

27. PMDD: Real Life Experiences



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

Period Power with Maisie Hill

27. PMDD: Real Life Experiences

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.

So, folks I am particularly excited about today's episode and not just because it's day 10 of my cycle which is when I am prone to feeling excited about life in general. But I'm really excited because in front of me I have four incredible guests who are joining me today for a very important discussion. It's going to be a very special episode about a topic that is dear to my heart and is also dear to theirs because today we're going to be talking about premenstrual dysphoric disorder, PMDD.

And I did a previous episode where I spoke about PMDD. But every time I mention PMDD we hear from people who realise that this is sounding familiar to them and that maybe they meet the diagnostic criteria for receiving that diagnosis. And I also know there's a lot of people out there who know that they have PMDD who are struggling and probably wondering is this ever going to get any better?

So I thought it was about time that I brought on some of my clients from The Flow Collective to talk about their experience of coming to realise that they have PMDD. What life is like when you have PMDD and also the things that have made a positive difference to them. So what we're going to do is just go around and spend a bit of time speaking to each of you. First of all I'm so thankful to you all for coming on and joining us. This is something I've wanted to do for a long time and it's just wonderful to be finally doing it. So welcome and thank you.

Let's start with you Becky. Why don't you go ahead and introduce yourself? Let us know your pronouns and where you are in your cycle today.

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Becky: Yeah, thanks for having me. So my name is Becky. I am cycle day nine. And I identify as female, so just she, her or my name is fine.

Maisie: Great. And it's been interesting putting together this episode and trying to plan it at a time that kind of suits most of our cycles. I think one of us has got the short straw on it. We've tried to do our best to kind of really capitalise on a time when hopefully you're all feeling more up for this but you're here either way. So Becky, I know you've had an interesting experience in terms of a diagnosis. So could you talk us through that and let us know what that was like for you?

Becky: Yeah, sure. So I think I first got my period when I was 10 or 12. And I remember kind of the first maybe seven years of my period I used to get really bad cramps. And I have a vivid memory of being at a volleyball game and being curled over in pain and thinking something's not right. But I was still so young that I didn't know any different. I just thought this is what happens. And then I asked my mum and she said, "Yeah, that's just being female." And then I think for me I had kind of the mental health side of things was my first cue.

So I noticed in my late teens, early 20s I started to suffer with anxiety. But I noticed a really stark difference between kind of the first half of my cycle and then that two week period leading up to when I would start bleeding. And I noticed my anxiety got significantly worse in that two week period. So at the time I was living in America in Chicago and I went to my GP and I said, "Here's what I've noticed." And he immediately just put me on birth control. And I thought okay, I guess that's what people do.

He didn't diagnose me with PMDD and I didn't know at that time what PMDD was because no one talks about it. In school you're just told around this age is when you get your period and here's what your period is, end of story, nothing.

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Maisie: So I think just to say there that I think what's amazing about that is that you had that awareness that your experience was related to your cycle. I think that's incredible that you had that awareness at that age.

Becky: Yeah. I think it was because I saw such a stark difference I knew it was – well, I thought it was related to hormones. So I'd started taking the birth control and I felt awful. So I went back to the doctor and I said, "Look, this isn't doing anything for my mental health or any of my symptoms." By that time the cramping and pain I was having had sort of subsided. And it was mainly just really intense food cravings, anxiety getting worse, tiredness, fatigue, lack of motivation for, like I'd feel really good the first half of my cycle then I would suddenly just, yeah, I couldn't do anything.

So he said, "Okay, well, we can change the birth control you're on." So I changed it, same story, really didn't help at all. By this time I was maybe early 20s, mid 20s. So I started to do my own research. And I had seen a commercial on TV about PMDD actually.

Maisie: Oh wow.

Becky: Yeah, it was in the US. And I think it was promoting an antidepressant medication but they had...

Maisie: Right.

Becky: Yeah. They had talked about it in the lens of PMDD. And I thought that's interesting. I think that's me. So I started to do my own research and started to incorporate lifestyle changes, so exercise, diet changes, prioritising sleep. But at the time I was working overseas in emergency humanitarian relief. So there was only so much I could incorporate given the resources available to me. So yeah, I did my best. I wasn't taking any birth control. I did start taking an antidepressant because my anxiety had gotten worse and worse.

And I found that the medication actually did help me to take the edge off a bit, particularly during that time two weeks before I bled. But if we fast

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forward a few years I had finished my time in emergency relief. I was living in London and I had just finished a mission in Greece working on the refugee response there. And when I was in Lesbos I started to get even worse anxiety than I had before. I had started getting heart palpitations, again the food cravings, mood changes things like that. And I just thought I can't live like this anymore.

So when I got home I went to my GP in London and I broke down in his office. And I said, "I am so paranoid about everything. I'm so anxious. I know I have anxiety all the time but it really gets bad that second half of my cycle." And he was the first doctor who ever said to me, "Have you thought about perhaps you have PMDD?" And not only did he say that he also said, "I think you should approach this as a 360 view of you need to make lifestyle changes. You need counselling. And you should consider medication again."

So that was the first time I felt like any doctor had really looked, and he was male which I thought was interesting because I would have thought the female doctors I saw would have been clued up on this.

Maisie: How was it for you to hear him suggest this 360 approach?

Becky: It was fantastic. It was always something that I wanted and knew that was the answer because so often in my family, my mum and my sister also suffer from anxiety. And they just take a pill every day but continue with their life as is. So they will drink lots of caffeine, do heavy exercise and carry on in the same patterns. And I really remember thinking surely that's not the best way forward. If you're going to take a medication you should do everything you can to help that work at its best.

So it felt like I wasn't crazy to have a medical professional agree with me and say, "Yeah, actually you need all of these things in order to give yourself the best chance possible to be free from – well, not free but to live a better life", basically.

Maisie: Yeah. And so what happened next, what did you do?

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Becky: Yeah. So after that I actually got pregnant. And that was a really interesting time for me because I had stopped taking the antidepressant. And I noticed all throughout my pregnancy I felt fantastic. And then after my son was born I didn't have any of the usual PMS symptoms, my mood was great and after my son was born I breastfed him for 13 months. And while I was breastfeeding I also felt good. But then as I reduced the amount of times I was breastfeeding I noticed slowly the PMDD crept back in. And that was when I thought I know this is hormone related.

So I actually went and saw an endocrinologist and that's someone who specialises in hormones. It was one of his things. And the doctor I saw, he took a 360 view again of supplements and herbs that could help with that. So I said to him, "I've seen this before pregnancy and I've seen myself fall back into those same patterns after pregnancy."

And again he said, "You can stop right there, you have PMDD. You don't even need to tell me anymore." I was explaining to him the symptoms and he said, "You're textbook PMDD. What I would suggest is that you take progesterone in the second half of your cycle." And no one had ever told me about HRT before. And I said, "Well, I don't want to take anything synthetic. Because I had taken birth control as a young adult and I felt horrible." And he said, "Actually there's lots of natural forms." So now I take a natural form of progesterone from wild yam extract.

Maisie: Yeah. So I'm glad you've brought this up because there is a significant difference between the kind of synthetic forms of progesterone that are in hormonal birth control and the progesterone that is most commonly prescribed as HRT during menopause. But it can be used at other times because you're right, it's derived from yams. And it's called body identical. So it's identical to the progesterone that you make.

And people with PMDD will have – I love the sirens coming in now. People with PMDD will have different responses to those. So tell us what your experience of it was like.

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Becky: Yeah. So it took me probably six months to figure out the right dosage, the right time of my cycle to take it. I would say another thing I started doing was cycle tracking which since joining The Flow Collective I've gotten even more detailed about it. But prior to joining The Flow Collective I would just track it on my phone so I could mark and identify the change. So now I take the progesterone pretty much 10 days to two weeks before I bleed. And that has also been extremely helpful.

I think I noticed after my son I would get symptoms like night sweats, I mean terrible sleep, totally disrupted sleep, food cravings again, the mental side, so the anxiety. And I would say the progesterone has helped me mostly with the night sweats, sleeping. And yeah, it just kind of makes everything less intense in those two weeks leading up to my period. And again I would have never thought it was progesterone that was causing that. But for me it seems to be working. So I take a combination now of the progesterone, I take a citalopram which is an antidepressant.

And I saw a nutritionist, so I implemented everything I talked about with her diet wise. I won't say my life is perfect now, I don't suffer from anything. I certainly still do feel tired or some, you know, not a 100%. But it is so much better and I'm able to live my life now and carry on kind of almost from the first half of my cycle to the second half of my cycle with little disruption.

Maisie: That's incredible. And I just want to recognise all the efforts that you have done and the way that you have approached this because to get to that place, the way you described it, and I know people are going to be listening to this thinking, wow, it's possible to experience the cycle with less disruption.

And I love how you framed that Becky of often when we're talking about PMDD we are talking about getting to a place where you are able to live with it. And that it will likely still be there in some form but you can still function and you can still experience life. And get to a really positive place with it in some cases.

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Becky: Yeah. And I think I just want to encourage people, one, you're not alone. Two, you're not crazy. There is something happening in your body. And also I found it does require a lot of effort on your own behalf. The more knowledge and information you have about your cycle and about your body the better your experience will be when you go to a health professional and say, "Here's what I'm feeling." Because I find even consultants that I saw, if you don't know what's going on it's harder for them to help you, if that makes sense.

Maisie: It does. I think this is why I'm such a fan – well, I'm a fan of cycle tracking for lots of reasons. But I think particularly when we're interacting with health professionals, the more data we can give them the better able to do their job they are. And I think that's such a plus to working with your cycle and of course with PMDD, it's diagnosed based on your experience.

So having that data is going to be really helpful in getting a diagnosis and treatment strategies. And also like you said, being able to recognise what's making a difference and tweaks that might need to be made in order to have an even better experience.

Becky: Yeah. And I would just say don't give up, so many times in the pit of my anxiety, I wasn't suicidal but I was definitely like I could see why someone wouldn't want to live anymore. Because for me I personally – it manifested itself in health anxiety, so I was constantly concerned that I had cancer and was going to die. And it would take up my whole life. I did hold a job but I would say barely. I would show up but my mind was in a different place. And I thought if this is how my life is going to be then this is horrible.

Maisie: Yeah. And so how is it now for you?

Becky: It's way better. I mean I would have never thought I could go through a day where I didn't constantly worry or constantly think about my health and things like that. And now I can say I can enjoy my life now. I mean I have moments where maybe I'm more anxious than others, but through therapy, medication and HRT I have been able to cope when I am

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hit or confronted with a trigger. And whereas before it would bring me down, I'm now able to pick myself up. But it requires a lot of work and it's something I deal with every day.

Your life can be better but for me it's something, as you said, it's something I'm going to live with probably forever but I'm okay with it because I know now how to live with it and that I don't have to let it overtake my life. But I can overcome it in a way, if that makes sense.

Maisie: Yes, it does make sense. And yeah, I reckon so much of your story kind of resonated with my own experience of the relief in pregnancy and postpartum. It just brought it all back for me because it's a very similar experience for me. So thank you for bringing that in.

Becky: Yeah, no problem.

Maisie: Thank you Becky.

Becky: No worries, thanks for having me.

Maisie: Okay. Franzi, do you want to jump in?

Franzi: Yes.

Maisie: Okay. Hi, Franzi.

Franzi: Hi, Maisie.

Maisie: Why don't you please correct my pronunciation of your name and let us know your pronoun and where you are in your cycle.

Franzi: Yeah. No, it's perfectly fine how you say it. It always makes me smile and I'm so happy to be here. So my name is Franzi.

Maisie: Franzi.

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Franzi: It's German. And I do identify as female. So she, her or my name will be fine. And I'm on day 16 of my cycle today, so around ovulation, still some summery vibes but I also feel already transitioning into autumn, yeah.

Maisie: Yeah, okay. Because that's the thing with so many people with PMDD, it's like their autumn hits as soon as they ovulate, they're just straight into it for all of the second half, yeah. Okay, so we're on the boundary with you today.

Franzi: Yeah.

Maisie: Yeah, okay. What an honour. So why don't you tell us Franzi about what your experience has been like over realising that you have PMDD.

Franzi: Yeah. So for me I think [inaudible] perspective I have been struggling with PMDD from my mid to late 20s till now but only know what has been going on since one and a half years approximately. So I look back on a path of a lot of struggling and questioning myself every cycle. What is going on with me? Because to describe it a little bit to the listeners, it always felt for me like okay, here I am back again, hello world, I can do this. I am in a good mood and let's meet with people, be in the world, get creative, get productive.

And then suddenly one morning I wake-up and it's like a switch where I only feel dark clouds in my head, I feel like there's some monsters inside me and it made me cry in the morning already. And then the other half of my cycle just hell and I've been looking for what's going on for years and years until I actually found your book, *Period Power* which was recommended from a friend. She was listening to a podcast episode. I think it was around your book release when you had been on *Deliciously Ella*.

And she sent me that podcast episode, my friend. And that already was for me a huge light bulb moment where I realised, wow, what you can do with your cycle. And you have these different phases and all the things I don't know about my body happening. I need to dive into that and then I read your book and started cycle tracking. And then after a couple of months I

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had this moment where I looked at my tracking data and could actually see, oh my gosh, it's a pattern. It's always a switch on a certain point in my cycle where I have a huge change.

Maisie: And how was that for you to be realising that?

Franzi: It was a huge aha moment where I just thought, okay, this has to do with my cycle. How good to know. I went through therapy. I did a cycle analysis for years, laying down on the couch crying and not knowing what's going on but also not getting me anywhere. So it was really good to know, okay, this has something to do with my cycle and now I can see what's the next step and what can I do about it. So yeah, it was relieving but also I would say the first step of a journey or more work on my cycle because just knowing didn't make it go away.

Maisie: Yeah. It's like you have that awareness but then it's like well, what next, what happens? So what did happen next for you?

Franzi: I went to my gynaecologist and told her about it and what I discovered and showed her the book. And that I suspect that I might be having PMDD. Also I just didn't only read your book, I went on a research trip on the internet and also the website of IAPMD quite a lot to just read up on it and see where I'm at. And then also I collect the data to really say, "Okay, that could be me."

Maisie: Yeah. And we will link to that website in the show notes. We've given it out before but just if anyone's listening it really is a fantastic website, yeah.

Franzi: Yeah. So I went to my gynaecologist to tell her about it. And that was actually really frustrating because she didn't know anything about it, never had heard of it. And then just suggested as Becky said, "Just take the birth control, it's just what women have, it's just PMS. I don't know what PMDD is." So that was really frustrating. And I was sure I didn't just want to be sent away with a birth control because when I took it in my teen years

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and in my 20s I never had a good experience with it. So that led to me at the minor 20s to just get off the pill forever.

And then I did some more research and read up on your suggestions in your book. And then also saw an endocrino gynaecologist to get a full hormonal check. And I did that twice already. I did that once in 2017 where I already was very desperate to know what's going on with me. And there was no result. There was nothing found. So then I thought, okay, yeah, then I don't know. I'll just take some supplements and go on with it. But now, the last time one and a half years ago I knew more.

So I was more informed and could approach the doctors with a better preparation to really ask for, "Check me out properly. I need help. This is what's happening to me." And the symptoms I get with the anger, and tiredness, and really depressive thoughts, not suicidal but really where suddenly from one day to another, I don't think anything makes sense anymore in my life. But then also knowing it's only a phase, so I also have this other side. So who am I? And what can I do about it?

But then I got checked out properly again with a lot of blood tests through all the phases of the cycle. And the result didn't show any hormonal imbalances. And that doctor then said, "Yeah, I can't find anything and you still have a problem. So you still have to go and deal with it."

Maisie: I sort of bash my head against a wall every time I hear this because, and I'm so glad that you're sharing this Franzi, because I hear this so often. And we have so many people in our community talking about this that they self-diagnose and they are sure. And they go away and do all this research and then they go to a medical professional which I always encourage and we always talk about the importance of that. And many of them are fantastic.

But unfortunately I just hear so many stories of people who go have hormone tests which I'm sure are done with good intentions and it sounds like a good thing to do. But PMDD can't be diagnosed. It's not about a

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hormonal imbalance. You might have a hormonal imbalance and have PMDD. But PMDD is fundamentally about your particular sensitivity to hormones and the impact that they have on you.

So I'm really glad that you brought that up and I just wanted to make that point for anyone listening who's been in a similar boat, this is not an accurate way of diagnosing PMDD, so please continue.

Franzi: Yeah. So I am actually diagnosed from a health professional here in Germany, I am still on the path. But what I also want to share is I don't know, maybe it's different in other countries. But the experiences I made here in Germany and in Berlin are actually not that great yet. I am still looking for it but I am also taking breaks from it because sometimes it's really hard to go somewhere for help and for being taken seriously with your suffering and then get these kinds of answers.

And that was also a situation where she then even kind of, I felt blamed, she was like, "Yeah, you're a healthy woman in her 30s. The tests I made with you are even extra already."

Maisie: Yeah, I've done all this for you, what's your problem?

Franzi: You should be kind of grateful, yeah. And now you still have that problem and you still have to deal with it. And maybe it's also just because you didn't have a child yet and your uterus is a little angry.

Maisie: Oh.

Franzi: Yeah. And I should be happy because I'm healthy and I still have that problem. So I need to find a way to deal with it. And that was for me really like, yeah, I mean it's good to know that I'm kind of healthy. But it didn't make me happy and it also made me feel like it's all my fault.

Maisie: Yeah. And I'm just fed up of this constant positioning as if you have a kid all your problems are going to be solved whether we're talking about PMDD or endometriosis, painful periods. There's this constant, I don't

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know, this belief that if you're pregnant and you have a kid that's going to magically reset your whole body. It's just not true. And why should that be the option?

Franzi: Exactly, because I mean you might get a break from it as we heard earlier. And as I even heard my mother tell me recently that she was always happy during pregnancies and then when her cycle came back that kind of PMS or PMDD came back. And it's so interesting because I started talking to her about it as well and then she told me what kind of problems she has. But I never heard from her about it before because this wasn't really a topic between us, but yeah, coming back to that...

Maisie: Yeah. And so what kind of strategy is that to just, what, be constantly pregnant until you go through menopause? That doesn't make sense. It's a very heavy investment.

Franzi: Yeah. And also then you still have kids.

Maisie: Well, exactly and that's definitely for me my experience of my cycle since having a kid, the challenge is there. It's significant. So I don't recommend that everyone as a strategy for things.

Franzi: Yeah. So that was that. It was actually my last doctor's visit, since then I haven't seen any doctor because I needed a break from dealing with it in that way. And then I just actually went back to lean into The Flow Collective, tracking, tracking, tracking, cycle tracking. And really using thought work and looking for a behavioural therapist. And that combination actually helps a lot. That I just have more awareness that I not only track my cycle but also that was a step I missed for a year or something. I always tracked and then [inaudible], going to start again.

But I didn't know to really look at my data and then proactively have a strategy, what can I do for myself to get through this better? And that's what I'm doing now since I think half a year. And then at the beginning of each cycle have a look and put some warnings or some tips in my agenda, what I can do for me. And also just practice communicating with my partner

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pre-emptively before the monsters creep in. And that helps a lot. But I still feel that can't be the end. And I'm also really mad at the doctors I've seen and how this topic is treated in general.

And I feel especially in Germany I feel like it's so behind. That I go to the doctor and say, "Have you seen this book? Have you read about that?" And then they make notes to read up, that's really – I don't know, that just makes me angry. And I feel like this should change, that something needs to change because as Becky said as well, I'm not alone.

There is many menstruators out there suffering from the same thing and don't even have a clue or a name for it, what's going on. But already knowing what's going on is the first step to getting better or finding a way to live with it and yeah get some relief.

Maisie: Yeah, it is, it's an important step because like you said when you've been having this experience and it was the same for me. I was convinced, because I'm quite psychologically minded and I always have been. I've just always been fascinated by brains and human behaviour. So I remember looking up about the kind of mood changes I was experiencing. And I didn't have the awareness that Becky had at that age that it could be related to my cycle.

And I just thought maybe I'm undiagnosed bipolar disorder because that's the only thing I could find that could make sense of the such rapid shift in mood and experience. You're bang on, there's just so much work to be done in this field. And thankfully I have hope because the people who are affected by PMDD and the professionals who are interested in it are very vocal. And I do think that things are shifting and more people are learning about it. And through that, hopefully that's what's going to drive more funding, more research, more options and more support.

Because like we were saying it does, I think, involve that 360 approach and looking at various things that are going to make a difference. So let's channel all that premenstrual rage into demanding things that are better.

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Great, thank you Franzi. Okay, Anna, you were nodding your head vigorously a lot as we were talking about that.

Anna: Yes, oh my gosh. I know it's a similar experience because we both live in Germany. But, well, this was so strange and I don't know, wonderfully empowering to hear because my experience of my journey of realising that I had PMDD is so similar. And yeah, basically everything resonated so much. It's so strange because – where do I start? So I always struggled on certain days. I always knew it's related to my cycle somehow, or let's say I knew, yeah, during my late teen years probably. And I always said to people, "Well, I have PMS and it's really strong, and it's really bad."

And just like well, living with my parents they knew as well. And they said, "Anna, no, it's PMS again and you're going to get the period." And it was something we very openly talked about because everybody knew around me that I had excessive mood swings. And the mood swings really is a topic for me and it's also very interesting because in contrast to Becky for example, and diet is for instance, isn't such a topic for my experience. It has to do with anger and depends on the stress level of the rage.

And sensibility, those places of doom and gloom where one day or just one moment really you're feeling amazing and then just two minutes later you're crying your eyes out, don't know what's happening. And you're just not able to [inaudible].

Maisie: Yeah, because there's such a significant shift. And I think that's – when we're around ovulation and oestrogen and testosterone are peaking. And we can just feel so on it, which can just – it's kind of like a double-edged sword for people with PMDD because you're like, "Yes, I can get stuff done. And I'm feeling like myself."

But you also know that any moment that's going to suddenly shift and the contrast between who you are from one day to the next is I think a lot to get our own heads around. But then for anyone else that's in our lives is just

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like, “What is going on?” It sounds like that’s what you’re talking about Anna.

Anna: Yeah, exactly. And well, I think, I realised and I actually immediately self-diagnosed with PMDD, once I heard about it because I just knew it was so spot on. I think and also, well, irritability was something that has gotten worse and especially during the beginning of Covid last year with working from home, studying from home, just really increased for me. Every symptom I had years ago, just I think suddenly just all exaggerated so much, that it was at a point where it was even more unbearable than it was before.

My partner and I, we live together and we knew that something had to change or something has to happen somehow because it was just, yeah, unbearable to say that. And that was when after a friend of mine set me up with the Deliciously Ella, so amazing, “[Inaudible], Anna, I don’t know, I just thought about you.” And sent it to me, she’s in Germany as well and I was listening to her and I just straight went out to buy Period Power. And because you also talk about PMDD and you also have the list of the criteria actually to map and it was so spot on.

And this was so crazy because I read it and I knew this was me. And then also I did research online and read – I think I found some other voices who talked about their experience as well. And yeah, that was when I just knew that this is what was going on for say 10 years, I don’t remember.

And this is also something where I was really lucky because my mum actually during the same time because she knew that I was really struggling. And she also took research herself somehow and she said, “Well, Anna, I read about PMDD and I think this is what’s going on.” And this was sort of during the same time, so that was very helpful.

Maisie: Yeah, a shout out to your mum, I love your mum.

Anna: Yeah. And also because, Franzi, what you said, she has or had, she’s postmenopausal but she had the same experience. And she knows

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that her mother as well did. So this is something that I thought was very helpful to me because on my mum's side it was something we could really talk about or she was able to relate to what I was feeling. So that really made it easy and easier for me.

And this is also why I knew during the last 10 years that PMS and my cycle, and how my relationship with period or my cycle is, is something that is really a topic for me. But we're really able to put it in a way to yeah, basically do something about it. But then when it came on, what do I do now? It's also that here in Germany, I don't know what it is, but it's, yeah, it's really hard to find a health practitioner to work with. Yeah, I reached out to some and the same experience that Franzi's had.

My GP and also my gynaecologist, they are like, "What is PMDD? I've never heard about it." And yeah, so then they recommend either the pill or they said, I don't know if this is the same English word but agnus castus.

Maisie: Yeah, it's a herbal remedy.

Anna: Yeah. And this is something I took when I was 15 because I went to my GP with very similar experiences. And now having gained more knowledge about PMDD it's very interesting because I think in retrospect, even when I look back at the journals I had when maybe I was 12 or 13 years old when just my periods began. This was going on all the time. It was never just suddenly broke in or started, it was just my experience all along. And then with my experience with the stress level it just hit so hard. Yeah, I needed to reach out and have something to do about it.

But I'm still – I took so many notes Becky from your journey because I think I still have a way to go because, yeah, it's a long journey.

Maisie: Yeah. That's the thing, it's ongoing and then life shifts, like there's a pandemic or you have a kid, or whatever it is. And it's like we need to work on things in a slightly different way or in a deeper way or if we've been kind of getting by and kind of got into quite a steady place with things. We often need to kind of dig deep again like Becky was saying. And kind of find

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that inner resilience and determination which can be so hard when you have PMDD to actually do that.

And that's why I'm such a fan of bringing in the self-coaching, so that we are able to do those things for ourselves and actually take that first step, because that can be huge.

Anna: Yeah. Also what helps, so cycle tracking all along is something I so much recommend because I was able to see patterns, just think of my months of cycle tracking, it was just so clear. And this is also what improved my experience so much because I was able to communicate again with my partner about how I would be feeling probably and how I am feeling. And also this self-diagnosis, it was a relief for me but for him as well because he actually thought, yeah, what is it? Is it like bipolar disorder as well? And he read it as well, some stuff I found.

And he said, "Well, this is you." And now we actually have a synced calendar where I have my own calendar for my cycle where I would mark all the days. And so he would know and I would also, during breakfast or one time just saying, "Maybe tomorrow I'm probably going to be very irritable."

And yeah, what is amazing about that is that he actually is able to yeah, to get along better with it because he knows it's not me in a way. It's something different or something else. So that really made a shift. And we could have watched those downward spirals then, so that was very, very helpful.

Maisie: Yeah, exactly. And it's so interesting that because people sometimes will say, "Well, if you track your cycle." But you can't plan your whole life around it. It's just not possible which is completely true. But I always talk about it as, "Well, if you know the weather in advance then you can wear the appropriate clothes or take an umbrella", or whatever it is. But I love how you put that, Anna, in relation to other people and our partners.

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And they just want to know what the weather forecast is. No one's going to hold you to it or it might be different.

But, "Hey, just a heads up that on Tuesday, I might just want a hug or I might want to be left alone", or whatever the case may be for an individual because it all affects us very differently. I'm just like, "Don't come near me. Don't look at me. Don't talk." That's my tendency is I just really need time alone. And when that's built into my relationship then that means that there's opportunities to connect in other ways. But it's just having that understanding up front and centre makes a huge difference, yeah. Okay, so where are you currently at, Anna?

Anna: I'm actually at day 23, and I know that I'll probably start bleeding in four days and honestly, I'm feeling good today although those are days that are the hardest. And yeah, I found I was in my doom and gloom let's say two and three days ago. So still the cycle has been very, yeah, hitting hard I would say.

Maisie: This one, yeah, I know you were saying you were having a kind of a bit of an off cycle.

Anna: Yeah, it's strange. And this is also why this talk and also experience from Becky and Franzi. I think I'll do some calls probably and maybe try to also reach out to some health practitioners or maybe an endocrinologist or what?

Maisie: Endocrinologist, yeah.

Anna: Even in German it's a very hard word to pronounce. Yeah, this is something I avoided because I knew that they would just tell me that everything is fine. Because I talked to my endocrinologist about it and so this is what I've avoided because I really felt that no one out there even wants to understand what's going on, so that was very hard. And there's, yeah, one psychiatrist, that's like on PMDD and postpartum and all that kind of thing. And yeah, you're just not able to get sessions booked there.

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Maisie: Yeah, that's the thing, it's just finding the right person and yeah.

Anna: Yeah, it's just hard to find someone, yeah. And that's still something where I'm at, yeah.

Maisie: Okay. Let's keep talking about this inside the community and figure out some options because I would love to help you do that. Okay, great. Thank you, Anna.

Thank you all for taking the time to come on and being so willing and open to sharing about your experiences. I got a lot out of this conversation and I can kind of see by your faces that it looks like you've all got a lot out of having the conversation and I'm sure that everyone listening has got a lot out of it.

So we will put our favourite links to resources and places to go for support and things and yeah, that's it for today. Thank you all. Yeah, we got a lot covered today, so thank you, thank you, thank you and see you on next week's episode.

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