

Episode: Worry



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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.

Hi there, how are you doing? It is the middle of May and I have used the last two months to double down in my business and go all in. And it has been so fun. Mostly because my clients are going all in too. So if you are not in Grow You, you really should check it out. Especially if you don't have a life coach. What are you doing? You need a life coach. This work continues to change my life and it continues to change my clients lives and I just don't want you to be out there suffering for no reason at all.

So today I am going to teach you a new tool about worrying. Worry is something that is so normal. All of our brains kind of are programmed to default to worry. So there's a circumstance that happens in the world and your brain has to interpret it in a very basic level.

So if you are laid off from your job, if you receive a diagnosis, if your husband serves you with divorce papers, if your kids are home from school and not doing their homework, if your parents are aging, so all of these circumstances in your life that can present as problems, they're very real and your brain has to interpret them, and it does this really, really quickly.

If your brain interprets a circumstance as potentially dangerous, your brain thinks that it should focus more on that circumstance to make sure that you and your family are okay. It's so helpful to know this because if you understand the cause of worry, you can get some authority over it. The interesting thing about worry is that it's always based on something in the future. Your brain is trying to interpret something in the future. What's in front of your brain today is always manageable.

So let's say that your child doesn't get in to the school, the kindergarten program that you wanted her to go to. You can handle that information today, right? You're okay, your daughter is okay. Nothing is wrong, right? Today. Everything is okay. You might feel disappointed, right? Or some other emotion, but today it's okay.

When you think about the consequence of that information, your brain goes to all of the what ifs. Your brain goes to, you know, where is she going to go? What about her future? Her education's in jeopardy. What should I do? You know, how are we going to find another school that's as good. All of the concerns that you have are about what's going to happen in the future and your brain does this in an effort to protect you.

It wants to make sense of what's happening now and in the past and it wants to do its best to create the best outcome for you so that you are healthy, that you are surviving, that you are thriving and it focuses on what's dangerous to try to protect you.

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When your brain can't figure something out, it kind of freaks out. It hates not knowing. When your brain perceives something as dangerous, right? It thinks, Ooh, that's really important. I need to pay attention to it to make sure we get all the information. We avoid it and we survive, right?

This is why the news is so powerful. Your brain is wired to be attracted to that danger that it perceives in the news and the more danger on the news, the more we think we need to watch. I talked about how to really manage your mind around the news and input in that Input Versus Output episodes so make sure you listen to that. I think it's so powerful, not just during this time that we're currently in, but any time, right? So when you understand that this is your brain and it's just doing its best, you can kind of get a sense of where that worry coming from and not feel so bad about it.

You can get some authority over it. It's simply your brain trying to make sense of the future to make sure that you and your family are safe, secure, and that everything is going to be okay. So I wanted to get to the root of worry and I looked up the definition for you, which I love to do, and the definition online that I found was worry is a feeling of concern that something bad might happen.

I really love this definition because it shows you that worry is a feeling and remember what is true. All of your thoughts cause all of your feelings and I think that this is the missing piece of the puzzle that unless you have a life coach or unless you're in Grow You you might not be aware of. So your circumstance, although the circumstances very real, it's not actually causing you to feel worry.

Your circumstances are happening and your brain has a response to it. Your brain fires neurons that produce thoughts and those thoughts create feelings. Whenever I am doubting this, I look at circumstances in the world and I notice how differently people respond to them and that is always a good indicator to me. Oh yeah, this is a circumstance that's totally neutral. So you can see this with Covid 19 and stay in shelter.

People had lots of different opinions and lots of different feelings about all of it. It's the exact same circumstance, very different thoughts and feelings based on what's going on in all of our brains. This is so important because if you understand that you are creating the feeling of worry, you get so much power back, you are no longer at the effect of your brain and of your circumstances.

The one thing that I would add to this definition of worry that says a feeling of concern that something bad might happen is that I would add in the future to the end of the sentence because worry is an uncomfortable feeling that's caused by a thought you have about the future.

Worry always relates to something in the future and in this way you can see how it's a very

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present feeling, right? So you're feeling the feeling of worry now because you're thinking something right now, but what you're thinking about is something that may or may not happen in the future and it feels really responsible to worry. I think it does anyways.

It feels like we're doing a good job by showing our concern, by worrying, right? There's a level of seriousness if you're worrying, but I want you to consider that the opposite might be true, that although worry feels responsible, it's not useful. It's not useful because it doesn't actually change the results. So either you will get coronavirus or you won't. Either your daughter will go to a certain school or she won't.

Worrying now doesn't actually change that. You can be prepared and you can be thoughtful and research the best approach to take during stay in shelter and how better to stay safe and what schools would be best for your daughter to attend as an alternative.

But you can do all of that from a place of feeling confident and certain without doing it from a place of worry. So it's just not necessary. And I think that this is one of the biggest misconceptions today thinking that worrying is useful and responsible and it's simply just not. I think that the biggest problem with worry is when you don't have the awareness that you are worrying.

Say for example if you're worrying about your health because you had an abnormal test result, if you are not familiar with thought work, if you're not in Grow You, you might think that your worrying because of the result itself and you might think that worrying about it is useful. And you might continue to worry and your brain will continue to approach the test and your health with fear. And you know, almost to the point where you can get to this mental place where you think death is imminent.

Even if you're not saying that to yourself, the worry can overcome you. And what I want to offer to you is that the circumstance is having the abnormal test results. But you can think anything you want about the results. Now, it doesn't mean that you, you want to think something really happy that makes you feel excited, but you can think that it's amazing.

You have a doctor that you went to and that you were able to get the blood work and you can think that you're going to do your best to heal and be well. And you can think that worry is a choice and it's not going to change the result. Depending on what the circumstance is and depending on the neuropathways of your own brain, you will likely find yourself worrying about some things more often than others. You might be worrying about your job, you might be worrying about, you know, finding a home to buy.

You might be worrying about money or your marriage or your kids. Some people worry more about other areas. It doesn't make us right or wrong. So for me, I didn't worry about getting sick.

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And it's so funny because I found that my mom and even my aunt were a little bit worried about me getting sick.

So you guys don't know this, but I had H 1 N 1 in college and I was hospitalized and quarantined in the hospital for H 1 N1. So in the past when I've gotten sick, I've gotten really sick. Um, I don't have a preexisting condition. This is just been the way that my body handles getting sick sometimes. But I chose to just not be worried, right? I chose to be cautious and wash my hands and stay inside and all of those things. But I decided that I wasn't going to worry because it just wasn't going to be useful for me.

But other people are really worried or were really worried about getting sick. Now this doesn't make some people better than others. It just is an example that I want to point out that sometimes our brains worry more about different things and I think that if we kind of let go of the judgment and instead look for the connection because we can all relate to worrying about something else.

If not this, then there is a time in our lives where we have worried, then we can not judge each other and really work on ourselves with respect to processing our own worry. The biggest message that I have for you with this podcast is for you to know that there is an alternative to spinning out and feeling controlled by your own worry and feeling so helpless. That's what I want to offer you. I want to offer you a solution to feeling worried.

Before I do that, since I just kind of mentioned how I wasn't worried about getting sick and that if I got sick I was going to be okay with that. I do want to talk about a time where I did have enormous worry in my life, so just like you, I'm a human with a human brain that defaults to worry sometimes.

It can be about little things. It can be about big things and it's amazing that I have these tools because I know how to process the worry and kind of get out in front of it, but it doesn't mean that I don't have a human brain, so it still kind of goes to that worry and it wasn't that long ago last year that my dad was dying and all of the worries came up for me pretty much immediately when I got to the hospital.

Right? I thought sentences like, is he going to die? When is he going to die? Can he get better? Am I doing enough? Are we doing enough? Is my brother who's a surgeon going to come here and talk to the doctors? Is he getting the best treatment? Right?

All of these sentences in my head were concerns that I had for my dad and even kind of writing these down and saying them out loud. It gets me back to a place of worry right now and it's such a good example. I want to point that out because the worry is the feeling even if it's for something in the past. It's the sentences in my head right now that's creating the emotion of

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worry. It's my brain right now creating that discomfort that seems so important and useful yet it is not. Now did I completely stop worrying about my dad when he was dying?

No, definitely not. But after the first day when I was in there and I was so overwhelmed and upset that night, I was able to kind of go home, get some clarity around what was happening and be in the moment while watching my brain and my emotions and I decided how I wanted to think about this season and show up during this season and I decided that I was going to focus on me as his daughter. I decided I was going to show up 100% I was going to go back and forth between Cleveland and Chicago to be by his side the entire time I was going to love him. And have those moments with him by his bedside.

I decided that I just really wanted to be the best daughter that I could be, not from a place of I'm doing it wrong and is this good enough, but from a place of love and intentionality for what was happening without trying to change it, I decided to focus internally on myself instead of trying to change the circumstances.

So I experienced the heartbreak, the sadness, the grief, and all of those other emotions while he was dying, but I was experiencing emotional pain, not suffering. I wasn't thinking something had gone wrong and I needed to be responsible for the future of his life. Whenever that ended, and I think that this is the gift of life coaching. You learn how to process your pain, including worry and all the other emotions and you learn how to move through it instead of resisting it and causing so much more suffering.

I talk about this more in Grow You and I describe it sort of as clean pain versus dirty pain, but for now I want to just kind of let it sit with you that we all have human brains and they're going to worry about big things and little things and what's big to us and little to us is going to be different to the next person.

So I'm not better than you because I'm not worried about getting sick and you're not more responsible than me because you are worried about getting sick. I think that instead of comparing our emotional pain, we can do something better and learn how to deal with it, how to process it, how to experience it without that resistance. So I came up with five magical steps for you to deal with your worry.

Step number one is to call it worry. This sounds really obvious but so often we don't have the awareness of the worry. We just talk about the circumstance and how uncertain we are about the future and what's going to happen. So instead what I want you to do is say, I feel worried. This is worry. I'm feeling worry because my brain is thinking a sentence in my head. So fascinating. I love to watch my brain freak out sometimes I'm like, Oh my gosh, my brain is crazy and notice that I'm doing that from a place of compassion and love, not from a place of judgment and beating myself up.

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Step number two, after you call it worry and you get some awareness around it is I want you to take responsibility for that feeling and make friends with it. Sometimes this can be a tough one, but it's so powerful. So let's take the example of a spouse cheating on you and you are worried about your marriage, your family, and your future.

What I want you to do is want you to take responsibility for the feeling that you are experiencing, which is worry. He is still responsible for his actions, right? You guys had an agreement, you are only going to be together. You're not going to be with other people. He broke that agreement, right? So he's responsible for his actions. You are responsible for the emotions that you are feeling. He cannot jump inside your body and create the feeling of worry. No one is powerful enough to do that.

Right? Thank God. I love this. It's such great news. I think initially when we are learning thought work and you get a good life coach, there's some resistance to wanting to take responsibility for how we feel because we're so used to blaming other people on how we feel, right? We do this with our kids. It's like saying to them, did so and so hurt your feelings. Right?

And there's nothing wrong with that except for the fact that it's not true. So what's scientifically happening is someone said something and you had a thought about it. I always give the example when I'm coaching on self confidence and self doubt. If someone came up to me and said, you're a bad life coach or you're a bad entrepreneur, I wouldn't think anything. I would be very confused. I'd be like, they don't know what they're talking about. I would not feel rejected. I wouldn't feel disappointed.

I would, you know, just keep going about my day. Now contrast that. If you just got started and you published your first blog post, or you just became a coach and someone says that to you and you feel rejected, you don't feel rejected because they said that to you. You feel rejected because of what you're making it mean. So whatever is happening in your circumstances doesn't mean you have to think and feel a certain way. It's always available for you to think and feel however you want.

The second part of this, taking responsibility for feeling worried and making friends with it is the making friends with that part. I don't want you to judge yourself for feeling worried or judge yourself for how you're interpreting it. I think we beat ourselves up so much, myself included. The other day, Steve said to me, you're so hard on yourself, and it was so fascinating to me because I didn't even realize it.

He was talking about decorating the apartment and how I was kind of beating myself up for the choices that I made, or was this good enough or did I want it differently? You know? And to me these were just facts, right? I didn't even realize they were optional thoughts, which by the way is

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why it's so important to continuously do this work. I always compare it to cleaning out your house. It's never done every day you self coach, right?

Every two weeks I have cleaning ladies come. It's like your mind gets messy and you have to separate out the facts from the thoughts about it. So when you are discovering that you are worried and you've called it worry and you're taking responsibility that you are creating the worry, I don't want you to beat yourself up about it. I want you to be friends with it.

Sometimes with negative emotion you can like talk back to yourself. Oh hi there worry, I see you. You're welcome to stick around but nothing has gone wrong. We are going to figure this out. So basically it's just being kind to yourself. So step one is to call it worry. Step two is to take responsibility for feeling worried and make friends with it.

Step three is to give yourself worry time. This is a big one for things that you're just not able to stop worrying. Sometimes you can learn what I'm teaching you and realize that you never have to worry and then you're just done worrying. But other times, bigger things in your life will happen. Whether it's a parent getting sick or your marriage is in jeopardy or whatever the case, you are very worried and you don't want to stop worrying. So what I suggest is that instead of worrying all day and have it consume your day, you schedule worry time and it kind of sounds silly at first, but it works.

So you can plan on every day from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM whatever time, right? You can do it morning night, you schedule the time and you decide to worry on purpose during that time. You can clean during this time. You can write it all down during this time. You can do whatever you want as far as actions, but this is the time that you are going to allow yourself to just worry.

All of the thoughts, worry, worry, worry. And then after that you decide, my worrying is done for the day. I'm not going to worry again until tomorrow. This gives you some authority around your worry and around your mind and around your feelings so that you're not avoiding the worry. You're giving it attention, but you're not letting it control you. I think it's so powerful, especially for our biggest worries.

Step number four, after giving yourself a worry time, is to decide how you want to show up about this circumstance in the future. So sometimes worry happens in an instant, right? So when I got to the hospital where my dad was, I was flooded with thoughts that created enormous worry, right? I almost had a physical reaction, right? I was sobbing, I was nauseous. Not just worried, right? A lot of other emotions, but it happened so quickly that I wanted to be present and process that emotion without resisting it.

But after that, after I was able to let it all out, for lack of a better phrase, I decided on purpose, how I wanted to show up, given the circumstances as they were. I wasn't trying to fight it. I

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wasn't trying to change the circumstances. I accepted the circumstances and decided how I wanted to show up, right?

So I took it to focus on the internal that I could control. We think we can control our circumstances and honestly stay in shelter is one of the best examples of not being able to do that. Cause sometimes you can right, if you have a job and you are really worried about your job, you can quit your job and get a different job. Now what's interesting is that if you are what I call a circumstance changer, I think that God has a way of giving us our little homework assignments so that our brains go back to needing to feel whatever we were feeling before.

So you might not worry about your job anymore, but you'll be presented with something new that you worry about. For you during stay in shelter or whatever else. You weren't able to change that circumstance. And I love this as a life coaching example because you have to focus on your own thoughts and your own feelings. And it's where the real work is. It's some of the hardest work, but it's the most rewarding because you actually get stronger.

So step number one is to call it worry. Identify it to become aware of it. Step number two is to take responsibility for feeling worried. You don't blame your circumstance on it. You decide, yes, I'm interpreting this circumstance by thinking the thought that's creating the worry and I'm going to be okay with that. I'm going to make friends with it. Step three is to give yourself worry time. Step four is to decide how to show up given the circumstances as they are without trying to control them.

And then step five is to bring it back to today. Now remember, worry is always about the future and sometimes even if you do this work steps one through four, what's going to happen is that a new circumstance will arise and your brain will default to worry and that's okay. When this happens, I want you to bring your mind back to today. You can always handle what's in front of you today. Today I have enough money today. I have enough food today. I have enough time. I have enough right now.

When you focus on the moment and remind yourself that you have everything you need, right? It's very abundant and powerful because then you can get some authority over how you want to think, right and know that the future hasn't happened yet and we don't know what's going to happen even though we think we do and instead of worrying, you can bring yourself back to today.

Remind yourself of the truth of today and think anything you want to about the future. I wanted to give you my favorite quotes about worry because some of them are just so good. One of them is Eckhart Tolle quote, worry, pretends to be necessary but serves no useful purpose. Another is from Gavin de Becker where he says to worry oneself is a form of self harassment. Worry is the

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fear we manufacture. It's not authentic if you choose to worry about something, have at it, but do so knowing it's a choice.

So good, right it is really ruthless. I love it. Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength. Corrie Ten Boom, I love this. Remember, worry is about the future and it doesn't change the future results. Oh, I just love remembering this. I have been pretty, pretty good at being able to eliminate most of the worry from my life just from learning these tools. Now, of course, I still have a brain worry still comes up for me, but it happens so much less frequently now that I understand what worry is, where it comes from in the brain and how I can really process it and get out in front of it in the future. That is what I have for you today. I will talk with you next week.

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