

25. Feeling Guilty



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

Period Power with Maisie Hill

25. Feeling Guilty

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 friends. I am thrilled to be here with you for another cracking episode. This is episode 25 already. And I'm feeling really good today because it has been gloriously sunny recently, the weather finally shifted and it's been feeling incredible. I really notice a difference in myself and also in the people around me.

And I've been wearing my Birkenstocks which I usually like to rock in the colder weather as a stocks and socks combo. But I've been wearing my Birkenstocks without any socks which I think is something to celebrate particularly with the weather we've had this year. And it's been half term here in the UK so the kids are off school.

And it was a Bank Holiday on Monday so Margate has been busy. For those of you who don't know Margate, it's a seaside town in Kent which is the southeast coast of the UK which makes it a perfect place to come on holiday particularly when there's a pandemic and there are travel restrictions in place. Basically there's a lot of sunburnt people walking around the town this week.

But I am going camping later on today and typically it is forecast to rain for the time that I'm camping. And then it's going back to sunshine on the day that we return, typical. But because it's been warm we've also had some of the windows open in the building that I work in.

And last night I was just finishing up or about to finish up work for the day and I suddenly heard this flapping. So I went to my door, looked outside at the area, outside of my room and I just saw this pigeon flying around. So I shut the door quickly so it didn't come into my room. And I just thought I'll

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deal with it when I'm done with work because I just wanted to finish up for the day. So go back to working and I basically forgot all about it because it stopped flapping around.

So 20 minutes later I'm done for the day and I opened my door completely forgetting that there is a pigeon outside. And it just came flapping towards me and scared the you know what out of me. And then it went through into this bigger room that has these huge windows in it and it just kept flying into these windows. It was quite traumatic to watch but I eventually managed to get it out.

I used to work in a parrot store when I lived in New York in my early 20s. So I'm familiar with handling birds, I'm okay with birds. But pigeons have started to bother me. My partner doesn't really like them and I think it's just finally rubbed off on me. But I got it out finally.

Now, today we are talking about feeling guilty. Before we get into it I want you to try and remember the last time you felt guilty. Was it today? Was it yesterday? Was it a week ago? Was it ages ago? I want you to recall a specific situation because I think you'll get more out of this episode if you have one in mind. So go ahead and think of a time. It might be recently. It might be from ages ago, it literally doesn't matter. You'll just be able to use it as we go through and talk about feeling guilty.

I recently did an episode called being lazy. And after that I put a poll up on my stories over on Instagram asking if you feel guilty when you take time off to rest or care for yourself in some way. And 67% of you told me that you do feel guilty, which didn't surprise me at all. It's very common for those of us who have been socialised as female to feel guilty. That's the essence of this episode but I'm going to give you some strategies and we're going to discuss it further. And I'm doing this episode now for good reason.

The last two episodes have been about being lazy and being ambitious. And I speak to a lot of folks who basically feel guilty for being lazy. And

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when I say lazy I mean resting, so guilty for resting. But also guilty for being ambitious and doing things or wanting more somehow, so it's basically a lose, lose scenario. And this is what you told me over on Instagram too when I put a post up about why do you feel guilty, when do you experience guilt in your life. And basically it comes down to not doing enough or wanting more for you or for your life.

So before we go any further let's take a look at what guilt actually is. So guilt is classified as a moral and adaptive emotion. And this is important because it means that it's there to help us in that guilt motivates us to adhere to societal norms. It's all about keeping the peace. Keeping the peace is important generally I would say, but particularly in terms of our evolutionary history because if we didn't keep the peace we would risk being kicked out of our community and that would mean certain death so it makes sense that it's there.

So say you do something or maybe you don't do something and that has a negative impact on someone else or even something else. Then guilt appears to help us to be aware of our actions and then self-correct our behaviour. So guilt can be helpful but guilt has become rampant. And many of you feel guilty no matter what you do. You know who you are. This is you.

So maybe you feel guilty for not spending time with your kids. When you're actually with your kids maybe you then feel guilty about how you're parenting. Then you decide that you're going to put your devices away and be really present with your kids. A lot of you have told me about this being the situation in your life. So you're actually then present with your kids and it's all good but everyone feels the benefit of it.

But then you go away and you do check your phone and let's say maybe the kids are in bed and you check your email and you see something from a colleague. And then you feel guilty that you haven't been working, even if you receive that email during non-work hours. And you'll all have your own version of this whether you have kids or not.

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You might also feel guilty about what you ate or what you didn't eat, guilty about how productive you are, guilt for taking time off, for doing nothing once your kids are in bed. Because there's an unwritten rule that then you should kind of blitz clean your whole house and cook meals for the next day and call your friend. And there's this rule that once the kids are in bed a switch should be turned on and you should be very productive. You might even feel guilt when you are feeling productive or when you have been productive.

I spoke on another episode; I can't remember which one about how I had a moment of feeling guilt because I wrote my second book, *Perimenopause Power* during the first lockdown. And I thought I feel guilty about sharing this because people really struggled then. And I'm going to make people feel bad if I share this, which I'm going to talk more about that's not possible. I'm going to share more about that as we go on today. You might feel guilty because your house isn't cleaned.

I mean it's a really fascinating post that I put up and your responses to it, other things came up. I'm trying to remember now. It was things like you felt guilty because your body actually needs to rest because you are human after all, built because you can't power through, guilt because you want to more when others have less, guilt because your home isn't tidy and clean. And someone actually shared; I think they said guilt for anything that is essentially just for me. And I thought that was such a brilliant way of putting it.

And also what's coming to mind is someone said that they feel guilty for not sharing an expensive chocolate bar with their kids. So I'll link to this post in the show notes so that you can read the comments because I'm sure it'll be helpful to know that you're not the only one who's plagued by guilt. And it's helpful to read other people's stuff because it helps us to then reflect on our own experiences. Sometimes it's easier for us to see how, I'm going to say ridiculous it is when it's someone else sharing than when it's our own shit.

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I also just want to give a shout out to my client, Becky, who's in The Flow Collective who replied, "Nothing really anymore." So she was talking about how she doesn't really feel guilty anymore because after 14 months of using your coaching methods and two years of cycle tracking.

So a shout out to Becky, I really want to acknowledge you for all the work that you have done and continue to do. And how committed you are to really caring for yourself. You are such an example of what's possible and I really appreciate you. So it was wonderful to read that you just don't really experience guilt anymore, how fantastic.

But it's no surprise that many of you feel guilty because you don't do enough for others, whether it's your friends, your kids, your family members. You haven't replied to a text, you haven't called so and so in a while. Even one of my friends replied to the post and I was literally thinking oh my God, I did feel guilty a few days ago because I thought of you and I thought I haven't checked in with you in a while.

But it might also be to do with your parents, what level of guilt are you feeling around your relationships with them? Even those of you whose parents are dead, I bet there's guilt there. There is for me, but I feel guilty about not posting some skincare to my mum when she was living abroad. So this is years ago. And I still have it in my bloody cupboard.

But anyone who knows me knows that I just don't post things. I'm very averse to going to the post office and posting things. I'm great at buying presents and stuff and packaging them up but that final step of getting to the post office is not me basically. So I still have it in the cupboard.

But now I know this about myself and I just ask Paul to do that kind of stuff for me because it's either that or I'm likely to feel guilt, or shame, or both. And I can absolutely coach myself on all of this and I have and I do. But sometimes I think it's better to just do what's easy. And what's easy is to ask him to help me, which he's only too happy to do because it's either that

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or he has to look at the clothes that don't fit me that need to be returned, wondering why are they still sat at the door.

Anyway my point here is that my mum is dead. It's not helpful to her or to me for me to feel guilty about not sending her some bloody moisturiser once upon a time. And you can't be everything to everyone. I know we're socialised that we can be. So it's no wonder that we feel guilt around our kind of role and responsibilities to others. But you can't be everything to everyone. I know we talk about this a lot.

But even though we can acknowledge the truth in that I think most of us just crack on, still trying to be everything to everyone. And for sure this is rooted in perfectionist tendencies, people pleasing. And we're going to be doing dedicated work on those in The Flow Collective soon. So if you want to address those then make sure you get on the wait list for when we open enrolment. But because you can't be everything to everyone you are going to disappoint people. You're going to disappoint people, it's inevitable.

So I want that to be a relief to you, imagine that, if you felt relief rather than guilt. This is a good example of how you can keep a thought but use it in a different way to create a different emotion. You can feel relief instead of guilt. And there are times when guilt can be helpful but most of you are feeling guilty when it isn't helpful or appropriate. And it's just another tool to beat yourself up with.

And this is important because it stops you from taking time to do things that regulate your nervous system and help you relax, things that bring you pleasure and connection, things that support your menstrual health. I mean what kind of life is it when you have debilitating period pain, which just sucks anyway? But then you're metaphorically pummelling yourself for needing to lie down or even just do marginally less than what you usually do. And you're probably over-functioning anyway.

And I just hear this time and time again how feeling guilty gets in the way of you taking care of yourself. Because if you lie down to rest but you spend

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the whole time feeling guilty for doing so, you're not actually resting. It just counteracts any of the positive actions that you're taking. So it's really important that we address this. And I have no idea why you might be doing this. I mean for sure, being socialised as female but maybe it was used within your family or education as a tool to get you to behave a certain way.

Maybe you had a significant experience in your life and you felt guilt because of that and that continued to have an impact on your brain's particular wiring and your tendencies, who knows. But the good news is that you do get to decide if you want to change things and stop being held back by guilt because guilt blocks you. It holds you back. It has this paralysing nature to it.

When I'm feeling guilty I can shut down and I get stuck ruminating on what a shit person I am and that helps nobody. But that's when guilt evolves into shame I would say. But that's if I let it do that. And I've got pretty good at stopping that spiral from happening. And I'm going to share a recent example of how I did this. So as I've been preparing for this episode I've been paying particular attention this week to when I feel guilty.

And the other night my son woke up repeatedly around 2:00-3:00am. When it came to the third time I was just tired. I was annoyed. I was grumpy. And I spoke to him in an unkind way. So I felt guilty about that. I also had compassion towards myself because I was half asleep and I'd already gone back to sleep twice in the last half an hour or so probably. And so I could have compassion for myself because of that. So although I was feeling guilty I didn't beat myself up for it. I just knew that I'd spoken in a way that I don't like and that he doesn't like.

Now, remember that guilt is there to help us to reflect and guilt helps us to amend our behaviour. This is different from shame which isn't helpful or productive and is based on our identity. Shame is very destructive.

Brené Brown says that guilt is adaptive and helpful. It's holding something we've done or failed to do up against our values and feeling psychological

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discomfort. She defines shame as the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging. Something we've experienced, done or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection.

And in that moment with my son I felt guilty. I knew I had been unkind and feeling guilt which on that occasion expressed itself as a heaviness in my belly, like a gnawing sinking feeling. For me guilt, it has a depth to it as an emotion when I feel it in my body, it hits me in my core. Now, that could have evolved into shame had I let it. But I was able to keep it to guilt. And I knew that it was appropriate for me to feel guilty but I decided that I wasn't going to shame myself. This is what I mean when I talk about having your own back. It's moments like these where we have to look out for ourselves.

So I stopped the shame spiral, I realised I was feeling guilty. I knew that I wanted to do better in those moments. And I also had compassion for myself that I'd said what I said. And if I can do this then you can do it too. Please know that. There's nothing particularly special about me that makes me able to do this. I'm just doing the work. So after that I got back to sleep and then the next day I was still feeling a bit guilty. Again I knew it was appropriate. I didn't let it descend into shame. Instead I decided to use the guilt in a positive way by getting it to evolve into curiosity.

I asked myself what love would have done in that moment. What would have been loving for me and what would have been loving for my son? And I problem solved from that place for the future by approaching it that way. So I came up with some simple things that would make a difference and that I would remember hopefully to do if I was half asleep. Like pausing for a moment before I walk into his room, to just wake myself up a bit and find some softness instead of the hardness that I had walked into his room with on that night.

To talk to him about how he's feeling and to acknowledge that he feels lonely at night sometimes. And also that he needs to drink more bloody water in the day so that he's not dehydrated at night and trying to find water

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and struggling. And then drinking loads of water and then needing to pee. These are simple things but can you see how I used my experience of feeling guilty in a helpful way? I was also very loving towards myself through that experience. So know that it's possible to feel guilt and be loving towards yourself.

So I'm going to give you a process to use when you feel guilty. And remember, we provide a transcript of each episode. So if you want to get these and just copy and paste them into your phone, or you want to write them down somewhere just go to the show notes for this episode. Are you ready? Here they are.

Step one, notice when you're feeling guilty. It sounds simple but many of you are probably feeling guilty and not really realising it. So first step, notice the guilt.

Step number two, notice the guilt in your body. How does it express itself as a sensation in your body? And I want you to name it. Name that it's guilt. Notice that you're feeling guilty.

Number three, question it, why is the guilt there? This will be because you did something, said something, thought something, didn't do something, ate something, whatever it is. Just get super clear on why you're feeling guilty.

Step number four, ask yourself is it appropriate for me to feel guilt in this situation? The example with my son, that for me I deemed as being appropriate. But many of you are feeling guilt I would say when it's inappropriate for you to feel guilt.

And lastly number five, this is kind of a riff on what number four was but sometimes it's helpful to have it phrased in a different way. Step number five is to ask, is it helpful for me to feel guilt in this situation?

So asking these questions will really help you. So I encourage you to do them, to follow this process because we just want to create a bit of

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separation so that you can observe the guilt and assess why you're feeling it. From there you can decide if it's appropriate or if you're going to tell it to do one. And I would say the majority of cases it's not appropriate for you to be feeling guilty. The key to this is to stop ruminating. Don't let your brain run wild. Put the reins on and give it some direction.

Now, before we finish up there's one other aspect of this that I want to discuss with you and that's when someone else makes you feel guilty. Listen, I'm feeling sassy today. I've got some news for you. Nobody else can make you feel guilty. All of you who tell me you struggle to give boundaries because your family members make you feel guilty. They are not making you feel guilty. You're feeling guilty because of a thought that you have about whatever it is they've said or done.

Stop making them responsible for how you feel. Do you really want them to be in charge of your emotional wellbeing? I don't think you do. And the flipside of this is that you also feel guilty because you think you've caused someone else's negative emotion. Many of you take on the emotions of others very easily and that's my history too. So I get it. But you haven't. They feel however they feel because of a thought that they have. You are not responsible for how other people feel. And they are not responsible for how you feel.

So the great thing about doing this work and by taking responsibility for your emotions is that you will simultaneously stop feeling guilty for how other people feel. You'll stop taking responsibility for things that are not your responsibility. And if you can do this, and I'm telling you, you can, probably going to take some work but if you do it your life will be radically different. And you can start doing that today using what I've shared with you in this episode.

We take things deeper in The Flow Collective. You can get on the wait list. Enrolment's going to be opening soon. But you can also just use what I'm sharing with you in the podcast to get to work and start changing things for yourself.

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Okay my friends that is it for today. I am off camping with my waterproofs and I will see you next week.

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.