

## 06. BOUNDARIES



### 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 that you can use it to get what you want out of life. Are you ready? Let's go.

Hi folks. This is episode 6 and it is an absolute whopper of an episode. So I'm just going to get right on with it. So today I'm going to be talking to you about the all important topic of boundaries, which I know a lot of you struggle with. I see it all the time in my clients and I sure here I've had issues with them in my own life. So we first need to start off by defining what a boundary actually is. And the simplest way that I understand boundaries is to think about the physical boundaries that we see around us all the time.

So when I leave my house and I walk down the path of the front garden I know that the gate and the wall at the front, they mark the end of our property before they join the road. And the hedge that's on the right and the little wall on the left are the lines dividing our property from that of our neighbours. So, physical boundaries mark the end of your property and the beginning of someone else's. You're responsible for what happens on your patch and they are responsible for what happens on theirs, this part is key.

Now, I don't go telling them what they should do on their side of the fence. And they don't tell me what I should do on my side. If, I'm going to give you the example of my lovely neighbours, Richard and Craig, so let's say they decided to paint the front of their house and they painted some of the bricks that are actually our house because our houses are attached together. Then I'd definitely say to them, "What the hell happened there? That's our house." So I'd let them know that they have gone over the invisible line onto our patch and that what they'd done wasn't cool.

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Now, I could also take it upon myself to buy something for their front garden, maybe a plant or a gnome, let's say a gnome. So maybe I buy a gnome that I think is going to look great in their garden and I could put it there and they'd definitely have something to say about it like, "You're such a weirdo, what are you doing?" Because that would be very weird for me to do, but I'm using these scenarios to make the point that boundary transgressions can happen by accident because we don't know, it isn't clear where the boundary actually is.

And they can also happen when someone else is being well intentioned and I think it's really helpful to bear these two things in mind because often when our boundaries are transgressed we can be so busy being mad at the other person that we forget that their actions are perhaps well intentioned or they just have no idea that what they're doing is a problem, usually because we haven't actually told them. So in the amazing book called *Boundaries*, Henry Cloud and John Townsend state that boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me.

Boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership. And I love this focus on ownership in this quote because we are in charge of our boundaries. It is our responsibility to communicate and uphold them. And often we don't want to uphold them.

If my neighbours didn't say anything about the gnome and maybe I think that they really liked it and just to clarify, they definitely wouldn't. But maybe I think that they loved it and I just kept buying them more gnomes, and they ended up with a garden full of them, think about that in terms of emotional boundaries in your own life, when you don't say anything. And then just more of the same thing keeps happening.

And if I didn't say anything about the paint then they might conclude that we love the colour that they're painting with and just decide to do us a massive favour and paint the front of our house too. So when a boundary transgression happens it is the responsibility of the person who is experiencing the transgression to communicate it to the other party

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because if they don't, how are they going to know? So then they will just continue and then you are really in the shit. And believe me, it's happened to me.

I'm going to tell you a story later on that involves a family member and you can all learn from my mistakes. So boundaries come up a lot when I'm coaching my clients and they are important when it comes to menstrual health because when we don't honour our boundaries we spend a lot of time usually resenting others, feeling frustrated and angry. And we can get stuck in a stress response. And as I mentioned in episode 4, we don't want that happening because it's not particularly pleasant for the body. And it has huge consequences for hormonal and reproductive function.

And also I would say when we don't honour our boundaries and respond to boundary transgressions appropriately we can get in the habit of overriding them and minimizing them which causes us to doubt ourselves. And that's just another patriarchy win situation which we want to avoid. So to be really clear, a boundary is about you and it is for you. It's not for someone else.

And a boundary is not an ultimatum or a way to control someone else either, this is crucial because a common misconception is that the purpose of a boundary is to control someone else's behaviour. And I think we can all agree that it's not possible to control what someone else does or doesn't do, much as we might love the idea of being able to do that. And usually when we attempt that it doesn't work out well, it just causes a lot of emotional turmoil for ourselves and arguments.

Boundaries are a way for you to communicate what you're cool with and what you're not cool with. But you don't necessarily even have to say them out loud. And I'll give you some examples of what I mean by that later on. They are about what you will do if the boundary transgression continues, not what you think the other person should do and how they should behave.

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So with boundaries we're not trying to reprimand someone or give a consequence that punishes them for their behaviour. You might request that they behave differently, but ultimately when it comes to taking action, that responsibility lies with you. And one other thing to mention here is that other people have boundaries too and they may not coincide perfectly with the ones that we have.

So when it comes to working with your boundaries the first thing I recommend is just paying attention to when a transgression takes place. And the way to do that is to just notice what's going on with your body and when your stress response is being activated.

An example I can give you of this is that if you've seen a photo of me you'll know that I have a lot of tattoos. And when I was younger people would often come up to me in the street and touch my tattoos, especially my arms as in complete strangers would just waltz on over and start touching me. Or they would ask me questions about where else I was tattooed, usually this question would come from men. And that was also completely inappropriate for my standpoint.

So my stress response would be activated and sometimes I'd feel able to respond in the way I wanted to by asserting myself. And other times I'd feel paralysed and unable to say or do anything. And these are just different ways that my nervous system responded to that threat. But these are clear boundary violations. Sometimes boundary transgressions can be more subtle especially when we're talking about emotional boundaries rather than physical ones.

And I recommend being aware of the signals that your body is giving you and then just using your brain to explore what the transgression is and how you want to handle it. Now, I also want to give you the anatomy of communicating a boundary to someone else. So when you give a boundary you need to state what the transgression was, the other person needs to know what the problem was. And then you also need to follow up with a

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consequence of what will happen if they continue to do whatever the behaviour is.

So my son loves climbing and he actually needs the kind of sensory input that comes from activities like wrestling, and climbing, and bouncing, and spinning. So if he hasn't had enough of that kind of sensory input then he will start to climb on me. And I'm just not into that, that's a clear boundary for me. So I'll say, "Hey, I'm not a climbing frame, I want you to stop climbing on me." So that's the part where I'm making it clear what I'm not okay with.

Then I'll go on to say the consequence part. "So if you keep climbing on me I'm going to go and hang out over there, but I'd rather be here with you." So that's the consequence part and I probably also, recognising his need for sensory input, give him some options of how we could meet those needs. And communicating a boundary is literally one sentence, one sentence that lets the other person know that there's been a transgression and what you will do if they continue to violate your boundary.

I want to be really clear here, you don't have to explain or apologise, when you've been socialised as female then it's likely that you're going to want to explain yourself and to say sorry. And you don't have to do either of those things. And if the very idea of that challenges you then I really recommend that you give it a go just for the thrill of it and to let your brain and body know that the world won't end when you do this.

So this is a topic that's been coming up recently with some of my clients in The Flow Collective because there's a little crew of us who are histamine intolerant. I'll explain what that is in a moment. And over the past few months there's been a couple of times where I've coached them on how various family members make their thoughts known about them choosing to follow a particular diet.

So I'm going to give this example but you can, I'm sure, use it with other scenarios in your life. You'll be able to relate to it even if you're not

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histamine intolerant because we usually all have loved ones who like to state their opinions.

And if you're wondering what histamine intolerance is I'm going to give you the quick version of the science. So it's when the body can't break histamine down properly due to the reduced activity or the reduced presence of an enzyme called DAO. This enzyme's job is to break histamine down. So when it's not doing its job properly you get an accumulation, a build up of histamine in the body and this causes symptoms that basically mimic an allergic reaction.

So symptoms like headaches, nasal congestion, itchy eyes, dizziness, vertigo, you can feel very fatigued, get digestive upsets, palpitations, hives, and flushing. And some foods contain histamine or they trigger the release of histamine and unfortunately they're all really delicious ones like bacon, cured meats, dairy, mackerel, avocado, red wine, citrus fruits. And anything fermented as well like sour dough bread, sauerkraut, lots of the things that you're told are really healthy for you, they're all no, no's because they trigger all of these symptoms.

And I have histamine intolerance so if I were to eat avocado and sour dough bread and especially if it had bacon on it then I would feel pretty lousy. I'd flush and start sweating on my face around my mouth and my nose. My eyes would get super itchy and I'd feel tired, sometimes I might get hot palpitations or feel anxious. And the reason this comes up in my work is because there's a relationship between histamine intolerance and the hormones of the menstrual cycle.

So often the symptoms can appear or be aggravated at particular points in the cycle which is why it comes up when I'm coaching my clients. But my main point here is that following a histamine free diet can make a massive difference.

So let's go back to these clients who are both embarking on a histamine free diet. But they were anticipating coming up against some friction with

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their loved ones who they were imagining would have some thoughts and feelings about their plans. So we spoke about creating a boundary where they would state that what they eat is not up for discussion.

But I also coached them on sorting out what was going on at their end of things. As in is it realistic to expect a family member who's prone to asking questions or to stating their opinion which is usually done from love all of these things, but we just may not like it. But is it realistic to expect them to suddenly stop asking questions? No, it just isn't.

So we know that these lovely people are going to keep asking questions or stating their opinion, that's not under our control. But what is under our control is letting them know what we're okay with and what we're not okay with. We can give them a boundary. So once we give them a boundary we don't know what's going to happen next, zero idea. But we have control over what we can then do.

So to use this example, or you can just enter your own, maybe you don't want to discuss whether you want to have kids with someone or your fertility status is not up for discussion. Or there's a treatment strategy you're considering, whatever the case may be, we're going to use the anatomy of the boundary that I gave you earlier on, the boundary and then the consequence.

So a boundary in a case like this could sound like, "I'm not up for discussing my diet. If you keep asking about my diet then I'm going to go in the other room or take a walk." Then if they do keep talking about it you then of course have to follow through and walk away from that conversation or maybe you're on the phone and it's your mum, let's face it, it's often our mums, but maybe it's Uncle Fred or whoever. And you say, "Mum, I know you're saying all this because you love me dearly but I'm not going to have this conversation with you. Please change the subject or I'm going to get off the phone."

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So there's a boundary, there's a request and a consequence. And when you're doing this, especially to begin with it can feel deadly serious, like a really big deal. But you don't have to actually threaten people when you're giving a boundary. You're not throwing ultimatums around, and you're definitely going to be the best judge to this scenario that you're in. And sometimes you will need to adopt a tone of voice that will ensure the other person does actually hear what you're saying and they get that you're serious.

But I want you to know that it can also come out very nonchalant, calm and composed and especially when you're practiced and in the habit of flexing your boundary muscles.

Now, to go back to the example of physical boundaries, when you communicate a boundary with someone you don't need to have spears and rifles pointed at them. Hedges and fences are all you really need.

When I have that image in my mind of the spears and rifles I think of situations where people think a boundary is about standing up for themselves. And this in my experience usually happens when there's been repeated boundary violations, but the other person has no idea that's what's been going on and that it's been a problem for you. But all the while it's been going on you've been experiencing a massive build up of tension and it's like the rubber band is being pulled and pulled until it just fires.

And when this happens I think it's important for us to take responsibility for the action that we haven't taken, the words that we haven't been saying. And I think also what can be going on here is misplaced anger. We think we're angry about the other person but really we're angry at ourselves for not speaking up to begin with. And I will give you an example of this from my own life.

When we moved to Margate a few years ago a family member of mine also moved here around the same time. And at the time I think my son was nine months old, definitely under a year and I was tired. With hindsight I reckon I

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was anaemic, my hormone levels were certainly low. And between all of those things and not much sleep I wasn't feeling particularly resilient. And at this point in my life I really had very little experience in recognising or respecting boundary transgressions.

So I would notice and feel them within me that a transgression had taken place but I was so fucking scared of speaking up that I just kept quiet and put up with it. I have a long history of doing this until I started doing what I'm sharing with you today. So if this is sounding familiar to you just have some hope that things can change. And you can probably already guess what went down.

So this family member lived close by, like walking distance and we agreed that it would be fine for them to just pop by without planning in advance if it was between particular times. I think it was eleven and one because that was around lunchtime and it wouldn't interrupt us napping in the afternoon. So this arrangement worked well for a bit, I want to say at least a week. And then one day they stopped by after one and I answered the door and let them in even though I previously said not after one. And I probably did it with a smile on my face even though internally I was seething.

So this is when I should have just said, "Hey, popping by at this time just doesn't suit me. I'd like you to stick to between eleven and one. And just so you know, if you come at other times then I may not answer the door, not because I don't love you, I just want to protect the time that I have to rest, it's really important to me." So you can see in that example there's a boundary, there's a consequence and then I would have to follow through on what I'd said I'd do if this person did rock up after one.

And because this person was being completely well intentioned, I would make it clear that I do love having them over and it's great to see them but I would also be making it clear that the timing would need to suit me and my son. But I did not do this. I just let them in and continued to do this day in, day out.

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And you'll maybe laugh at this. I certainly laugh at the memory but sometimes I would spot them coming up the road and I would just hide underneath the windows, a grown woman sometimes with the baby in my arms, just dropping to the floor hoping that my son just wouldn't give the game away by making a noise. And after that, after these visits I would replay them again and again in my head. And this is what a lot of you probably do as well.

I would also recount my experience and tell these stories to the people around me and anyone who would listen because I was so invested in moaning rather than addressing the issue. I certainly wasn't taking any responsibility for what was going on. I just made it all about that person. Meanwhile they were just so excited to live close by and so happy to see us. They were completely clueless about what was going on and I don't mean clueless in a derogatory way. I didn't say anything when there were lots of times that I could have.

And I didn't say anything because I was avoiding responsibility; I was very busy blaming them. I was unwilling to feel uncomfortable and to give a boundary. And I was scared of upsetting them because this was a time when I also thought that I was responsible for how others felt. That if I gave a boundary that's what would upset them rather than their thoughts about me giving a boundary, potentially upsetting them, because boundaries don't always upset people.

But you can see the difference there. If they were upset that would be based on their thoughts about what I would have said, not what I actually said. So I was very busy being livid and having a moan. And this person was just delighted to be at my door and I would smile and nod and not say anything and blame them, which is just so unhelpful. Because in order for me to feel good it required the other person to be following the instruction manual that I have for them in my head. And that basically makes everyone else responsible for how I feel, which is not helpful.

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And I have to say that I was very misguided because I also thought that boundaries would create disconnection in our relationship, but that's not true. Think about what actually happened in that scenario. Do you think that in me avoiding the conversation I felt more connected to this person? No. For many, many months I was more disconnected from them and I really missed out on an opportunity to connect and deepen my relationship with them by giving a boundary.

And this is important because boundaries don't keep people out of our lives. They just let them know about the parts of our lives that are important to us and that we don't want trampled on or violated. Boundaries are about love towards yourself and love towards someone else. Or maybe not love in all cases but at least respect, they're not there to punish someone or shame them.

And I want you all to hear this part. When you're giving a boundary you're just giving that person information, feedback that's helpful for them to hear. When you keep this information under wraps it isn't doing anyone any favours, including yourself. And you can let the other person know that you're telling them because you respect them or because you love them. And that you're letting them know what's going on because you value your relationship with them and that communicating your boundaries is a way to protect that relationship.

Giving boundaries also creates respect, self-respect first and foremost. But the other person can respect you even if they don't like what you've got to say. And just a bit of a newsflash for you, it's okay for other people to not like what you've got to say. It may come as a shock to some of you but it's true.

But here's the deal, folks, I want to be honest with you, when you're not to asserting your boundaries then it's going to feel weird to begin with. It's going to feel risky sometimes and it kind of is because when you give a boundary then you have to be willing to experience the discomfort that might follow. And by that I mean your own discomfort. And I say might

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because it might be totally cool with the other person. A lot of the time we build these things up in our heads and make mountains out of molehills, and that's an experience that I've definitely had.

Giving boundaries also means being fully responsible for yourself, you're letting others know what's cool and what isn't. And you've got to follow through with the consequences that you've laid out to them. You have to be responsible.

And you can also use your cycle as a way to start implementing boundaries and this is a great tip if the idea of giving a boundary scares the shit out of you. Because all you need to do is pick the point in your cycle where you feel the most confident and this would be the point in time that it would be easiest for you to do. So for me that would be in the run up to ovulation because that's when I tend to shine verbally, when I don't have a cold.

And I can either be very serious and not care so much about what happens next. Or I can also be light-hearted and have fun with it which may sound a bit weird but just park it as a possibility that when you give a boundary, it can also feel fun and light-hearted if you deem it to be appropriate in that particular situation.

But there's something else that I want to be clear on with you and that's that you probably don't need to be giving boundaries as much as you think you might. There are circumstances where they are appropriate but a lot of the time we don't need to give a boundary we just need to say no.

For instance if your boss or a client asks you to do some last minute work, that's not a boundary transgression. They've just made a request of you and you get to answer as you see fit.

Now, it's different if your boss or a client is behaving inappropriately, maybe they're yelling at you or doing something you're not okay with, then that would be a boundary transgression. That would likely call for a response of, "It's not appropriate for you to talk to me like this. And if you continue to

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then I'm going to get off this call and speak to HR because I'm not comfortable with what's going on right now."

Or maybe your boss is in the habit of calling you outside of your agreed work hours or they start to do that. That's when you can communicate a boundary with them and the consequence of what will happen if they continue. But a lot of the time when I hear people talking about work and boundaries this isn't what they mean. They're usually talking about being boundaried with their time which is something different to what we're talking about here. And it's often to do with people pleasing and not being able to say no. And we'll return to those topics at a future date.

The other thing I want to mention is that when you get used to boundaries and also when you start coaching yourself which is what I teach my clients in The Flow Collective to do. Then you don't need them as much, not because you're a pushover or you've achieved some Zen like state that you can inhabit all of the time. Just because you're really clear on everything at your end and you're honest with yourself and with other people around you about what you're willing and able to do. And you get out of the terrible habit of people pleasing and running yourself into the ground.

When I think about boundary issues now in my life and just for me, nothing to do with my son, it would be along the lines of I don't want to be around anyone who's smoking. I'm just not into that. Now, I don't have to go up to people and berate them, or shame them, or tell them not to smoke around me unless they were in my house. That would be different then I'd ask them to leave. But if I was just out and about and around people smoking I would just leave the room or go somewhere else, take a walk. And whether you have to actually say something is going to depend on the situation.

So let's say I'm out somewhere and someone I don't know starts flirting with me. For me that would be inappropriate because I'm in a relationship. But in that case I would just end the conversation or walk away. I don't need to come down hard and heavy and let this stranger know about my boundaries. If however, this person was someone that I know, that would

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require a different approach where I would communicate my boundary and tell them to stop.

I'm also very sensitive to scent, that if I was going out somewhere, a restaurant, remember when we could do that? I wouldn't have to call ahead and let everyone know that I don't want them to wear perfume. I would never do that. If someone happened to be wearing perfume that bothered me I would just find a way to leave. This used to happen to me on the tube in London, if someone came on wearing a strong scent I would just change the carriage that I'm in. I don't have to go up to that person and ask them to leave, I do it for me.

On the other hand if I was hosting a retreat or a workshop and people had paid to come or they'd given up their time and come to listen to me or to work with me. I would let everyone know in advance not to wear perfume because it gives me headaches and it also really distracts me from doing my job. And in that scenario I would let people know in advance, that if someone is wearing perfume then I'd have to ask them to leave, which I definitely don't want to do, so just please don't wear perfume.

So you can see how the way you deal with boundaries is going to depend on the context that you find yourself in. And what I'd love for you to do is to just start noticing where you could do with honouring your boundaries, and then actually honour them. Use the tips that I've given you today. Use the anatomy that I've given you of how to actually give a boundary. And you might just want to come up with these sentences in advances and have them ready and practiced and ready to go. It might feel scary to do initially but I know that you can do it. It can also feel thrilling.

And if this is the kind of thing that you'd like some help with and if you're loving what you're learning through the podcast then I want you to consider checking out my online community, The Flow Collective because that's where I can help you the most and teach you all the tools that I have at my disposal to help you to improve your cycle and then use it to get what you want out of life. It's where I combine effective strategies with group

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coaching, that way I can help you overcome the things that are standing in your way.

Not to mention, the power of being in an incredible community of likeminded people who are going through the same kind of stuff as you. And there's a couple of reasons why I specifically recommend joining now. The first is that I know so many of you are struggling with your cycle and in your life and I know that I can help you, bottom line.

And I really want you to imagine yourself a few months down the line, later on in the spring or autumn if you're in the southern hemisphere when hopefully the events going on in the world will have moved on somehow. But it's probably more likely that they won't have but it won't matter as much to you as maybe it does now because you'll be equipped to deal with it and be inspired to create the things that you want in your life, using your cycle and without burning yourself out, that part is key.

So, many women and people that have been socialised as female that I speak to aren't going for the things that they want in their life because they're already exhausted and overwhelmed. And they think that they can't take on anything else. And I'm on a real mission to change that. So if that resonates with you then come and join me.

The second reason that I recommend you join now is that starting in February I'm going to be teaching a new programme that I've been writing and developing called Harness Your Hormones. And the course is really a culmination of how my work has evolved over the past few years since writing Period Power. It includes some of the missing chapter from Period Power, yeah, there's a whole 10,000 word chapter that we removed in the early stages of editing the book, which was for good reason when it came to the book.

But any time I cover this material with the folks in The Flow Collective, they love it and I reckon you'll find them helpful too. And in the course I'm also going to be sharing the Cycle Self Coaching tool that I teach my one-on-

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one clients and that I use every day in my own life. And seriously, if you want to improve your menstrual health and your mental health, then I recommend that you sign up because you get access to this as part of your membership. It's the only way to get it.

And I'm going to be teaching it live which is always so much fun to be able to go through this live and there'll be opportunities for you to ask questions too.

The final reason is that every month in The Flow Collective we work with a specific theme so that you can address things layer, by layer, by layer. And you currently get access to all of the past themes when you join, that's going to be changing in the future but at the moment you get access to all of them. And I think there's 14 in total so far.

But more importantly, what's coming up next is a special sequence of themes that I have designed very deliberately. So in February which will be, I think next week when this comes out, we're going to be concentrating on love, and in particular your ability to love yourself. Now, I want you to notice if the very idea of that created some resistance to you, for you, or if you felt open to it, because that will be interesting just in itself and very telling. And we'll be kicking things off the Tuesday after this episode comes out at the start of February.

And then in March we're going to be zeroing in on how to use your cycle to do big things, whatever you determine big things to be. And the order of this is important. We're starting off with loving and appreciating ourselves exactly as we are before we move on to using the cycle to do big things.

And then after that we're going to move on to perfectionism which let's face it is where a lot of you come undone and I know this because you tell me a lot. And I've done extensive work on this in my own life. So I've got a lot to share with you so that you can overcome any perfectionist traits that you've got lurking around causing trouble and holding you back. So the doors are

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open now from when this podcast comes out until Monday 1<sup>st</sup> of February. And you can sign up using the link in the show notes.

That is it for today my friends. I hope you found today helpful. It was a slightly longer one, a jam packed one, but a really important topic and I loved preparing for this podcast, boundaries, people pleasing, all of these things, they're just so vital when it comes to supporting our hormonal health. And I hope you found it helpful. I will see you next week. Have a good one.

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](https://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](https://maisiehill.com) for more.