

## 07. Tiredness



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With Your Host

**Maisie Hill**

**Period Power** with Maisie Hill

## 07. Tiredness

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 your 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 7 and I wish you could see me. So I'm recording this episode from the bottom bunk of my son's bunk bed. I've got duvets hanging down from the sides to improve the sound quality. And to tell you the truth I'm actually dreading that my podcast team are going to tell me that the sound is better this way than when I record it from my office because if you hear any creeks in this episode it's my head hitting the wooden slats above me. This is not particularly comfortable.

Today we are talking about tiredness which feels particularly relevant. And I have to say ironic as the last couple of weeks have resulted in me feeling more tired than I usually do and there's a couple of reasons for this.

The first is that last week I spent three days participating in an online event which ran on US time. So I was getting off Zoom around midnight and after being on Zoom all day which that can be exhausting in itself, Zoom fatigue. But I'd be getting off the call around midnight and then it would be around 1:00 or 2:00am before my brain wound down enough to actually sleep and then I was still being woken pretty early in the morning.

But I suppose that's nothing compared to my friends and colleagues who were taking part from other parts of the world like South Korea and Australia and they were, like their day was starting at 11:00 at night or 1:00 in the morning, something crazy like that. And also you can probably hear that I'm still ill. It's not, you know what according to the tests I've had. But the congestion and brain fog is taking a bit of a toll.

It is getting better though which is a relief as next week when this episode airs I will be recording the audiobook for Perimenopause Power my new

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book which is out March 4<sup>th</sup>. And it's available for pre order now. And I have to say that pre orders are massively important in the world of publishing because those numbers give retailers the confidence to stock and market books. So if you plan on buying it I would love for you to order it now. That way it arrives with you straightaway. I know so many of you have been waiting for this book.

Your numerous requests for me to write about perimenopause are actually why the book exists. And in case you are wondering, there's no silly questions around here. But menopause is when your periods have stopped. And actually menopause itself only lasts for one day because it marks the one year anniversary of your last period.

Whereas perimenopause is the period of time when you still have cycles but experience what we refer to as menopausal symptoms. And this often comes as a shock to a lot of people because we think that this is something that we don't need to think about because it'll happen in our 50s. And actually the process of hormonal change, that starts quite a while before that.

So if you're 35 or over and definitely if you're in your 40s then this book is going to be massively helpful. But my hope is that regardless of your age or stage in reproductive life that you'll read it because it's rare for perimenopause to be discussed until someone's actually going through it. And by that point there's so much that could have been done to support the process.

And I just want you all to have a sense of what perimenopause can be like ideally before you actually get there so that you can be informed and make the best decisions for you. It's available to order now in all the places that you usually buy books and I would really appreciate it if you ordered it in advance.

Okay, moving on to tiredness, I wouldn't be surprised if a significant number of you are feeling tired these days. The lockdown rules in your area

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might be making it more challenging to be physically active. So your energy might be a bit stuck and you might be feeling tired for that reason. You might not have any outdoor space to enjoy so you're kind of stuck indoors. And probably even if you do have outdoor space I'd say that we're pretty much on the whole all getting less exposure to sunlight. And just that in itself has an impact.

And if you have kids or other responsibilities, particularly around care-giving then you might be context switching very quickly throughout your idea, just going from one task to the other without reaching a sense of completion and that will add up. Or as I said at the start of today's episode, being on Zoom calls all day that will have an impact. Maybe you're working later than you usually would in order to get things done like me. I usually don't like to work in the evenings, that's kind of quite firm for me. But recently I've needed to be doing that.

But I also know that some of you have more time because you don't have to commute into work. So you're able to get more sleep, or to take a walk before your workday starts and to eat a proper breakfast. And some of you might be able to rest at the points in your cycle where you need to or just feel inclined to. But all of these factors will influence your hormones one way or the other.

And some other common reasons for tiredness, especially when we're talking about hormones and the cycle include iron deficiency and other nutrient deficiencies too, poor thyroid function, low oestrogen, pregnancy, depression. And of course just if you're getting poor or insufficient sleep which can be related to hormonal imbalances and the cycle too. Progesterone deficiency can also result in sleep issues which will then result in tiredness. So these are just some of the reasons why someone might be experiencing fatigue and it is important to address these.

But today I want to differentiate between physiological reasons for tiredness, and the tiredness that we create for ourselves on top of that. And I don't just mean when we choose to stay up late watching Netflix. Here's

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what I mean. Let's say you wake-up feeling tired, maybe you didn't sleep well or you didn't get enough sleep, maybe your period's due. That's a common time for sleep quality to be not so good and the amount you get to go down. Often people tell me that they're up till one or three in the morning ruminating on things and missing out on sleep.

But basically you just don't get enough sleep. And there is a reason for you to feel tired. But then you spend lots of time thinking about how tired you are and probably telling those around you how tired you are as well. So in a situation like this which I'm sure will be familiar to most of you, you want more energy but what we end up doing is running a pattern of thoughts that creates more tiredness.

So this isn't to negate the fact that you're a human who does need to sleep and that you function best when you're rested and energised. Or that you could do with a thyroid that's up to the job. Or that growing a human doesn't require an energy investment. Those things can all exist. We're not ignoring those things in this conversation. But I want to focus on something that you can implement right away regardless of what's going on for you and without getting lab work done or needing to work with a practitioner.

So I have a client who recently was in her words feeling exhausted. Now, there was a particular reason, a physiological reason as to why she was feeling exhausted. And as we've covered, there might be one or multiple reasons as to why you're feeling that way. And in the conversation I was having with my client we were exploring the physiological reasons that she felt tired and strategising for those. But we were also exploring how she was thinking about things and in terms of her mindset and how she was approaching her daily life and in this case her work in particular.

Now, here's what's interesting, as we were talking about her mindset she said, "Just the thought of this is energising me", when we were coming up with alternate ways of approaching this. And I said, "Interesting, just the thought is energising." Basically because I was thrilled that she'd made the point that I was going to make before I said anything about it.

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So I said to her, “But you haven’t had a nap since our call started. And to my knowledge you haven’t eaten anything either.” Which she confirmed was the case because she could have been sucking an energy gel or something without me knowing. So I just wanted to clarify that with her. So as I continued to say to her, “So nothing physically has changed and yet you feel energised, why is that?”

And we went on to explore what had shifted with her mindset and how she was thinking about it all and how that in itself created energy for her even though there were physical reasons why she was experiencing more tiredness. And since then I’ve been thinking about some scenarios that might help you to understand how the way you’re thinking will influence how tired you’re feeling.

And I was thinking about what happens when we go on holiday. Do you remember those things? They’re a very distant memory for me because it’s actually been over five years since I went on a holiday of any kind. Anyway let’s imagine that you are going on holiday tomorrow, you’re excited, you stay up late packing or maybe you’ve got work stuff that you want to finish up before you actually go.

Or maybe you have some low level anxiety about sleeping through your alarm, this happens to me all the time, and so you wake-up intermittently through the night or you’ve just got a flight at stupid o’clock in the morning and have to get up mega early. So whatever the case may be the same scenario will emerge and that you will be feeling tiredness to some degree as you go to get on that flight and start your holiday.

But I imagine that the kind of tiredness you experience in the holiday situation will feel very different than if there was a car alarm going off in the night or your neighbours were having a party and that kept you awake. Or your partner was snoring or your kid was waking you up because for some reason they just can’t pull the duvet back on themselves. This is an ongoing issue in our household.

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Our son has never been a great sleeper. He probably sleeps through once or twice a week. It's not much. But fortunately for me, unfortunately for my partner, something shifted with my sleep in the past year where I sleep so much deeper and half the time I don't even hear him. I think I finally crossed the point where I stopped having that new mum alertness through the night.

But let's go back to talking about holidays. When you're going on holiday you're probably busy thinking thoughts about how amazing it's going to be and how you can't wait to get there and it's going to feel so good to switch off. Or it's going to be so relaxing, or so much fun. And because you're thinking those kind of thoughts you feel excited. And you can end up creating energy even though you're feeling sleep deprived. Versus when you have a regular day ahead of you and all you're saying internally to yourself or verbally to others is, "I'm so tired."

So again I'm not arguing the point that you are tired. I'm just highlighting that saying how you're so tired is unlikely to help you. I'm not talking about you saying you're tired and realising that you feel like that most days and that your periods also are heavy. So maybe you should see your GP and see what your iron levels are up to. That's a helpful acknowledgement of the situation.

But what I'm talking about is in that moment when you're saying. "I'm so tired", on repeat, all that's going to do is create more tiredness. And I'm not suggesting that you should bypass your need for sleep and just by thinking you're going to change everything and that you don't need some support in some way. Because you do need to sleep and some of you will need some kind of support for what's going on with you at the moment.

And sleep is literally my favourite intervention when it comes to health. I remember when I was doing my degree in Chinese medicine, my course director, Ian, this is one of the standout moments of my training because we were talking about really complex cases when a patient comes in and they have a long list of symptoms. And he said, "If someone comes to you

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with 20 symptoms and you look at the list and sleep is one of the things on the list, start by improving sleep because you'll only get limited results with all the other things if sleep is poor. And most things improve with sleep.”

And that just really stuck with me and throughout my professional practice I have found that to be true. And I would just love for all humans to feel well rested and energised. I think the world would be a much better place if we were. But what I'm inviting you to do here is to look at the ways in which you might be creating additional tiredness.

The other reason this is important is that when you do have a physiological reason for tiredness like anaemia or an under-functioning thyroid gland then you do need to create some energy and motivation in order to do something about it. I know that so many people's issues continue because it's hard to do anything about it when you're already feeling tired and depressed or maybe it just feels like nothing's going to change. So I want you to be in a position where you can create that flicker of energy to take the action that's going to help you.

And I've been in this situation myself. In last week's episode about boundaries, and by the way, thank you for all the lovely messages about how helpful you found that one. But in that episode I was talking about how when my son was around nine months old I was incredibly tired and finding it hard to function. But I wasn't able to prioritise me at that time because I was just so in it. I just couldn't see it.

And it wasn't until my friend and colleague Mars Lord came to visit and she made a comment about how pale I looked. And as soon as she said it I was like, “Wait, I'm probably anaemic.” And even then with that awareness I didn't manage to get myself to the GP.

So there are times when if you're struggling to function then you need to create some energy so that you can get your arse to the GP, or a nutritional therapist, or whoever so that you can get help. And sometimes this can mean messaging a friend and saying, “I'm struggling at the moment and I'm



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feeling pretty tired, struggling to function. But I know I need help, can you help me find a way to get things moving or come to an appointment with me?" Having that support in place makes a massive difference, even just someone else knowing what's going on.

I see it in The Flow Collective frequently when my clients in there will post about upcoming appointments and their thoughts and feelings about them. Or I coach them on a call about how they're approaching medical appointments. And then they post after coming back from the appointment and they share their experiences. And so I really see in there how having that kind of support does contribute towards your ability to seek out and get the help that you want and need.

Now, the final thing I want to mention is that I think we have to question are you demanding too much of yourself at certain points in your cycle or all cycle long? A lot of my clients tell me how tired they are. And as we explore what's going on, and strategies, and how to increase their energy, we go through why they are feeling tired and they tell me about everything they're doing. Or I would actually say trying to do because usually when we do too much we're doing a lot of things not very well. So sometimes that's what needs to change.

Other times it comes down to time management and mind management, as in is there a reframe or some kind needed? So you can think about it in terms of do you need to change what's actually going on? Or do you need to change how you're thinking about what's going on? I'm going to say that you probably need to do both. But I do recommend checking in on why you want to be able to do all of these things because often it's rooted in perfectionism and imposter syndrome. And they can really drive tiredness and burnout. I see this a lot.

So we've got to clean all that up and this is why asking why you're tired and why you want to be able to do more are such important questions. I also want to say that it's hibernation time here in the northern hemisphere. If you're feeling less energy, in my eyes, that's normal to a degree, if you're

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struggling to function that's a problem. But a little bit less energy at this time of year I think we can kind of say that's the effect of being in winter.

And it's also not necessarily a problem if there are times in your cycle where you feel a shift in the amount of energy you have or the type of energy you have. Of course it's better if you're energised and you have a baseline level of energy to function with. So many women that I speak to they just haven't been at baseline for so long, they've just been deficient and in the red for a long period of time or consistently at some points in their cycle. And when that's going on there's certainly some recovery that's needed and usually a significant amount of stress to deal with too.

So my approach there is to nourish and soothe. But if you know you're low on energy then you want to find out why, please address that. And paying attention to where you experience fatigue in your cycle and what aggravates and maybe improves it, that's really helpful information to have as well as if you notice that you're getting tired more frequently or if it's increasing in severity.

When I'm assessing my energy levels and I'm maybe telling myself how tired I am especially when I have something that I 'have to do' I like to think about what I'd do if I was presented with an opportunity that I would love to do. So there are times when even if I was asked to do something that I really want to do, I just don't have the capacity for it.

So the other day a friend got in touch who I haven't spoken to in some time and I really wanted to speak to her. But I was really noticing that I was feeling quite tired and there was some kind of telltale warning signs there. So I let her know all of that and that I just couldn't speak in that moment, but that I'd love to another day.

But if I'm going to be taking care of some admin that I'm not exactly feeling enthusiastic about and I'm telling myself that I'm too tired, and trying to procrastinate, and avoid, and get myself out of it then that's a moment when I just like to get real with myself and think, well, what would I do?

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Would I have the energy if a friend asked if I wanted to go for a walk and talk? Because in those cases usually I would think yeah, I do have the energy for that which means that I do have the energy for the task at hand. And that means that I just need to manage how I'm thinking and what my brain is up to and that possible for me to create some energy by choosing to use thoughts that are more helpful like getting the sun is going to give me so much energy, or I have all the energy I need to do this. I find thoughts like that quite helpful.

So here are your takeaways from today's episode. There are lots of reasons why you might be feeling tired including hormonal ones. And it's important to investigate what's going on there. You can also start to pay attention to when you're creating extra tiredness for yourself because you're thinking about how tired you are. And a helpful way of assessing how tired you actually are is to consider if you'd have energy if you had an opportunity to do something that you love.

And I also recommend that you consider the seasons of the year and where you are in the world and how that's impacting things as well as where you are in your cycle. Are you in hibernation mode?

Okay, that's it for today folks, I hope you found it helpful and I will catch you next week.

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 Podcasts 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.

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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.