

## 10. Productivity



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With Your Host

**Maisie Hill**

**Period Power** with Maisie Hill

## 10. Productivity

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.

Hello, hello folks. How are you all? I have had quite an exciting week I would say for a couple of reasons equally important. The first one is that I have a printed copy of Perimenopause Power. It arrived a couple of days ago from the printers and it's just really quite something to see it in print, to hold it in my hands. It still doesn't feel quite real because the whole writing process, the whole past year has just been really surreal. And it feels very odd that it's about to be out, I just, I don't quite believe it. So that was very exciting.

The other exciting news is that I bought a dishwasher. And I have never had a dishwasher. Actually I did at one point when I was living in a shared house in London. The household had a dishwasher so I have had one before but for a very short period of time.

And this actually relates to this week's topic which is productivity because at one point I was reflecting with my brother on how many minutes a day I spend washing up. And he calculated it to be 11 working days a year. And that just blew me away. And since then I've been like, "I've got to get a dishwasher." But the dishwasher that I wanted to get, which is apparently a very, very quiet one because I've shared with you before, I have sensory issues, so noise in particular, kind of ongoing noise like that really can dis-regulate me.

So I kept my eye on this dishwasher but because of Covid it's been out of stock everywhere. And finally it's back in stock, so I have it, now I just need to get it installed but I'm getting closer. So they are the two big bits of news from my life this week. But I have been really looking forward to discussing

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productivity with you. I actually wasn't going to cover it for a while but something happened to me these past couple of weeks that made me really want to get into it as a topic. So I'll share what happened with you in a bit as we continue on our journey today.

But I think productivity is an interesting topic for us to consider, in particular right now because although I would say generally as humans we can be pretty judgmental about our productivity anyway. But it's really been put under a microscope with Covid and all the lockdowns that have been happening. And of course it also comes up when we're talking about the cycle especially if you're perhaps someone with PMDD, or PMS, or maybe you have long term mental and physical health conditions.

All of these things that I've just mentioned I see a lot of shame around productivity in my clients who are affected by these conditions, particularly things, not just PMDD but chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, this has been coming up a lot in The Flow Collective recently as we've been exploring these issues. And of course shame in relation to the cycle is a big topic. So I will return to that on a separate occasion.

But in terms of productivity the appearance of shame I think it makes a lot of sense because our entire society is based upon productivity and a constant push to be more productive. So if there are times when functioning is a challenge for you then shame is probably going to come up until you learn how to work with it and how to manage your mind or for society to change. I don't think that's going to happen in our lifetime but I mean who knows? I'm open to it.

And this is something that I have also experienced myself but recently I've been experiencing a different kind of shame. And that shame because I have been productive, and this is just such a great example of what our brains will come up with if we just let them because I've been just finding this so hilarious and fascinating to see where my brain has gone recently. So I'll give you a bit more context of what's been going on.

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So now that I am doing interviews and things for Perimenopause Power, the new book, I have found myself playing down the fact that I wrote a book during lockdown. People have made comments about me doing that and some of them have been journalists, some of them have been friends of mine, and people on social media. And all the comments they've been making have been really lovely and very complimentary and all nice things. But what I've noticed myself doing is downplaying this achievement. And I think internally as well kind of defending myself a bit.

And I've just found this such an interesting process to observe, to just watch where my brain has been going because it's presenting the fact that I did that, that I wrote a book during lockdown as a problem. And so I've been thinking about this quite a bit and I wanted to share where I've landed with you because I think it will be familiar to you, whether or not you're in a similar situation to me or not. So here is my understanding of what's been going on. I think my brain's been doing this for a couple of reasons, probably more reasons but here are the main two that I've come up.

The first is that our brains always like us to stay safe, that's their job, and the safety when we're part of a pack. So if the people around you and also the ones on social media all seem to be having a similar experience, or maybe voicing similar opinions that you might find it harder to go against the grain and say otherwise. And a lot of people I know and definitely the people on Instagram are often saying how hard it is for them to get anything done. And don't get me wrong, it has been challenging for me and it still is, especially today.

I have had a day today that has chucked up lots of challenges and kind of prevented me from getting what I set out to do today. So I completely get it. So it's been challenging for me too but it feels risky for me to say, "Yes, I wrote a book with a four year old at home whilst running a business." Because what my brain's doing is just going, "Hey, this is dangerous, don't say anything. Distract them. Don't let the focus be on you. Just let's get off this topic."

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And as I mentioned, that's just my brain's job, it wants to keep me safe. And it's telling me that I'll be safe if I play it down and don't stand out somehow, which I think if you think about situations where you've maybe felt a scared or felt like the attention is on you and your nervous system's just like get back in the cave where it's safe, don't let people see you. So it's very understandable that we have these responses. They're very human responses but I just have to remind myself, remind my brain that this is not a life or death situation.

The other reason is that I, perhaps like you have been socialised into thinking that I am responsible for other people's feelings and that it's my job to protect them and make them feel okay. Even in preparing for this episode I had to really look at what my brain was offering up and examine those thoughts because I noticed I was having thoughts along the lines of I don't want to make them feel bad. And I know from all of the coaching and all of the conversations that I have that this is a very common thought for us to think, very common.

So think about your own life for a moment. When was the last time that you did or didn't do something because you were worried about upsetting or hurting the other person? Perhaps you held back from saying no, or you didn't give a boundary, or maybe you didn't uphold a boundary. And did you do these things because you're worried about making the other person feel bad? I've done so much work on this myself. And it is ongoing.

But there's lots of things I've done in my life that I didn't want to do because I believed that whether I did or didn't do something that could make the other person upset. So as I said, it's really common to think this but it's just such a load of rubbish and it's not helpful. The reason it's a load of rubbish is because it's not actually possible for me to make you feel bad. I am capable of a lot. I give myself a lot of props but I am not powerful enough to make you feel bad just by recording this episode, let me explain why.

So, me writing a book during lockdown, that's something that's factual. It's just a description of something that's happened. And if you were to look

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inside my computer you would see evidence of it but you will all experience different feelings about me talking about my productivity during the pandemic. Some of you might feel perhaps judgemental either of me or of yourself, probably just yourself but it's easier to put it on me. And I do this too by the way, any time I'm judging others it's really all about my judgement of myself.

But some of you might feel astonished, or curious, or inspired by that information and some of you will not even be interested. But you'll all feel these different emotions because of the thoughts that you're thinking about, like the thoughts that you're thinking about me having written a book during lockdown, which is why it's actually not possible for me to make you feel bad, or for you to make someone feel bad. Now, of course we want to be responsible for ourselves in the world and don't be a dick I think is a great principle.

But when you say no to someone you're just saying no to them. It doesn't mean anything until that person attaches some meaning to it and a story to it. So you could say no to someone and they might then think she doesn't care about me, which would then result in them feeling sad, or unloved, or perhaps rejected. But that is their choice to think that way about you just simply saying no. On another day, maybe a different part of their cycle they might have a different thought that would lead them to let's say feeling respect towards you, or impressed with you, they could even feel jealous.

And the reason I'm harping on about this, we will get back to productivity, but the reason I'm harping on about this is because productivity is a bit of a contentious topic right now. I've seen a lot of social media posts talking about productivity. And they tend to be one thing or another, on one hand they can be very, now is the time to do something with your life. Who do you want to be when you come out of this? Or flip flopping the other way around, it can be something this is a pandemic, this is not the time to quadruple your output, you just need to get through this.

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And I think we can look at both of those things. I have thoughts and feelings about this binary and kind of the same way I had mixed feelings about Lean In, the Sheryl Sandberg book. I haven't actually read it in its entirety, I did start it. And I know there's also a book called Lean Out which critiques it. But the truth is I'm greedy, I want both. I want to lean in and I want to lean out usually in accordance with my cycle but also with my day.

In the mornings I love creating and writing, I like really thinking about things and really, I mean mainly writing. But in the afternoons that's when I like talking and interacting. So that's when I do the bulk of my coaching with my clients. And there are also times when I want to be more productive and be bolder with my work, often again with my cycle. And there are times when I just want to maintain what I'm doing and I'm not up for a bigger challenge. And there's also times when I just want to pack everything away and switch my brain off and watch old episodes of Gray's Anatomy or Seinfeld.

So you might be in a season of your life or of your cycle where you're up for getting your teeth into something and you're up for a bit of a challenge. Or you just might be up for maintaining what you're currently doing. Or you might just be really ready for a rest. All of those things are okay, but what I encourage you to do is to notice what meaning you attach to wherever you're at because all it is, is a decision, a choice, it doesn't have to mean anything beyond you know what's best for you in the context of your life and that's what you're doing.

But productivity is frequently intertwined with morality. So if you get stuff done that makes you a good person, it makes you worthy. And if you don't get stuff done then that makes you a bad person, very unworthy. But doing more does not make you a better human and your self-worth has nothing to do with your productivity. Please let this really sink in, rewind it if you need to, it's important.

And we've been spending some time on this in The Flow Collective this month because our theme for February is self-love and I took the members through a reflective exercise where they could see when they aren't being

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loving towards themselves. And often this is tied up with productivity. So quite a few of them really notice that their ability to love themselves changes depending on whether they get stuff done or not, particularly in regards to where they are in their cycle and also in relation to ongoing health conditions.

And what I notice when I'm coaching my clients is that their desire to be productive, and I've recognised this myself certainly in the past, some of it's still lingering around. I'm a working progress too. But often our desire to be productive is rooted in perfectionist tendencies and wanting to improve ourselves or fix ourselves, improve ourselves, wanting to feel more worthy.

Or we come at productivity from a place of hustle and fear. Maybe fear that you'll lose your job if you're not super responsive to emails, so then you try and get on top of your inbox. But then you're not actually doing any work. So maybe then you're judging yourself for that. And in cases like this there's just no winning. So you might be just hustling and white knuckling it through your days and through your weeks. And that's just not doing your hormones any favours.

So I suggest removing these things from the equation which is exactly what we do inside The Flow Collective. Then you can look at productivity from a more neutral place. And a great way to do this is to just ask yourself, why. Why do you want more time? Why do you want to be more productive? And then once you've got those answers keep asking why again, and again, and again until you really uncover what's there and where this need for more productivity is coming from. Does it feel good to you or does it feel shit?

And when my clients start working on this what happens is really interesting, because they start doing less in some areas of their life, which means that they can also do more. So they do less because they start to notice when they're striving for perfection or hustling out of fear and scarcity. And once they start doing that, that then frees them up to do more in other areas. And not just to do with productivity but also to do with



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pleasure, and rest, and all the other things that are part of being human and needs that we all have. It's not always about doing, doing, doing.

And because they're not putting themselves through the mental anguish that they did previously then they start to sleep better and they're not just rushing through their day. And we start to see the impact of that on their nervous system and on their hormones, and their cycle. So right now your brain might start to come up with all sorts of reasons why you can't be productive and get something done. And I really recommend questioning your thoughts. Are they actually true? Because often we say these thoughts like they're facts and that they are a 100% true.

Like the time when a colleague of mine was coaching me and we were on a Zoom call so she could see me. She could see the room that I was in. And we were talking about me writing my book at the start of the first lockdown, so this was very early in the book process for me. And a lockdown had just happened, and I was kind of in a how am I going to get this done place. And I said to her, "Yeah, but I just, I can't get away from my son, he's literally always with me. I'm not going to be able to write at all."

And she just stopped me and she's like, "Maisie, I don't see him in the room with you right now." And I was just like, oh shit, yeah, you got me there Lisa. And she really did and that was just such a fabulous insight. It didn't take away from the challenges and the obstacles that I had to go away and strategize for and get past. But what that one sentence did for me is it stopped me from slamming the door on my goal. And it allowed me to be open to the possibility of actually being able to do it. It just gave me that foot in the door and that's all I needed to get going.

And now that I think about it I have coached myself around time management and productivity a lot this past year. And it's just so interesting because it sounds so practical but actually when I got into it, it's just revealed so much about myself and my motivations, and my drive. Some of it I'm happy to stick with and other parts I'm like, "Yeah, I'm not so keen on

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where this is coming from, let's work on changing that." But it's been a fascinating process to go through.

And one final thing I want to suggest is that productivity doesn't have to be a capitalist stick that you beat yourself up with, okay? It can be a tool that you use to focus your brain. And that might be helpful to you right now, directing your brain to focus on something is a good thing to do particularly if you're distracted by the news, or your doom scrolling on social media, and spending a lot of your time feeling overwhelmed and worried. It's time to put your phone away.

And that reminds me actually, the most common reason I hear for someone not getting shit done is lack of time. And some of you are going to want to argue this point with me. Trust me. I argue this point with myself all the time. But then I have to get real and just look at what my average screen time per day is. I mean I don't actually even have to do that, I know. And just be honest about why I'm not doing the things.

And speaking personally, it usually comes down to wanting time to myself and wanting to escape somehow, things along those lines. But really when I'm scrolling on social media all I'm doing is inviting all the people in my phone into my mind. It is not time for me. And it's also not a great way of escaping. I mean look at people's postures and their expressions when they're on social media. I would say they look trapped more than anything else.

And of course compassion towards ourselves, it makes sense that we do it and maybe why we're doing it a lot right now, phone apps are designed to be distracting and we get a dopamine hit from them so we keep doing it. But the time I spend basically numbing myself out of my phone I could just as easily take a walk and that would benefit me in so many ways. So picking something to do is basically going to give your brain some structure and purpose. And pick something that's doable in the context of your life right now.

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You get to decide what you're up for. The theme in The Flow Collective throughout March is doing big things. But you all get to decide what doing big things means to you. And it's also all about perspective. I've got a friend and I would guess that she doesn't think of herself as ambitious, or as someone who is doing big things in the world. But the way I see her, I see her as someone who is both ambitious and doing big things, particularly in how she's raising her kids.

So I recommend staying in your lane with this. Don't get caught up in what other people are doing, and slide into that old compare and despair, which never feels good. And of course make it as easy as you can by paying attention to where you are in your cycle and noting how that influences things.

Those of you who are in The Flow Collective, I'm going to be getting into all of this with you throughout March. And those of you who aren't already in, but this is sounding up your street then you can use the link in the show notes to join us. The doors are open for a few days from when this episode first airs. And throughout March we're going to be focusing on working with your cycle to do big things but we're doing it from a very loving and grounded place.

Okay folks, have a cracking week. And I will see 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 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.