

30. It'll Be Better When...



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With Your Host

Maisie Hill

Period Power with Maisie Hill

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If you are in the horrors with menstrual cycle issues or you want to learn how to harness your hormones then you are in the right place.

Welcome to the *Period Power* podcast. I'm your host Maisie Hill menstrual health expert, acupuncturist, certified life coach and author of *Period Power*. I'm on a mission to help you get 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.

Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening wherever you're listening or whatever time it is where you are. I'm here in my studio and I had a whole day of scheming and coming up with plans of all kinds, topics to speak about on the podcast with you, ideas for future things for The Flow Collective. And a whole lot of looking at the backend of my business and making sure everything is planned out in there so that these things aren't solely in my brain or in the depths of my memory. And also, so that my wonderful new assistant, Kim, knows what's coming on too.

And I love doing this at this point in my cycle. I am in my autumn. And I do find that there's nothing like a good planning day and a good cup of tea to see me through at this stage of things. It has been a really fun week for me because I've been welcoming the new members to The Flow Collective. And it's been really fun to see them getting involved in the community and starting to use what I teach in *Harness Your Hormones*.

And what has been really fascinating to see is how many of them have never invested in themselves like this before. And whether we're talking about investing time, energy, money or all three it's so powerful to say this is for me without guilt, apology, or explanation. So, I want to acknowledge you all for doing that. Some of them have been posting about what shifted for them within days of joining which I'm thrilled about and here's why.

Do you remember how my word for this year is effective? I think it was episode three that I spoke about this in, it's called *Living with Intention*? And basically, my focus for this year was to be effective. And one key way that I've worked with that word is really thinking about how I can be most

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effective in helping others. It's why I created the podcast. It's why each episode is short and powerful. And it's also why I created Harness Your Hormones because I wanted you to be able to sign up to The Flow Collective, go through the five modules and get results from the get-go.

And that's what has been happening, people are signing up, watching it. And even before they implement any of the strategies just from watching it, they're noticing things shift for them. It's very cool to see.

Now, today's topic is one that I've been mulling over for a while. I wrote the notes for this episode several months ago. But I really wanted to sit with it, and you'll know why once I get into this. But I feel ready to release it. It's day 23 of my cycle. I'm kind of getting close to my period starting and it feels right to let it out into the world.

So, you'll be wondering what it is and it's something that I've observed my clients doing. I see my friends doing it, you probably do it and I do it too. I'm not exempt from this. I've kind of got a handle on it but I still notice it coming up from time to time in certain areas. So, there's this thing we do as humans and it's that we imagine life will magically get better when something happens, when something in our life changes, usually something external to us. But it can also be to do with ourselves too. So, I'm going to give you some examples of this.

Maybe you are in a busy work season at work. So, you might be telling yourself that life will be better when this project is done or when you finally get on top of your emails. I am not quite sure what that means but I hear people talking about that as a thing. Or that your stress levels are going to magically reduce somehow when you take some time off. And I'm all for resting and time off. But relying on holidays to feel better is not what I recommend.

Another example of this is that you might think that your imposter syndrome will be better when you write a book, which I can tell you is not an effective strategy for dealing with imposter syndrome. There are far better ways that

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have nothing to do with what you actually do and what you achieve. And this is what we've been focusing on inside The Flow Collective this month because our team is confident. So, I've been sharing all my favourite ways to increase self-confidence in there.

Other ways this could show up. You might think that life will be better when you reach a certain weight or dress size, or if you have a new romantic partner, or you get married, or whatever. We have this tendency to believe that things will be so much better when something happens to us like a promotion or a change in relationship status. But this doesn't work. You might get momentary relief but ultimately you're still left with all your thoughts about you.

I hate to break it to you, but all those crappy thoughts, they don't go away unless you focus on changing them on purpose, which is what all the new members are currently learning how to do.

So, I've been thinking about this topic and where I see it the most. And I want to give you a head's up that I'm going to be talking about trying to conceive, fertility issues and pregnancy loss. I'm sure this will be helpful for those of you who are experiencing these things, that is certainly my intention. But it might be challenging for you to hear, your brain might rail against what I share with you today. And that's okay, that's just what human brains do. I'm okay with that.

This is something that rarely gets discussed and in the many, many conversations I've had with clients at various stages of the fertility journey, I've come to realise that we need to talk about this more openly. It's not a conversation that you hear ever really. It's quite taboo but you know me, I don't shy away from these things.

So, some of you will have a strong reaction to what I'm going to say. Some of you will feel triggered. And that's not a word that I use lightly, those of you in The Collective know that I'm not a fan of using the word 'triggered' unless we're talking specifically about posttraumatic stress disorder, PTSD.

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Triggered is used very casually these days to describe any kind of emotional response. And I don't think it does anyone any favours when it's used like that because it reinforces the belief that all these things are triggering you.

I prefer using the word 'activated' when we're talking about a nervous system response. That being said, reproductive trauma is very real. Reproductive trauma is a term that describes the psychological impact of a range of reproductive events such as infertility, pregnancy loss, recurrent pregnancy loss. And the physical and psychological toll, the impact of fertility treatment on individuals, but also couples when they're trying to conceive. And there can also be birth trauma as well.

So, I say all of this because you may feel triggered. So, I want you to be kind to yourself and consider if you want to listen to this now if it's something you might come back to later or you might skip this one altogether. And you can also take what I say, or you can just leave it. Please do what's best for you and don't judge yourself in the process. I want you to trust yourself that you know what's best for you. So just know that's where we're going. And you can listen to this in a way that's loving and helpful and you can also come back to it or ignore it, entirely up to you.

So, where I see this a lot is when people think that life will be better when you conceive or once you have a baby. And just so you know, I'm not going to be saying, "But just wait till you see what life with a baby is like, the sleepless nights, the this, the that." No, that's not what this is about. You want a baby. Well, I don't know if you do but if you're in this category, if you're having this experience, you want a baby. You want a very boring standard uneventful pregnancy, a smooth birth, and a healthy baby.

I know that if you're in that position then right now you would take all the sleepless nights, that you'd sacrifice whatever you could for that to be reality. I see you. I get it. And that's not what this conversation is about. This is about the usually shocking realisation that happens when you get pregnant or you have a baby and all the emotions you've been carrying for

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all that time don't just disappear, they're still there. But you've spent all this time thinking that they would go. So, this is why I want to talk to you about it.

And I want to share something that I spotted on social media a while back. I was reading a post that linked to a story about someone's fertility journey and their experience of IVF for the second time around. So, the author of the article had had one child through IVF and then was pregnant again through IVF. And someone had left a comment along the lines of the trauma that this woman had been experiencing was less than what others go through because she already has a baby and is pregnant again.

And what was clear as I read that comment was that this person who left it was in so much pain. And very sadly they're not alone in that. I've had many clients and friends make similar remarks over the years. And it's completely understandable. There can be so much loss, and grief, and heartache when you're trying to conceive. And it's rare for someone to have support to help them process that. This is something that people carry for years, for decades often.

So, reproductive trauma is real and in my eyes it's common. And it's usually going on behind closed doors. Someone who is trying to conceive using donor sperm might be going through this process entirely on their own. Or a couple going through it might keep it private. And you can end up putting on this mask to the rest of the world. And that's exhausting too because it can impact your work and your personal life. And it just starts showing up everywhere, so it's fucking hard, no doubt.

And I don't judge anyone for having thoughts that resemble what this person commented on Instagram because they're just hurting, they're really hurting. But for me this post and that comment brought everything I've been mulling over into focus and highlighted them in a really concise way. So, I want to share my thoughts on the topic with you today using this concept that I mentioned earlier of it'll be better when. So, let's get into it.

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When you're trying to conceive or you've gone through pregnancy loss or infant loss your focus is on conceiving, having a pregnancy that goes to term and having a baby that thrives. That's where your head is at. You've likely experienced a lot of emotions on this journey. There might be unresolved and ongoing trauma, plus the physical and emotional consequences of trying to conceive and using assisted reproduction like the use of hormones to manage your menstrual cycle, so stopping it, stimulating it, maintaining it etc.

Which by the way when it comes to IVF and assisted reproduction I'm not against them, I'm not bashing them. But it's fair to say that they have an impact. If you're in this place then of course it makes sense that you're thinking it'll be better when you're pregnant or have a baby like the person who commented on that post possibly thought. And I don't know if they did or not but I'm guessing that they did. And in some ways it will be better. I'm 100% not saying that it won't.

But not having a baby, not having your own family, the heartache of the fertility journey, it can be so painful. And I say this with all the love in the world, the idea that all that grief and heartache will just disappear once you have a baby in your arms is unrealistic. And this such a taboo topic for several reasons. Firstly, nobody wants to tell someone who's going through this that on the other side of having a baby is more feeling like shit about yourself.

Some professionals I know do talk about this but it's usually this unspoken thing until you're in the club and realise that's what it's like. Secondly, the folks on the other side of it who do have a kid can feel so intensely guilty about any 'negative' thoughts and feelings that they have because they're just busy telling themselves that they should feel grateful because at least they have a kid, and what about everyone who doesn't?

So, they don't talk about it which means it remains this thing that you only ever find out about once you're in that position. And that can come as a shock because this whole time you've had this idea that it'll be better when

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you conceive or have a baby. And I want to credit my good friend, Natalie Georgas for educating me so well on this. I had a good understanding of it through my work and speaking to my clients.

But Nat really broke it down for me and the impact that it has for people on the other side of saying this. And she does such amazing work supporting folks during pregnancy and postpartum. So, I'll include a link to her website in the show notes in case you want to reach out and work with her.

So, what often happens is that the anxiety and the fear, and everything else that's there, continues. And that as I said, can come as a shock because you've been thinking it'll be better when. When you're trying to conceive you think that it'll be better when you do conceive, and all your anxiety will go away when you do. And it might for a few minutes, maybe a day or so. Then your brain, because it's a very human brain starts contemplating, well, what if it doesn't work out, what if I miscarry? Particularly if you've got a history of pregnancy loss.

Then as you get towards the end of the first trimester you start worrying about the 12 week scan that among other things, screens for conditions such as Down's syndrome. Then you get through that but start to worry about why you can't feel the baby moving yet, or that your bump isn't the right size. We all carry our babies differently so there is no right size. Then it's the 20 week scan which is a more detailed scan that picks up anomalies and rare conditions. So, you get through that but then you start to worry about late pregnancy and birth.

Then you have the baby but now you're worried about this and that. And I want you to see that this anxiety, this fear will keep going and going and it will consume you. It doesn't have to though. And it's okay for these thoughts and feelings to be there. They are valid. They are understandable. And it can be the same when you have a baby following a pregnancy loss. You can be relieved and delighted with your baby and mourn the embryos and babies that didn't make it.

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It may not come up for you, but I want to name it for you in case it does because the clients that I've worked with over the years and in my own experience of this as well, it has just meant so much to have space held for this. And for someone to acknowledge everything that has come before even in the joy of everything panning out 'okay'. And it's just important that we acknowledge all of the experience, and we don't just expect it to be rainbows and daisies because it's not always.

We also do this weird thing of comparing trauma, which I don't think is helpful. I can't think of an example of when this might be helpful. Trauma isn't a competition. There's no winner, and even if there was, do you really want to win? How does that actually serve you? It's like if you break a leg but your mate has broken both their legs, does that negate what you're going through because of this notion that they've supposedly experienced more trauma? And I say supposedly because we don't know.

I had a miscarriage at 15 weeks of pregnancy that essentially involved me being in labour. And yes, it was devastating at the time, but I fully processed that which meant I didn't carry that experience into my second pregnancy, which I think is quite rare. And I will talk about this more another time because I know a lot of you have been asking for me to discuss pregnancy loss in more detail. But I mention this now because I think there are people out there who miscarried a week after they found out they were pregnant, and they have trauma that I don't have.

So even if we were to believe in the trauma Olympics, which we're not doing that, okay, but even if we were, how do we know who wins? And again, why would you want to? Please know that this won't happen to every person, especially if someone has great support in place and they've had opportunities to process things, to talk stuff through. For sure I have had clients who have had really positive experiences. And my experience really fucking sucked. And it was also hugely positive. Things can be both. This is the importance of and in these sentences.

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So, what I'm saying is that it can be both. Give yourself space to experience all of what's coming up for you, process your emotions, really accept, and process them. For some of you that might start with being able to name the emotions you're experiencing, or it could be learning how to safely inhabit those emotions, to not try to run away from them or avoid them. Now, it might be challenging for you to drop the it'll be better when in yourself when it's to do with fertility and pregnancy. That might be quite loaded for a lot of you.

So, my suggestion is to find other areas of your life where you're doing this. Often when we work on this in one aspect of our life it starts to impact other areas. And it's totally okay for you to build your muscle here with what we could call lighter topics.

Really this is all about letting yourself experience everything and stopping the it'll be better when, because when you do that you're putting your emotional wellbeing on a future that may or may not happen. And preventing yourself from finding emotional – well, I don't want to say balance or peace because that's just nonsense, but emotional wellbeing. The capacity to be emotional.

Okay, it was a big topic today so thank you for listening. And if you need to take care of yourself somehow now, please do that, give yourself a hug, text a friend. If you're in The Flow Collective, post in the community. Move your body, shake it off, write about what came up for you when you listened today. Okay, I'm sending you a big consensual hug if you want one and I'll be back next week. I'll see you then.

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.