

UNCONDITIONALLY WORTHY

The Podcast

Unconditionally Worthy Podcast EP #57: Why Mothers are Worthy of Putting Themselves First with Dr. Amber Thornton

Dr. Adia Gooden: (00:00:00) This episode is sponsored by Crys & Tiana; taking the guesswork out of launching your podcast.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Welcome to the Unconditionally Worthy podcast. In this podcast I will guide you on your journey to connect with the true source of your self worth. Each week we'll discuss barriers to unconditional self worth, the connection between self worth and relationships, self worth practices you can apply to your life, and how to use self worth as a foundation for living courageously.

I'm your host, Dr. Adia Gooden, a licensed clinical psychologist, dance enthusiast, and a dark chocolate lover who believes deeply that you are worthy unconditionally.

Hello, and welcome to another episode of The unconditionally worthy podcast. This is such a timely episode. I have Dr. Amber Thornton with me talking with me today about balance in motherhood. She has a community called Balanced Working Mama and I'm recording this on a day where I'm feeling pretty tired and a little bit stressed. Last night was sort of tough baby girl Imani Joy [ph] was up a lot. And so I'm a bit sleep deprived.

Our nanny that we hired which were really excited about, let us know that unfortunately, she can't start next week. She just start doing afterwards. So childcare is a bit challenging next week. So I'm feeling sort of this stress of being back in my business and working and recording podcasts which I do love to do, while also taking care of Imani and just trying to balance all of those things. And I'm certainly not in it alone. Jason is here.

My parents were here this week. Jason's mom, my mother-in-law has been here. And so we have help in and I'm feeling somewhat stressed and out of balance. I'm trying to practice a lot of self

compassion and be gracious and patient with myself and know that this is a period of time that it's going to pass and I was really grateful to be able to talk to Dr. Amber Thornton today about how we find balance in motherhood and how we move beyond trying to prove our worthiness as mothers. So I'm excited about this episode today. I know that you'll get so much out of it. So let's dive in. I'm really excited to have Dr. Amber Thornton on the podcast today. I've been following her for a while on Instagram and really just excited to have a conversation with her about motherhood and how we can find balance and wellness in motherhood especially since I am a new mother myself. So let me tell you a little bit about Dr. Amber Thornton.

She is a licensed clinical psychologist and motherhood and wellness consultant. She is the founder of balanced working mama where the mission is to completely change the narrative of what's possible for millennial working mothers by helping them to better balance work, motherhood and wellness. Balanced Working Mama community continues to grow as more mamas are leaning in learning how to redefine balance in motherhood and truly begin to prioritize their needs and desires first. Dr. Amber Thornton is dedicated to sharing tips, strategies and mindset shifts for balancing work, motherhood and wellness weekly on the Balanced Working Mama podcast.

Dr. Thornton also helps working moms to transform their wellness through the Balanced Working Mama community, a virtual wellness community that supports millennial mamas in finding the balance and wellness in motherhood through any season of the journey. Dr. Thornton resides in Washington D.C. with her husband and two children who are incredibly adorable, which I know from Instagram, and she is deeply passionate about helping other working mothers fulfill their goals, passions and find more joy throughout their motherhood experiences.

So welcome, Dr. Amber. I am so grateful to have you here.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Oh my gosh, thank you for having me. I'm really excited about this, like this is going to be a really good conversation. So I'm just happy to be here.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Awesome. And I was telling Dr. Amber before we started that this is a very timely conversation to have because I'm in, I guess sort of my second week post maternity leave. You know, childcare has been a little bit wonky starting out. And so, you know, I'm definitely feeling the challenge of striking a balance or finding some balance in terms of being a new mom and working and doing all the things. So I'm really excited to hear your wisdom that you have to share and I know that I'm going to take a lot from our conversation today.

And I'd love for us to start where I start all of my podcast episodes is by asking you to share about your own self worth journey.

(0:05:00)

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yes. Oh my gosh. That's such a great question. And I actually took some time to really think about this and for me, I think my self worth journey has just been a work in progress since I was probably a child. You know, I don't know how many of your listeners can

relate to this, but I have always been this very high achieving person even in childhood. That's, why I became a doctor.

And that's why I, you know, I was the first in many rights in my family to do many things, you know, the first to go to college, the first to go to graduate school, the first to move away from home, you know, the first to do all these things. And so for me, what I noticed is that my self worth was often tied into what I was able to accomplish, or what I was able to produce, how I've been able to perform.

And so I think that has just been, you know, an evolution. For me, my self worth journey is me realizing that my worth has nothing to do with how much I'm able to do, you know, for other people, how much I'm able to produce, and it has just continued to evolve in every stage of life that I've been in. So for instance, right after graduate school, you know, I had to learn like, okay, yes, you have this doctor, but that's not where your worth lies, like you always had worth, you always have value in it, it has not changed, because now you get to be doctor. And now in motherhood, you know, I'm realizing, you know, oh, okay, so my worth is not really tied to how good of a day I had as a mom today.

You know, I could have the worst day ever with my kids and still have worth and value. And so, you know, all of that is just kind of continuing to evolve as I take steps in life. And that's what it is, for me, it's still a work in progress. You know, me really understanding that my worth has very little to do with the roles and the responsibilities I hold and everything to do with just who I am as a person.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Thank you for sharing that. Yeah, I mean, I think a lot of listeners can relate, I can certainly relate to your experience of finding worth and achievement, academic achievement in particular. I know, you know, a real turning point for me was, you know, right after I defended my dissertation and sort of realized, like, Oh, that wasn't going to do it for me, you know, like, you know, spent years like, okay, that's going to be the thing, that's the final like, goal, and then I'll feel worthy, and then I will feel good enough and got out of that room and was like, oh, you know, didn't do it.

And so I totally relate to that. And I, you know, I think also just entering into motherhood, and I know that this is something you talk about a lot is that, you know, women are often taught to believe you're being a mother gives you worth, right, like, you're worthy as a mother. And then there's the sort of how to be a perfect mom, right, or to do all the things and now in our generation, like work, and, you know, be the perfect mom at home and sort of do more of all the things.

And it's really easy to get caught up and feeling like that is what makes you worthy, or kind of ended up engaging in motherhood I think in a way that's sort of oriented in the same way that we can engage in academics, which is striving and achievement and, you know, checking boxes, which, you know, I don't, I personally don't think is the most healthy way for us to engage in this aspect of our lives and our identities.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Agreed, agreed. And it's, you know, it's unfortunate, because if we're not aware of it, we'll just pass that right on to our kids. And they'll continue that cycle with their

kids. And we just, we really don't want that, you know. We really don't. So, yes, everything you said is so true. And I love that we're having conversations like this, because there might be someone who has not realized that that's what's been happening for them. And now, just need this conversation a little bit more aware and really thinking about what what's the next steps for me.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, yeah. I wonder if you could share, specifically about kind of what aspects of self worth were uncovered for you, or came up for you as you became a mother and now you're a mother to two little ones, right like, how do you sort of navigate your feelings of worthiness in, you know, in connection with motherhood? What does that look like for you?

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yes, that's so, that's another great question. You know, I think for me, I grew up. And again, this might be relatable to you all, too. I grew up watching my mom really be the person that did most of the things in my household. You know, we did grow, my dad, my dad was also in the household. But the way that things worked back then, you know, there was very traditional roles in terms of this was what she was supposed to do.

And this is what he was supposed to do. And unfortunately, this was really not even and so, you know, I think for me growing up and becoming a mother, but then also so another layer I'll throw in is that I'm also a married woman. I have a spouse and so for me, I quickly realized oh, my spouse is very engaged,
(0:10:00)

very active, very supportive. And so this idea of what I thought motherhood should be, is automatically going to be very different. And I started to realize there was a sense of me that was like, wait, but if I'm not doing all the things, then what does that mean for me, mom, you know, and my still have the same word, you know, is it okay for me to not be, you know, like this default parent or this primary parent? Is that okay? And so I just started to feel all of that kind of come up. And so even in as I kind of like, in you all I'm still a new mom. My oldest is three years old.

And so I'm still, I'm still learning and growing. And so I think another thing I've learned is that, with me being so vocal about wanting and needing help, I've had to kind of like, often balance this desire for like, Yes, I need help. Yes, I need to assert myself. But then also this, this other thing in the back of my mind is like, there's other women who do this by themselves. And so what does that say about you? You know, what I mean? You know, that there's other women who, who do this better than you. And so, you know, it's like constantly battling that chatter in your head that says that you should be doing more, you should be doing it better. You know, you're not doing [Inaudible] [00:11:13] I think that is something that moms in particular, especially women of color, and black moms, we battle all the time.

All the time, is like, if it's not someone else saying it to us, and it's us. And in most times, it's us. It's us saying to ourselves. No one else is saying. And so, you know, that has been, you know, how it's kind of also unfolded for me as a mom in my journey, you know, just constantly reminding myself that it is okay for me to not do everything. You know, it was okay for me to not

do this with excellence all the time. You know what I mean? Like, it's alright, that is okay. And that has been really pivotal for me.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, yeah. I mean I think you're so right, right. Like, how we're socialized, what we see our moms doing growing up, definitely makes a difference. I think, you know, the other thing that is coming up for me, as I sort of am in this new stage of motherhood is sort of balancing desires, because I do on one level, have this desire to be available to nurse my daughter whenever she wants to nurse because I really enjoy breastfeeding. And it's this special time and this connected, you know, this point of connection. And I know that if I don't step away, or, you know, take time for myself, or let somebody else feed her that in the long term that creates these challenges, right?

Because one, I'm going to need a break, or I'm going to need to step away. And so it also feels like this tension between wanting to be there and wanting to be present, right? So there's the desire that's not totally based on like, am I good enough? But like, I really love this time, and it's special, and it's precious, and how do I take care of myself in the same other hand, because I need that time and then there's a layer of what do other people think about that and so it's, there's a lot of tension and pulls while you're also sleep deprived. I'm sleep deprived. You know, and so how do you, you know, sorting through all of this in the as you go through, it is challenging. And I, you know, I imagine that's one of the big benefits of your community, for moms, because it's a lot to sort of sort through, and it can be so easy to just kind of just get swept up on whatever is happening, versus trying to slow down and move with intention.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yes, absolutely. And so I have two responses to that. You know, one being this is why I always advocate for moms to prioritize your own needs, like just very bluntly, put yourself first above your children. And that sounds so hard and so scary. You know, because I think there's a lot of like perceived judgment, you know, people are afraid like, okay, well, what are people going to think of me if they know that that's how I'm living my life.

You know, are they going to think that I'm like a neglectful parent or that I'm selfish or that, you know, there's all this guilt. But I think that is so important because it is so easy for us to slip into this mode of prioritizing everybody else and we completely forget about ourselves. And so, you know, this radical shift of putting your own needs first, putting yourself in the center is really just like insurance to like ensure that you will think about yourself. It's not saying that everybody else's needs matter less. It's not saying that you are more important even though I argue I think we are more important because [Inaudible] [00:14:49] if we are not well, we can't take care of anyone you know, but it really is just like this insurance policy of like me putting myself in the middle role ensure that I won't forget about myself because you absolutely (0:15:00) will if you are not being intentional about it, but what you said about the community, that is why this community is so important.

You know, having a community of other moms who also want to be well, who wants to be healthy, who wants to have balance. It will help you when you are feeling like there's not a lot of clarity in your own brain, because you are sleep deprived, because you have so many things going on. Having these other people around you who are cheering you on, supporting you,

having similar messages, kind of like you get to be in the mix of that, even if you feel like you can't do it on your own.

And so being able to look out at other people who are maybe examples of how they're doing it, or who are also desperately wanting the same thing. So you all will align just in terms of your mindset and your beliefs and your desires, that is so helpful. I've been talking about this a lot more, because even I'm coming to realize the power of this community that I have. You know, it really is, just imagine yourself in a room full of people who really just want the opposite of what you want.

You will eventually go down the path of those people. And it's not good or bad [Inaudible] [00:16:09] because you'll only be in a room full of people who are saying these things, wanting these things, you know, believing these things. But if you're in a room full of people who are aligned with all the things you want, then you get to hear that and see that and feel that and taste that be a part of that. And that will only push you further in the direction you want to go.

So I think that's why that's the community is so important. But also like, you know, moms really boldly, boldly, boldly practice this idea of like, I have to put myself first because if I don't, it's only going to be bad for me moving forward.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, I think that's really powerful and somewhat radical, like, put yourself first and you know, it makes me think about, you know, often in families, everybody else is putting yourself first, right, like kids are putting themselves first because they don't have any other way of being right. Like if they're hungry, they're going to tell you they're hungry. If they're tired, right, like, they are going to say I want my needs met. They are not going to say, Oh, mom, I'm going to wait until you finish in the bathroom, and then I'll get hungry and cry no, like they're putting their needs first.

Often, if you have a male partner, they're probably putting their needs first and not necessarily in a selfish way. But like, that's how they're socialized. Right. Like men are usually socialized to think about themselves first. And then they'll take care of their family. And they can be amazing fathers and husbands while doing that. I'm not trying to put them down. But that's, you know, so they're probably going to do that. And so then if in that ecosystem, the mom is the only one who's not putting her needs first, then it just creates a situation where her needs aren't going to get met. Because there's almost always somebody who needs her.

There is almost always some demand. And so I think, you know, your guidance is so important to say that no, literally put your needs first, center yourself. And, you know, I think about this in the work I've done with clients, which is, most of the clients are so worried about being too selfish. I'm like, you're never going to get there, right? Like you prioritizing yourself like is going to even things out, it's not going to put you in a space where you're totally selfish, and you don't care about anybody else. And so I imagine the same of your wisdom, it's like center yourself, and actually, that's going to balance things out versus exactly, making you just, you know, the center of attention and the only person who gets their needs met in the family.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yes, because the funny thing about it is, you know, the people who are neglecting their children, you know, not caring, they are not aware of it. But like many of us, we are hyper aware of, you know, how selfish we may or may not be, [Inaudible] [00:18:51] what are the needs of our children. And so that right there will let you know, like, if you are afraid to put yourself first because you're afraid of what it means spiritually, that means there's absolutely no way like you will never neglect your family.

Dr. Adia Gooden: That's not likely to happen.

Dr. Amber Thornton: And so that's something that I often have to really like break down for moms, you know, I remember a few weeks months ago, I set that on Instagram, and a lot of women were really shocked and unhappy about it and I got to talk to them. And what they said was, you know, when you say that you have to put yourself first that makes me feel like you're neglecting your children, or that I'm neglecting and we have to really have a conversation about putting yourself first does not equate to neglect for anyone and in that think again I'm so glad we're having this conversation because I really want moms to understand this. You know, centering your own needs really helps to bring more balance to the whole picture.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Have you ever considered launching your own podcast but don't know where to start? Is your podcast ideas still taking up space in your head (0:20:00) and your launch to do list to long and tedious? You need a gentle push in the right direction and I highly recommend you consult the team at Crys & Tiana, a podcast launch production company helping entrepreneurs like you and I launch podcast without the overwhelm.

That way you can focus on what you do best talking, connecting and sharing your special message with the world. Crys & Tiana allowed me to relax and focus on creating meaningful content that I'm proud of while connecting with all of you. They keep me organized and on track so I can spend less time on tedious tasks and more time in my zone of genius. Crys & Tianas' team will help you declutter your priorities, identify your most important podcast goals, create a plan for execution and lead you to success.

They'll provide you with the structure and accountability you need to thrive, which means you can use your newfound time to focus on growing your business, making a bigger impact and more money, doing what you love. Whether you're a coach, entrepreneur, or lifestyle brand, Crys & Tiana will help you take your podcast to the next level. Book a podcast on strategy call today and start turning your podcast dreams into reality. Go to www.crysandtiana.com/launchstrategy for 25% off a launch strategy session. You can also find the link in the show notes.

Dr. Adia Gooden: I mean, I also think about the challenge of living in a culture that is sort of this zero sum culture, right. So if you're, if somebody is first, that means everybody else was last. Right? Or somebody is the winner, everybody else is the loser. And I think when we have that orientation, the idea of putting yourself first seems really problematic, because it means you're putting your child's needs last or you're just ignoring them. And that's not what you're saying, right? You're just saying consider your needs first.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Right.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Right. Before you consider everybody else's needs, you're still going to consider everybody else's needs, but you're going to put yours at the forefront instead of ignoring them. Right. So thinking about that, I also think there's probably a way in which when you center your needs, you're also helping your children and family members to learn to meet other people's needs, right? Because so many of us are socialized in families where the girls or the women are the only ones who are focused on meeting everybody else's needs. But it's so important for everybody in the ecosystem to be sort of aware of their own needs and other people's needs, and to not sort of over index on one or the other.

And so if the mother is saying, here are my needs, how do we make sure those are met in addition to other people's needs? Everybody is learning and understanding, oh, this is healthy, right? It isn't just all about me, right? Or it isn't all about someone else. We all need to balance this.

Dr. Amber Thornton: And I you know, I talk about that often too, me communicating my boundaries to my children, helping them understand that, you know, mommy's not always happy or sometimes mommy doesn't want to play. It helps them realize that I'm human too, you know. and that is an important lesson. You know, we have to help our children see and understand that we have needs, we have desires, sometimes we feel pain. Of course, we don't tell reason. We don't want our children to ever feel responsible for our feelings or any of that, but really helping them understand that mommy is a human just like you and this is how the world works. This is how our relationships work. This is how connection with other people works, too.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, yeah. That makes sense. What are some of the biggest challenges in the community of mothers that you work with and your audience? What are the some of the biggest challenges you see people having with sort of taking care of themselves as they are mothering, as they are being mothers?

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yes. So outside of what we just talked about, because that's a huge one. I think guilt you know, this idea of mom guilt is what we often call it, you know, feeling guilty about, you know, taking a moment for yourself or doing something for yourself, that guilt is a huge one because it often for many women is the determining factor for whether they're going to make a decision about their wellness or make a decision about [Inaudible] [00:24:23] you know, for them, they kind of leave it as it will if I feel guilt that means I shouldn't do it. But the way that I help women and mothers understand it is that when you feel guilt you have to be very critical about it because honestly 99% of the time that mom guilt is wrong. It is wrong.

And so guilt is an emotion that helps us understand when maybe we might have done something wrong or you know something right but when it comes to motherhood and when it comes to your well being and your health, often that indicator is just kind of off a little bit. So I help them really be more critical about that guilt if they're feeling and instead of (0:25:00) stopping when they feel the guilt to actually just move forward, like, move in, because there's growth and healing behind that. You know, for instance, if you've been having guilt, about wanting to plan a vacation with your friends, you know, go away for a weekend. There is growth and healing behind that guilt, if you just got to get through it, you got to do it.

So you can learn. And you learn so much more, you grow so much more as a mother and a woman when you're able to do those things for yourself. So the guilt, but then also, I think another big thing that a lot of the moms struggle with, is really being very vocal about their needs, and when they might need support. Like just really communicating with other people about what they need, how they need it, really asking for that help is just really hard for them. Because again, many of them have been socialized to believe that if you need help, you're not trying hard enough, you know. If you because you haven't thought through all the options, or how you can do this alone. Or if you hope you shouldn't even go that route, because people don't know how to help you anyway, you know, and so there's a lot of really negative beliefs about help, what it means about you, but then also other people's desire and ability to help that we often have to work through to.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, yeah, I mean, I think, you know, the first part of what you said with the guilt is so important, right? Like, okay, feel the guilt and still do the thing that you know, is going to be good for you and going to be helpful. And the hope is that people you know, go on that trip or, you know, take a day for themselves, and then find that they can maybe even be more present when they come back, because they've had the rest. They've had the restoration. They've had the break. And, you know, I try to think about, you know, I've worked with young adults a lot. And, you know, in the conversations with them, if they had concerns about their parents, and many of them did, it was never, like, my parent went away for one weekend, or took a few hours or had a hobby, right. Like, that's not the complaint.

The complaint is my parent was critical. My parent was overwhelmed. My parent was depressed. My parent had a substance abuse issue. My parents didn't approve of me, right. Those core things are the things that really impact our children. But if in general, you're there, you're present, you're loving, you're accepting your warmth, having a few days away, a few hours away, right? Like that is not your child is not going to come through that thinking my parent doesn't love me. That doesn't cause that psychological impact. That's not what happens. And so, you know, I know that that's a helpful reminder for me, and I hope that that helps, you know, other people to hear that, like, your child is not going to be in a therapist office in 20 years because you went on a girls trip for a weekend.

Dr. Amber Thornton: [Inaudible] [00:27:43]

Dr. Adia Gooden: They are not. In fact, they're going to be like, I saw my mom go on girls trips, and I want to do that myself. I learned that it was good to rest and play and have fun, and that you could do that even when you are an adult and a parent.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yeah. And I'm imagining it too, they'll say, like, I saw that when she did that she came back she was happy. She felt, she seems satisfied. She was, it was easier to talk to her. And so like I'm learning that when I do those things, I feel better. And I'm able to be closer connected with people. Those are really important lessons for us and our kids.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah. And I think the other thing about sort of asking for help, we do motherhood very different in the U.S. than most cultures, right. Most cultures who have done this have sort of an established, you know, centuries old way of doing motherhood. And when I

was still pregnant, I was sort of reading about the postpartum period and reading some books that sort of talked about how different cultures around the world handle the postpartum period. And a lot, in a lot of cultures.

Basically, the new mom doesn't do anything, but nurse the baby. Like she sleeps, she nurses the baby and somebody else feeds her, makes her food clean. And it's just like, do not do anything. That's like that's the way it's supposed to be versus I think in the U.S. culture, it's like how quickly can you get out and get a run? How quickly can you get out there? How quickly you know and you're supposed to do anything, you have maybe a few weeks of maternity leave, and your partner probably doesn't have leave at the same time. And so you're supposed to be home alone with the baby and cooking and cleaning. And it's just, it's a recipe for a big problem.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yes.

Dr. Adia Gooden: My you know, my sort of clinical opinion is that, yeah, it makes sort of sense why we have high rates of postpartum depression because if that's your launch into motherhood, which is totally overwhelming. It makes sense that you might come through that feeling depressed and overwhelmed and anxious and all of those things. And so I think even for people to remember like, this is not like the way we do it is not normal. Actually, most communities and cultures, most moms have a whole ton of support, right? Like have grandmothers and aunts and all these people who are in the (0:30:00) mix of caring for the children, and you are not, it's not intended to be a solo endeavor, and you're really not proving anything by trying to do it alone, especially if you have access to support.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Absolutely, absolutely. And I think that was so key, like really, like you said, getting us to kind of like step outside of our own box, and seeing that there's so many other ways of doing this. And you know, that's also why I love our community, because it's a way for us to always say, like, redefine what motherhood looks like, you know, many of us have only seen that version of motherhood that is very American and westernized. And, you know, the mom and the woman always doing everything, it's like, oh, well, no wonder she was stressed out, no wonder she was overwhelmed. Like, it's literally too much, too much. And so, you know, getting us to accept and understand that there absolutely can be another way that we can work towards this. And it's going to be, it's going to take some work to like stretch our mindsets around it or our beliefs, you know, our habits and practices and how we even navigate our families. But there can be better, a different way.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, I wonder if there are practices that you offer to the moms that you support and work with that you find helpful. And I'm sort of thinking about this in the context of just we're touching on it, but the complexity of motherhood, which may be that you really, really, really wanted to get pregnant and have a child and then you have one, and then you're overwhelmed, and you're anxious, or you're experiencing all these things. And you're like, what is this right? Like, is it something wrong with me? How do I take time away. I wanted this child so much, maybe you didn't plan the child, but then you right like, there's so many complex, like, I love being with my kid, but I need a break.

And I can't you know, there's so many complexities. And I think we're often not practiced in holding the complexity together. And not saying, oh, this means I'm a bad mom, right? But like, oh, there are times when I really just want to get away. And there are times when I love my child so much, I don't want to let them go. Right. And that all of that is together. It doesn't mean you know, one is right, and one is wrong. So I guess I'm sort of asking it a convoluted question, but I'm just sort of wondering if there are practices that you offer that help people, help moms to navigate the complexities, the emotional complexities of motherhood?

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yeah, you know, I think the first thing it made me think about is in our community, we practice something called the balanced framework, and it's really just a framework to help us understand what balance means. But it's also like this new spin on how to think about balance, because I think traditionally, when we think of the word balance, we think of, you know, like, equal parts and things, you know, things feeling equal and smooth and kind of, like, harmonious. And that is, okay, that's a good definition of it. But, you know, we've taken that word and really redefined it.

And there are eight principles that we really tried to ground ourselves in. And, you know, I think that one that also, you know, doing it that way, it kind of calls out the complexity of this motherhood thing. You know, it is complex. And so it might take some principles to ground us and so that we're, you know, not aiming for perfection with these things, but really kind of like, understanding well, which direction should I be looking which direction? How should I, you know, what perspective might be helpful for me in that. And so some of the principles in that framework include, you know, really making sure that you're a very bold environment in how you set your boundaries, you know, really being very clear about how you're communicating with people when it comes to your needs, really making space for living fully, and all of your identities and that one is really special to me, essentially means that when you become a mom, that's not just it, like, there's still these other parts of you that exist, even if it feels like you've lost touch or connection with them.

Like, it's still important to really fully live in all of who you are. You know, another example is really learning how to delegate roles and responsibilities in your house and/ or collaborate more. And so for some of the moms in our community, this means them exploring what outsourcing means for them, you know, paid services. For a lot of them, this means like reshifting the roles and responsibilities in their house so that their spouse is playing a different role, or even their older children, you know, and [Inaudible] [00:34:28] my oldest child is three, and there's things that we expect and expect for him to do when it comes to responsibility. So you know that so that I think is a cool practice and really helping to ground them in, you know, what does balance mean? What does that look like? Like what are the foundational things that I should kind of keep in my mind to help guide my decisions and my daily habits and my practices as I go through each day.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, I think that sounds so helpful. And I think it's also it seems like it's about (0:35:00) people figuring out for themselves, right? So you have a framework that guides people into, like, here's what you should be considering in these different areas. And it's not like you're saying, these should be your boundaries, or this should be how roles and responsibilities are done in your household, but encouraging people to think about what will work for you, what works for

you, what doesn't work for you and then how do you sort of have the tools to implement those things.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Absolutely. Because it will look different for everyone. And that's, you know, one thing I know about moms, and especially moms in my community, it's such a diverse and eclectic group, like we're all very different, you know. We have different kids and different needs and we live in different places. Some of us are married. Some of us are single. Some of us have multiples. Some of us have one kid, like, it's all different depending on what your lifestyle is, what your circumstances are. But then also, even within your own life, things can look different this month than next month. And so, yes, it's going to look different for everybody, but these very common core, you know, principles and considerations to really be keeping in mind to help you find that balance and wellness.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, it sounds incredibly helpful. I mean, I'm thinking about sort of my own experience of, you know, figuring out what is it that I need and how do I communicate that like, I think, you know, one of the things during maternity leave things were really sort of in a flowing free-form state, like we didn't have much of a schedule. We didn't have, you know, we didn't have anywhere to go and that much to do so just sort of flowed through it. And I know for myself, that I do well, with routine. I do well, with some sort of, you know, like knowing what to expect. And so I'm finding that as I'm starting to work, but we don't yet have full time childcare that I'm feeling sort of like torn in a lot of places and stressed because I don't have my morning routine which for me includes like working out and meditating and like getting a good breakfast and like sitting down and getting into work.

And so I'm finding myself feeling sort of this tension and this pull and I know that it's temporary, but I also know that I need to think about how can I be intentional about asking for that, right? And creating the space for that because I know that then it just affects me and affects how I show up for my husband, for my baby; all of those things and for myself.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yes, absolutely. So true. So true.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah. Are there certain things that you do to take care of yourself just that you can share kind of as an example, for those listening?

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yes, oh my god, I do so much. Like, because you know, me, I have this idea of putting myself first and so for people who follow me on Instagram, you'll know I exercise often because it makes me feel good. But then also for my mental health too honestly. You know, I don't feel good when I haven't moved to my body each day. And so it sometimes that's yoga today, it was hitting a really long wall, sometimes to strength training, but like really, making it a habit and doing what I need to do to fit it into my daily lifestyle to move my body in some way has been super helpful for me. I think another thing is really being very mindful and intentional about connecting with other people outside of my children and my spouse, and outside of my co-workers, like, I think sometimes for many of us, we fall into this trap of, oh, I've only talked to my spouse, my partner and my kids all day, and then my co-workers like so really making space and time for those social connection, that social interaction.

You know, I was just talking about this on Instagram today, you know, sometimes moms say well, it's just so hard to make time for that and so then it just falls off. But we have to make time for that because that's a whole other part of us that really deserves some time and you know, for some of us, that's where these virtual communities can step in, you know. Yeah, it can be hard to go see your best friend that lives two states away but guess what, we have virtual communities.

We have you know, voice messages, I send those all the time to people. There is ways to really connect deeply with other people. So that is something that I'm very intentional about. I think another thing too and this is just something that I'm really trying to do more this year and this is just another example. I had a an annual physical yesterday with my doctor and so like little things like that, like prioritizing my health means being proactive about these things that come up with my health. So making sure I scheduled that annual visit even if I don't feel like I need it, you know or I booked that follow up therapy appointment, even if I feel okay today. You know, things like that. Just being very proactive about my physical and my mental health has helped me tremendously too.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, those are such great examples and I'm sure people are going to hear them and kind of get their wheels turning. It's getting my wheels turning a bit and I think one of the things that you know, I take away as I (0:40:00) listened to you is that it's not about performance. And I think often we're sort of in a space where self care sort of feels like it's performance. Like I'm supposed to work out, I'm supposed to do this. And I'm supposed to do that. And I am suppose to, and so the people bring that same again, achievement energy into taking care of themselves, and then feel stressed that they're not kind of like meeting all the things right. So the idea isn't that you listen to Dr. Amber and think, oh, my gosh, I should be working out every day. And if I'm not working out every day, then I'm not. Right.

But that you hear her say, this is what makes my body feel good. This is what makes me feel good mentally. And so I make time to move my body in one way or another, not to prove prove that I did it, but to say, okay, this is what takes care of me. Right. And I think that's so helpful for people to kind of orient around that, getting in tune with what actually feels good with you, not some sort of form or cookie cutter thing that somebody else said you should do. Sometimes it can be helpful to try things on like, oh, I heard this is helpful. Try it on, see how it feels for you. But just then tuning in, you know, I had you mentioned like, going out with people, one of my friends earlier this week invited me out for drinks tonight. And at first I was kind of like, no, I'm not going to be able to go and we have so much going on. And I don't want to, you know, and then I was like, No, I think I do want to go, yes.

And I actually, you know, like, actually, I think I want to go and my husband will be fine. And, you know, and I, of course check with him, like, you know, let's make sure we're not both planning to be out. Somebody has to be with the baby. But you know, and I'm glad, especially where I am today. I'm like, no, I do kind of need a break and to get out of the house and to do something different. And I'm grateful that I said yes. And so it's like in those moments, how do you slow down enough to really think through what will be of service to you, instead of just having an initial, which is sometimes guilt driven response, like, oh, I can't do that. We're too busy. We have too much going on. It's not going to work.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yeah, absolutely. And, you know, for me, sometimes to those reactions I know for a lot of moms, it's guilt. And for other moms, maybe moms like me, it's anxiety. Anxiety often keeps me saying no to things that are really should say yes to, something that would be healthy for me to do or to try something. But for me, I've noticed that as someone who lives with anxiety, I'm often you know, like you said, oh, my automatic response will be no, because of it.

So no, because of that, when really I kind of have to break that down in my head like, hey, that's actually just fear, you know, fear of what will happen. You know, fear of, are my kids going to be okay, fear of will my spouse be okay, like fear of the unknown, fear of uncertainty and feel for me, I often have to push through that anxiety that comes up whenever there's something new to try, you know, something to do that's outside of my comfort zone or outside of my routine. So I think guilt and anxiety often keep us release stuck in locked into these things that often don't serve us as much as we think.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, I'm so glad you pointed that out about anxiety, because I think it's something that so many of us deal with and struggle with. And the thing is that anxiety can masquerade as like truth, right? Those thoughts, right? Like, it is going to be bad, right. Like, if I leave the house, then she's not going to get to sleep, and she's going to be awake, or this is going to be right like and we can then predict the future and think that we know what's going to happen when we really don't. But we sort of predict this negative future because our anxiety says so and we say, well, I can't go right versus creating a space where we can say, okay, I can choose to go or not go. But I want for myself to know it's a choice, right?

And I can choose to go and know yeah, maybe the sleep schedule gets a little disrupted. Or maybe I have to like pump and dump when I get home because I had drinks or maybe whatever or I can choose to stay because today I'm more tired and just the disruptions are going to be more overwhelming than the benefit of spending time with a friend. But bringing it into a space where you're choosing versus letting your anxiety just like your anxiety or guilt decide for you, I think can be really empowering and help people to feel like okay, like today, I'm choosing that I don't want to go because it just feels too much. And I'm already kind of anxious, but I'm going to make a point to schedule to go another time.

And maybe a brunch is an easier time with our family, with the nap schedule with all those things. So let me ask my friend, let's put a brunch on the schedule, and I'm going to make sure to be there. So there are ways to work with it.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yeah, absolutely. I agree.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Awesome. Are there any final things, pieces of wisdom that you'd like to share or things that you want people to really remember and take away from this conversation?

Dr. Amber Thornton: Oh, wow. No, I think there were so many (0:45:00) gems and nuggets in this episode, I'm really happy about this conversation. But I think the thing I will remind people is that, you know, if you're a mom, especially if you're a new mom to just know that every day, it's not going to be easy. Most days might be hard you know, but really continue to think about

what it is that you want, what it is that you desire, what it is that you need, how to communicate that with other people so that you can be all that you need to be for other people, but really for yourself.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, thank you for that. And thank you for all the wisdom you shared. Today, I'm imagining that a lot of the listeners are going to be curious about your Balanced Working Mama community and you and the services you offer. So I'd love for you to just share how people can connect with you, learn more about your community and all of that.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Yes. Well, if anyone who's interested, you can definitely learn more at [Balancedworkingmama.com](https://www.balancedworkingmama.com). And I'm always on Instagram. You can find me on Instagram at Dr. Amber Thornton.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, she's a great Instagram page. You share so authentically. I think that's probably what stands out is that you just share so honestly and authentically. And you know, it's clear that you so love your family, and that you love yourself and you're kind of showing and modeling how do I engage with my love for my family and myself as a mom, and it's really wonderful to watch.

Dr. Amber Thornton: Thank you so much.

Dr. Adia Gooden: You're welcome. Thank you for being here.

Thanks for joining me this week on the Unconditionally Worthy podcast. Make sure to visit my website [DrAdiagooden.com](https://www.DrAdiagooden.com) and subscribe to the show on iTunes so you'll never miss an episode. You can also follow me on social media at Dr. Adia Gooden. If you love the show, please leave a review on iTunes so we can continue to bring you amazing episodes.

Lastly, if you found this episode helpful and know someone who might benefit from hearing it, please share it.

Thanks for listening and see you next episode.

This episode was produced by Crys & Tiana and the music is by Wataboi.