient and doesn't necessarily like how courage feels, but uses a lot of courage. And I would have described my number one trait to you, which I still think it is as being

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very curious. Okay. And it wasn't until reading this book and really thinking about what shaped me, right? My experiences that I realized so much of it right comes from my childhood.

And even with Covid 19 I see how I'm using these tools now because my circumstances abruptly changed. And it's so much easier for me in some ways, not in all ways right, but in some ways, right? Cause I have those in my tool belt, I can just grab that resilience or courage or curiosity when I need to because I've practiced those emotions so much. So I can see that experiencing some stress and some mild sort of hardships really strengthened me.

And I really believe that if you can look back on your experiences in your past where you've had to overcome something, you can read, write that story of how it happened to you, to one that really helped you know, strengthen you and help you become who you are today. So when I thought about stress in my life today and in my childhood and how I want to think about stress going forward, I decided that I wanted to step back and redefine stress.

So when we talk about stress, we talk about it as if we're all on the same page and it's a given, right? But I want to define what stress is. I think that stress is an emotion and it's a sensation. So it starts as an emotion and it can become a sensation and it's caused by your thinking. So I think that stress is an emotion in your body caused by the belief that something outside of you is important and needs your focused attention.

I just love that definition of stress. It is the belief that something outside of you is important and needs your focus attention. It's important to distinguish that out because it's never our circumstances that cause the stress. It's our belief about something in our circumstances. That's why we can look around and see that so many people handled Covid 19 and stay in shelter and all these changes in so many different ways and how we want to find connection in that with other humans and not judge them because just like them, we were experiencing it in our own way. So it's important to just see that it's your belief that something outside of you, right, that's something in your circumstance needs your focused attention.

Now I want to talk about how to describe stress. So when I think about stress, I think about some of the characteristics being tightness in your body, your chest pounding and your heart speeding up, increased alertness and focus, right?

Your brain and body are activated and sharp. Now all of this is happening because the biological effect of stress is that your sympathetic nervous system kicks in, right? And different hormones are released and most of us think that this is a huge problem. We think that adrenaline and cortisol and those hormones that are released are a bad thing. What I want to offer to you is that they're happening for you, right? As long as we are talking about the stress.

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One of the examples that I want you to think about is sports. So we put our bodies under stress intentionally all the time in the name of sports. We tear our muscles to get stronger, we put our bodies under pressure to get better and we don't think of sports as a problem. I love this example because immediately I can see how the mindset is, the difference between how we experience stress, whether we actually invite it in and welcome it like we do with sports or whether we push it away like we do with a project or work or money.

So now when I am working on something new, like a big project, I think of it as, okay, I'm in the arena, I am showing up. This is supposed to be stressful and it's not a problem, right? I make sure I have space in my life where I'm not overworking, but when I'm dialed in and focused, I think of it as a really good thing.

So I want to talk with you about how to actually manage your stress, how to reframe this. Instead of having this fight or flight response or wanting to push stress away and get it out of your life completely. What I want you to do is I want you to consider a different response in the book, it's called the challenge response, which is where you see this type of stress. I'm calling it performance stress as a good thing and you really see that it's helping you focus and strategize and problem solve. That is an option to you always.

The alternative is to get very afraid and to kind of go into fight or flight with stress, right? So you don't have to do that. You can decide to use stress to your advantage. So here are the steps that I want you to use to manage your stress and sort of redefine it for yourself.

Anytime that you are experiencing stress, I want you to name it. It's so important that we name our emotions. So we get some authority over it. And it's not this vague thing that we're trying to push away because we feel uncomfortable. So you say, Oh, this is stress. This is stress and emotion in my body.

The second thing you do is you describe it in detail, right? What does it feel like? Oh, it's kind of hot. My heart is racing, right? So what temperature is it? Where is it located? Is it just in your chest or is your jaw clenching up? And your shoulders are tight, right? And this is important because you're making friends with your body here.

You're watching your body, you're becoming the watcher of your emotions, and you're seeing that stress isn't you. And it's also not bad for you. You're kind of befriending it. So it's like hi stress. I welcome you here. I see that you're hot and a little bit tight and uncomfortable, but it's okay. So you know that you have labeled it and named it, and you've described it.

The third thing I want you to do is I want you to ask yourself what you're stressed about. So are you stressed because you're thinking I have too much to do, or are you stressed because you're thinking this project is something hard that I really need to work on right now. So when I was

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preparing for the Design Your Dream Life live event and all of this Covid stuff started to happen, I changed it to a virtual event. And when I had a little less than a month to kind of change everything, redo the entire event, I experienced stress and I welcomed it and I decided that it was performance stress.

It was helping me for form and double down and focus and problem solve. It was happening for me, not to me. And it doesn't mean that I was working 24/7 and not giving myself rest time. But it does mean that that was my training for the big event. Right? So if you think of, you know, if the event was the championship that month leading up to it, I was all in and yes, I felt stressed and no, that wasn't a problem, right?

So if you think of it this way, it's a total reframe. So you've named it, you've described it, you've determined what your thinking is that's causing the emotion. And then I want you to make sure you tell a supportive story about your stress. Tell the story of how it's there to serve you and stop telling the story that something's gone wrong and it needs to go away.

So I like to say this is performance stress and it's helping me focus and get done what I need to. It's like saying today I'm going to do some stress. It's okay stress is helping me. I'm going to get really good at stress. When you push stress away, you make it worse. You fear your own body, right? And if the emotion won't go away. You will keep creating it.

Even if it goes away for a little bit, you will find something else to get stressed about and you will create a pattern where you're fighting against your own body. And I think honestly that is why believing that stress is harmful, that stress is bad for you is the 15th leading cause of death because you are arguing against your own body. So instead of you think that stress is actually there to help you, right? What was fascinating is that when you think stresses there to help you, you actually live longer than people who don't experience any stress at all.

Isn't that so fascinating? And this is the result of changing your mindset about stress. If you change your mindset and believe that this stress is happening for you, the benefits are incredible. You will have more fulfillment and passion in your life and you live longer. It's wild to me that this is true, but it makes sense. Think about people who are retired. You may or may not have a lot of experience with this, but I saw this a lot when I was a certified financial planner.

Everyone is very, very excited to retire. They can't wait for it. And then they retire and they actually struggle. A lot of new retirees struggle. They're met with boredom and loss of purpose. When you think about stress as performance stress, it makes sense under the concept that we are stressed about things we deeply care about. So you actually deeply cared about your job, right?

And it's gone and you're trying to redefine what meaning your life has now. So when you see it in this way, you can see how the things that you care most about are often the things that you

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experience, stress with respect to. So anything in your life, in your circumstances that you decide to believe is something really important to you and that you want to focus on and have some stress over is going to be the thing.

And often is the thing that is most valuable and important to you. And if you think of it in this way and think about being in the arena, you'll see that you're having more resilience and you're getting stronger and you actually have more fulfillment in your life. I just love this. It was really life changing for me. And I want you to really think about that for your own life and for your families, right?

So if someone who you love, like your spouse is experiencing stress or your child, I don't want you to think that something is wrong and that you should solve the problem of stress. Instead, you can be there and not mirror their emotions, right? You don't have to get stressed too with them. You can see that they're in performance mode, that they are focused and dialed and that their stress is actually helping them.

And it's true, right? Our bodies are so amazing. The more I research and study the mind and the body, the more I see that these negative emotions are really there to help us as long as we welcome them and we don't resist them. So I truly believe that if you embrace stress and believe it's there to serve you, you're going to have a richer, more meaningful life.

Instead of running from your stress and creating more separation and pushing it away, I want you to welcome it, befriend it, and use it to your advantage. All right. That's what I have for you today. I will talk with you next week. Bye bye.

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