

Ep #177: Breaking the Cycle of Self-Judgement



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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This is episode 177. We're going to be looking at the layers of thoughts that exist within you and how to explore your inner narrative without being an arse to yourself.

If you want to do things differently but need some help making it happen then tune in for your weekly dose of coaching from me, Maisie Hill, Master Life Coach and author of *Period Power*. Welcome to *The Maisie Hill Experience*.

Hello lovely ones. I recently had a conversation on one of our group coaching calls in the membership where my client was getting coached on the topic that they'd brought to get coached on. And I noticed as they were telling me about the situation that they were judging themselves for not reacting in a particular way, the way that they think they should be able to respond by now.

So they just had this idea that because of all the inner work that they've done, and because they're now quite familiar with the methods that I teach. That they should therefore be able to manage their mindset and not respond in the way that they did to the situation that they were in. And it's not the first time that this has happened, it sure as hell won't be the last.

But I realised that I don't have a particular podcast about this phenomenon, and we need one because whether you're a client of mine or not, this will show up for you. Because it's one of the key ways that we can use our success against ourselves. So bear with me because today's going to be quite meta. I'm going to be talking about the thoughts that we have about our thoughts, the feelings that we have about our feelings and the responses we have to our responses, so strap in.

So here's what tends to happen. On your journey of self-discovery you will come across new techniques that you'll begin to apply to your life. And you'll look at and understand your thoughts, your emotions, your responses in a very different way. And it's just seeing your world with fresh eyes or a new set of glasses or just cleaned glasses.

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There's just so much clarity that becomes available to you when you do this kind of work. And there's intrigue and fascination and things because you can finally see what's going on. And also understand it and realise that you have other options that you can do things differently. So with that comes this surge of excitement. You're making changes. You're seeing the fruits of your efforts and it's amazing and wonderful.

And as you get better at recognising your particular patterns, you can also become aware of every so-called slip, every 'negative' thought or feeling. And then that can start to feel like you're failing at this and that you're not doing it properly, that you're not good at it, or whatever your brain likes to offer you. And this is what I see happen with the members. So their perspective of themselves and their lives changes, they feel more at home in themselves. They start accessing their power and that creates shifts within themselves and out in the world around them.

So there's all sorts of things going on and it's fantastic, it's a lot of fun for them. It's really fun for me to see it all unfold, it's great. But as they become more skilled at recognising and understanding their patterns of thinking and feeling and behaving, a new challenge emerges. Typically, I mean, sometimes it's around the six to 12 months mark, definitely by 12 to 18 months. But in that kind of timeframe, there's this trend that I've noticed where clients begin to use their initial success against themselves.

And basically it's because they now have greater awareness of how their mindset and stress responses and emotions impact their lives. And because they now have the tools to navigate their responses to situations, and because they're in a position where they can choose to adopt a different approach. They end up berating themselves for not always having perfect thoughts or for feeling negative emotions or reacting in a certain way.

And if you're thinking that you should be better at this by now, and that you should really know better, then you're using your success against yourself. So ultimately, I really want to help you to break free and just do the things that you dream about and make bold, courageous moves in your life,

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whether that's getting your dream job or actually instigating the important conversation that you've been putting off. That's what I mean by bold moves. And then inherent in that is you creating a really solid and respectful and compassionate relationship with yourself.

And so a lot of my clients start off their journey with me by unwinding the impact of their inner critic, that critical voice inside yourself that has all sorts of judgemental things to say about you. And then so the work that they do is really about coming into a different relationship with their inner critic.

But what can happen is that they learn the techniques I teach, use those to stop being so mean to themselves, and that all goes really well, fantastic. But then once they've experienced success, the inner critic comes back from another direction. So they've addressed it in one way and then it comes back, just from another direction, of course it does. That's just how it goes for you, me, for everyone. Again, it doesn't have to be a problem.

It's just another opportunity because it's all about how you interact with that inner critic, not the presence of them, though that does shift. So think of a situation just from the last few days, think of a situation that you've been in that was challenging in some way where you maybe felt a negative emotion. You know what I mean by negative emotions. I'm not really keen on the positive and negative spin on emotions, but I use it as a shortcut here on the podcast.

So a situation that was challenging where you felt a negative or challenging emotion, maybe where you got annoyed or frustrated or irritated, something along those lines. Doesn't matter what the situation is, whatever comes to mind for you is perfect. Then I want you to think about how you reacted to that situation. So what was your automatic response? What thoughts crossed your mind? What did you say? What did you do? How did you feel? What did you notice about yourself in response to that situation? That's what we want to hear.

Now, your initial reaction to that situation is important. We can definitely take a look at that, but I care more about what happens next. So we're

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going to explore the next layer. I want you to think about your response to your initial reaction. So there was the situation, your response to it, and then your response to that response. Told you it was going to be meta.

So are you thinking that you shouldn't feel that way, that you should be able to think differently by now, that you ought to be able to handle things better by now, that you shouldn't be this way? Basically, the question here is, are you being kind to yourself or are you being harsh and judgemental? I'm going to give you a couple of situations because I think with it being quite meta today it's useful to have tangible examples.

So let's say the situation is that a colleague emails you and in that email they question the approach that you took on a project. So that's the situation. Your initial reaction is to get defensive and annoyed. Maybe you start drafting a somewhat sharp response in your head or maybe in your actual inbox or you're just ranting in your head and finding ways to kind of pick up on their failures and either way you're just pissed off. So, so far we've got the situation, the email from your colleague.

And we have your automatic reaction, which is to defend yourself and all the things that that entails for you in that situation. The final piece of information we need here is your response to your reaction. So that's where maybe you're judging yourself for reacting that way. So this is how it often shows up with my clients.

So something like that happens and then they go through the self-coaching framework that I teach, where they coach themselves or they submit a request to get coached in the membership by me or one of the team. And in that process they realise that the email they received from the colleague was actually very neutral.

Let's say they just asked you a question about your approach. But because you're human and your brain does human things, you added some tone to their words and perhaps jumped to the conclusion that they were criticising you or undermining you or whatever storyline your brain likes to add into these situations. I did an episode recently about jumping to conclusions

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that I really recommend. So upon realising that this is what's happened, and you've reacted this way, what is your response? Do you criticise yourself or are you able to hold space for yourself for being human?

And even as you're listening to me saying this, you might be criticising yourself for criticising yourself. See how this cycle works? It really does go on and on and that might feel intimidating and hopeless and what the hell's the point? But really, the fact that this cycle continues means that there are lots and lots of opportunities for you to interrupt that cycle. That's how I see it. That's how I encourage you to see it.

Another example. Let's say you're trying to arrange a get together with some friends or you've got a family gathering happening. And for one reason or another it's just proving a bit tricky to accommodate everyone's requests. And you start to feel a bit irritated or perhaps overwhelmed. And then so we've got the situation, your initial reaction and then your response to that is to berate yourself. I always let myself get walked over. I should be able to handle this better or I can't believe I'm letting them get to me like this, I should be able to handle this.

So are you thinking some version of, I shouldn't have reacted that way, I shouldn't have had those thoughts, I should know better, I should be able to do better, etc, etc? And that's not to say that there are situations where you would like to react differently. But there's a big difference between doing that from a place of acceptance and loving yourself without shoulding all over yourself and shaming and judging yourself. So can you hold space for your experience as a human? Why is it completely understandable that you reacted that way?

Can you get curious about your response without judging it and trying to get rid of it by changing it? Can you be compassionate toward yourself? Because the goal isn't to purge ourselves of negative thoughts or feelings. If you want to see how futile it is to attempt this, try to manage every single thought you have for one minute. It is difficult. And then apply that to your emotional state. Apply that to your behaviour. It's an impossible task and

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it's an unreasonable one, it's an unkind one but this is exactly what many people end up subconsciously expecting of themselves.

And you can end up having this unhelpful and unrealistic standard that you should always have great thoughts, brimming with confidence and motivation. And that you should be able to fend off any hint of doubt or insecurity or fear or anxiety or whatever. But the goal of my work is not for you to feel happy all of the time. The point of everything I teach isn't to maintain a constant stream of positive, confident thoughts, or to never experience emotions that are uncomfortable or challenging. Please hear me on this, it's completely unrealistic and it's just not helpful or healthy.

Do your internal checks as you're listening to this and see where you may have subconsciously set an unhelpful standard for yourself on this front. If you have unintentionally set a goal or standard for yourself that you should be able to never think and feel and behave a certain way. Then you are effectively saying that you should be able to manage your mind and emotions and stress responses to the level that you are no longer human. You're criticising yourself for being human. That is unproductive, and it's also harmful.

So throughout the day we have tens of thousands of thoughts, I don't know, it's 60,000 to 80,000 thoughts, something like that. And they can often be about our other thoughts. We have a thought and then we have a thought about that thought and it creates this layered dialogue within us. It's not just one thought leading to an action, but many thoughts interacting and influencing and contrasting and supporting each other often in ways that we aren't fully aware of until we start to pay attention and use thought work.

So how could you ever possibly manage all of that? And why would you want to? That's the big question. Why would you want to? It's normal to have moments of doubt, to feel uncertain, to experience negativity at times. The goal isn't to eliminate these experiences. It's to develop helpful and kind ways to respond to them. And when you can understand and really accept this, the pressure of that unrealistic perfection will just dissipate. It

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will go away because it's not the presence of the thoughts and the feelings themselves are the issue. What matters is your response to them.

It's about how you can interact and coexist with these thoughts and feelings. Trying to eliminate them is just going to lead to more frustration. It's just like being in a room filled with echoes and the more you shout against them, they're just going to grow louder.

You're going to have to hear them more because if you just speak, just in a more regular way and just explore the echoes with curiosity, you find ways to understand them, to hear them. And to actually be able to differentiate the places where there's real wisdom being offered to you and where it's just your socialisation and limiting beliefs and all the previous criticism you've experienced in your life coming through. This is about finding ways to understand and integrate them into your experience. And if you're trying to eliminate thoughts, it's because you're judging them and you're judging yourself.

And I am all about adopting a growth mindset and using ways of thinking that serve you. But you can do that whilst also not trying to escape your current thoughts and do it in a way where you're not making your thoughts a problem or not making you a problem. And this is the stage that comes further down the line when you no longer criticise yourself or make who you are a problem. So what matters here is not the presence of certain thoughts or feelings but how you respond to them.

And these are all just opportunities to practise the skills you've been developing. It's each thought, each emotion, each reaction that you notice is a chance to offer yourself compassion and respect, to treat yourself differently with exquisite care. When there's self-judgement about your automatic reactions, that adds a layer that is unnecessary. It's just so harmful, it just makes you suffer, and it gets harder to actually look at the other stuff as well.

So this is just the process of observing the layers of your inner landscape, observing the layers of thinking, feeling, behaving with compassion and

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curiosity. That's why for those of you in the membership I'm always talking about simplifying the self-coaching and really getting clear on what's going on. And then looking at your thoughts about your self-coaching as well.

So if you find yourself feeling frustrated with your thoughts or your progress, whatever that means, then just remember, it's not about suppressing them. It's not about always maintaining control. It's about equipping yourself to have awareness and understanding of your reactions and being patient, compassionate and respectful with yourself. Okay my loves, that is it for this week. I'll catch you next time.

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