

05. Subverting Patriarchy with Your Cycle



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

Period Power with Maisie Hill

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If you are in the horrors with menstrual cycle issues or you want to learn how to harness your hormones then you are in the right place.

Welcome to the Period Power podcast. I'm your host Maisie Hill menstrual health expert, acupuncturist, certified life coach and author of Period Power. I'm on a mission to help you get you are cycle working for you so you can use it to get what you want out of life. You ready? Let's go.

Hi folks. How are you doing today? It's a rainy day here in Margate. Very windy and it's day one of my period. Which I have to say feels very apt because it feels like my internal world and the external world are together conspiring to get me underneath a duvet.

And ordinarily I would be under a duvet because you might be able to hear that I have a bit of a cold at the moment, thankfully it is just a cold. But also, on day one of my cycle I love to work from bed if possible. Not always possible, but I can get away with it a fair amount of the time.

And I like doing this, not because I need to, I just prefer to. I tend to come up with lots of great ideas and feel really creative at the start of my cycle. But I like to be comfy and relaxed in bed whilst I have them and get them all down on paper and maybe take a nap. I just enjoy relaxing.

But, with life being life at the moment my son is off school and at home so I've come to my COVID safe studio space to record this episode with you.

And this cold has really thrown my sleep off the past few days. Probably in combination with my period being due. But prior to getting ill I have been getting some fantastic sleep. And I have to tell you why. We bought two single duvets.

So, the backstory to this is that I first mentioned this to my partner well over a year ago. And if my memory serves me, and it may not and if so, I apologize in advance Paul, but I'm pretty sure that it didn't go down well at the time as a suggestion. But since then, I've basically become the kind of person who likes to lock the duvet around my body in a very particular way

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before I fall asleep at night. Which means that there's less for him. And it's been causing issues.

So, we finally bought two duvets recently. And they're the kind where each duvet has two parts to it. So, there's a thinner part for the warmer months and then a thicker part for the cooler. And you can basically button them together when it's freezing and be extra warm and cozy. Which means that we don't have to argue about our individual experiences of temperature regulation. Or more likely who stole the duvet, which is usually me. So, I highly recommend this as a sleep improvement strategy and a strategy to improve the quality of your relationship as well.

And talking of beds, let me give you an update on the wrestling with my son that I told you about recently. So, if you were thinking that it was only a matter of time before someone got injured, then you were correct. I got kneed in the vulva last week, which was not pleasant. And then the other day my son kicked me accidentally in the face. So, my nose is all swollen and I got a bloody lip.

And it was totally my fault because I went to do like a crazy fake wrestling move rather than a regular wrestling move. And I'm probably offending, if anyone's listening who's into WW, is it E or F? I don't know, whichever one it is. But like the dramatization of wrestling one. The fake one I'm going to say. So, I was like pulling one of those moves instead of just regular wrestling moves. And so, I just launched myself at him and his reflexes were to just stick his feet up in the air to protect himself. So, I wound up with a busted lip. It's getting better now though.

Anyway, what occurred to me the other day as I was wrestling him, not when I was getting injured but another point in time, is that I'm teaching him consent when we're doing this. I'm very explicit that when we're wrestling that if he starts to kick or punch then we stop, that's it. And that if I tap, because I'm teaching him the whole tapping thing at the moment. So, if I tap or say stop then he has to. And the same goes for if he does that or if he says that to me as well.

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And this is really important to me as his mum. Because I want him to be aware of consent. And I've been approaching this in different ways since he was born. And you're probably wondering like, "Well, how would you do that with such a small baby?" But a great way to teach kids about consent is to practice it with them. And to have their consent, or at least be involving them in processes and starting to create space for them to say no. And also, for them to say yes.

So, from the very beginning I would let my son know when I was about to do something, even as simple as picking him up, I would say, "Okay, I'm going to pick you up now." Just so that he knew what was happening and that we got into that rhythm together. And that carried through into all aspect of care giving, like changing his nappy, giving him a bath, all of those things.

But as he got older it would also involve talking about how he touched and interacted with other kids. And I remember once being at a playground and I saw him touching this young girl. Similar age to him, but she didn't look okay with it. She had this uncomfortable expression on her face and she was looking around for her mum. And so, I just said to my son, in a curious way, "Hey, do you think she wants to touch you at the moment? Like, how about we ask her if that's okay? I'm not sure her face is letting us know that she's okay with this."

And I was there like doing this and it was all fine. He was fine with it, the little girl looked quite happy that someone was noticing what was going on with her. And I was just thinking about what a great opportunity this was to teach him about consent. And then the mum of the girl said to her daughter, "It's okay for him to touch you, he just likes you."

And my heart just broke in that moment because I could really see how ingrained it is that we think it's okay for someone to touch us when we don't want them to. Because we're told they like us and we dismiss non-consensual touch as being okay because someone likes us and it's just their way of showing us affection. And I could just really see how easily

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how this kind of stuff is passed down through generations unquestioned. And that kind of leads me onto today's topic, which is all about how to subvert patriarchy with your cycle.

So, last week I spoke about the various ways in which patriarchy can mess up your cycle. And it seems like you all really loved that episode. It's good to have a bit of a ranty one once in a while I feel. And today I want to talk about my favorite ways to subvert patriarchy that will also improve your cycle and your life.

So, I checked out the dictionary definition of subvert and it is, "Undermine the authority and power of an established system or institution." And the way that I think about this is terms of my personal experience and the work I do with my clients is how can we undermine the power and authority of patriarchy while strengthening the connection and understanding that we have with ourselves in a way that allows us to show up in the world in all the ways that we want to?

Because patriarchy wins when we are disconnected from ourselves, when we dismiss our experiences, and when we doubt ourselves and hand over power. And when, let's be honest, we're exhausted and need a nap.

And as far as I'm concerned one of the best ways to achieve this is to track your cycle, okay? It won't come as a surprise to many of you, but bear with me. Because when you pay attention to your cycle you get to know how your energy and inclination shift according to your hormones as you move through your cycle. Now, that doesn't mean that you have to be a slave to what they're up to, and in fact my other favorite technique apart from cycle tracking is the cycle self-coaching tools that I teach my clients so that they don't have to be held hostage by what their hormones are up to.

But today I want to talk to you about cycle tracking because if you're not doing this, I really encourage you to start. But I don't just want to share my thoughts about it with you, I thought it'd be really helpful for you to hear what some of the members of the Flow Collective have to say about how

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cycle tracking has impacted them. And I have permission to share these with you all so here you go.

Camille said, “Cycle tracking has changed my life. Living cyclically and really tapping into how I feel has been like finally waking up. I no longer feel the need to constantly push myself to the limit and be all go, go, go. And most importantly I now ask for help and say no.”

Okay everyone, can you hear how F-ing powerful that is? “I no longer need to constantly push myself to the limits.” That’s what it’s all about. When we’re exhausted patriarchy wins. When we’re exhausted, we don’t go for promotions because what we’re already telling ourselves we can’t handle any more. I was literally talking about this with a client yesterday, and she’s not the only one who goes through this, it happens a lot.

Camille also mentioned being able to say no. This is a word that’s available to all of us all the time, but we maybe don’t use as much as we could or should be. So, I recommend we all use it far more often than we do and without apology. It’s another great way to subvert patriarchy, saying no. Love it. Okay, let me see what else we’ve got here.

Ellie shared, “I listen to my body so much more now that I understand the intrinsic wisdom it holds. I use it to plan and be more productive. And it has released me from the endless guilt of why I don’t have the energy to do X, Y, and Zed. I now work with the natural energy of my cycles, releasing the guilt and making me more productive and therefore so much happier. The biggest shift has been I no longer dread my period arriving and I am proud of being a woman and the wisdom I have within me.”

I don’t know about you, but I think feeling proud of being a woman and the wisdom I have within me is a really fantastic way to subvert patriarchy. And I know that Ellie isn’t the only one who has battled with guilt because feeling guilty is rife. I have a lot of conversations about this with regards to respecting our cycle and our needs throughout it. And it’s incredibly liberating to just drop that guilt. Like you could just decide now to stop

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feeling guilty. Guilt is unnecessary and it's certainly not helpful, so just draw a line in the sand with that shit and move on.

Alice said, "Cycle tracking has helped me to unsink the capitalist and patriarchal belief that I need to be productive and feel happy to be worthy." Oh, worthy is a big topic that comes up a lot in the Flow Collective.

"Understanding that my anxiety is more likely to show up in autumn has helped me massively to accept the anxious thoughts and listen to what my cycle is telling me rather than fighting it. Also, by looking at my energy levels at different points in my cycle and adjusting my behavior accordingly I live more in tune with my body and rest with less guilt. Working towards zero guilt."

Okay, so a hot tip that I shared in the flow collective recently when I was coaching someone about them taking naps without feeling guilty was that you can frame taking a nap as a way to say F you to patriarchy. After I coached them, I was sharing how I like to work from bed towards the end of my cycle, and I enjoy working then but I like to hide away in the bedroom. And sometimes my partner will come in and I can start to feel guilty because I feel like I've been caught and that I really shouldn't be behaving this way.

And I want to be clear when I say this, that this has got nothing to do with him and anything he's saying or doing. This is entirely to do with my own brain. Now, what I like to do in these moments is, first of all, spot that my brain has gone wild.

I've actually started calling my brain Brian because the spell check on my phone kept correcting brain to Brian and some of my clients have been coming up with nicknames for their brains too, which is a really fun way of approaching their thought work.

Anyway, I like to have a word with Brian in these moments and say, "Hey, this is a great way to subvert patriarchy. Don't you dare get up and work from your desk. Stay in bed." And what I suggested to this client is that

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when she goes to take a nap that she frames it as something positive by deciding that it's a way to deal with patriarchy.

Okay, who else do we have here? Melissa said that, "Cycle tracking at first gave me the tools to understand myself, my body, mind, and emotions. But then went further by giving me tools to love, honor, and respect myself. Knowing where I am in my cycle is a superpower and is now the key to my success." Oh, love that. "To say it saved my life seems like an understatement, it saved me and gave me a new life."

Yeah, because understanding yourself makes such a difference. And when you add love, honoring, and respecting yourself on top of that then that's going to have a tremendous impact on your quality of life. Not to mention the ripple effect in your work and personal relationships too. And everyone, like when you're hearing the things that I'm saying here that have come from the members, just remember that this is just from cycle tracking. Okay? It is very simple and very effective.

Okay, this is from someone else who wished to remain anonymous. And they shared, "Cycle tracking is valuable in many ways. The biggest is that it has helped me to stand up to medical professionals who, whether through ignorance or arrogance, assume we are all the same and that our experiences of our bodies are irrelevant. This includes gynecologists as well as GPs. Cycle tracking has given me the data to back up my experience of the cycle. For example, that they are unpredictable in length, varying from 21 to 28 days, never two the same. And prove to them that what I'm describing is real. My concerns and opinions have been so often dismissed by men. Cycle tracking is the first tool to help me fight back."

This is so important. When you track your cycle, you're collecting data that you can use. Like, you can use it for yourself, but it's also data that you can share with healthcare professionals. Tracking your cycle means you can advocate for yourself, just like this client of mine was saying. So, that way you can get the care that you need and deserve. It's also helpful to your

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healthcare team too, because when they have that kind of data to hand it helps them to do their job in the way that they, hopefully, want to.

Hannah said, “Cycle tracking is one of those amazing secret keys to life and once you know it and you pay attention to it you find out things you never knew were possible. And like all best kept secrets you don’t have to brag, or shout, or advertise it to get the benefits, you just get them with it. And then people start asking you about the changes in you anyway and then you have the possibility to share the gems you’ve uncovered.”

“For me, the first benefit was to understand that my changing moods, that were often a cause for concern for myself and others, were as much to do with my hormones as any choices I was making about my life. What a relief it was to know that it wasn’t my “fault” that I was so up and down. And even better that because I could start to identify when changes would occur, I could prepare for them and ease the situation for myself.”

“Now I understand that I’m prone to PMDD and yet, through the process of identifying it I haven’t really experienced it for maybe the last five months. I could even go as far to say that I have experienced great shifts of energy and insights in the last couple of cycles so that I actually look forward to being premenstrual.” How’s that for subverting the patriarchy?

She continues, “I love that something so demonized can actually be loved, and cherished, and used to clarify, uplift, and improve my life. And that’s just the start. Cycle tracking has really started to show me that all parts of my cycle have amazing power and strength built into them.”

Ah, I love reading these. I get goosebumps. This is what it was like for me as well on my journey. Every step of my journey working with my cycle and tracking it in the variety of ways that I have done and still do, it’s powerful stuff.

And finally, Bret said, “Cycle tracking has given me the greatest gift, the ability to listen and trust my own body and my own wisdom. I am capable of so much more than I imagined.”

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This is how we subvert patriarchy people. I think there's a misconception with menstrual cycle awareness that it's like all flowery and like woo woo, and it can be that, don't get me wrong. But that in order to honor whatever our uteruses are up to we hold ourselves back and stay small. But it's the opposite. This is about using the cycle to step the fuck up and get shit done, but without burning ourselves out in the process. This is about playing a bigger game.

And when you track your cycle, you're prioritizing yourself in a quick and powerful way. It's very straightforward. Being aware of your cycle is the greatest act of self-care you can give yourself. It really is. And it won't cost you anything to do. Even the busiest of people can do it. I know that some of you are thinking that you can't possibly have another thing to do, but it's very straightforward. And I would actually argue that busy people really need to track their cycle. And it also doesn't take long for you to be reaping the benefits of doing it, I promise.

Cycle tracking also improves body literacy. And what I mean by that is your ability to read your own body. And this has tremendous knock-on effects on self-esteem, how you see yourself in the world, and in my eyes it's the greatest untapped resource for improving mental health. It allows us to show up in the world when we want to, and it also helps us to retreat when we want to as well. It's a way for you to deepen your relationship with yourself.

Okay? This is a huge benefit to cycle tracking. To develop self-compassion and on a very practical level, a way for you to plan your diary as much as you can do at least. And I like to compare it to knowing the weather forecast in advance because there will be times when if it's pissing down outside you can just text a mate and postpone your plans. But most of the time you just have to stick on a coat or take an umbrella and get on with your day. And that for me is what cycle tracking is like. And yeah, sometimes what actually happens varies from what the forecast said it would be like, that does happen too.

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And if you're wondering, "Well, this is all sounding great, but how do I actually do it?" Then I'd love for you to come to the free masterclass that I'm hosting next week on January 28th where I'll be showing you how to track your cycle and walking you through it bit by bit. It's completely free you just need to sign up in advance at maisiehill.com/masterclass or use the link in the show notes. I'd love to see you there. I have so much fun doing these masterclasses and we always have a blast. So, come and check it out.

That's it for today folks. Have a wonderful week and I will catch you next time.

To celebrate the launch of the show I'm going to be giving away three annual subscriptions to my amazing online community, The Flow Collective, where I coach our members, host webinars, and interview special guests. That means three lucky listeners who subscribe, rate, and review the show on Apple Podcast will win an annual subscription.

It doesn't have to be a five-star review, although I do really hope you love the show. But I want your honest feedback so I can create an awesome show that provides tons of value.

Visit maisiehill.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of the Period Power Podcast. If you enjoyed learning how to make your cycle work for you, head over to maisiehill.com for more.