

## 32. Pregnancy Loss Listener Q&A



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Maisie Hill**

**Period Power** with Maisie Hill

## 32. Pregnancy Loss Listener Q&A

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 folks. I am in my studio, and I am sweating. We are in a heatwave here in the UK which compared to most other countries in the world probably isn't even all that hot. I'm not even sure what the temperature is. But it's hot in my studio and it's not normally. Usually, it's quite cool in here. So even when it's really hot outside, with the window open and the door open there's enough of a breeze and I think this is the first time I've basically ended up sweating in my studio.

So, I'm looking forward to getting out of here later on today and going for a swim in the sea on my way home because I've been really enjoying doing that the past couple of months. I feel like it's making a huge difference to me in terms of my health and wellbeing. So, it's especially helpful when it's hot like it is today.

So, this week we are continuing with the same topic as last week, pregnancy loss but I'm answering your questions. I put this up on my stories a couple of weeks ago over on Instagram. I was just asking you what questions have you got when it comes to pregnancy loss? And I received so many great questions. They were really incredible and really helped me as I have put together these last couple of episodes.

So, what I've done today is pick out the most common ones that came up because there were particular ones that were repeated a lot or just asked in slightly different ways. But I've also picked out the less common ones that I think will be most valuable and helpful for you to hear my answer to. So, let's get going here.

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Okay, the first question that a lot of you asked and I was very touched by how many of you asked this. And that's how can I support friends who have been through it? And I think most importantly just starting off by acknowledging that someone's had a pregnancy loss. And acknowledging where they're at in the process of recovering from one. Don't underestimate how powerful that is. If that's all you do, fantastic. Let them talk.

Don't try to cheer them up unless they have explicitly asked you to do that or ask if that's what they want you to do. Most people will, they will usually say, "Can you come over and just cheer me up? I'm having a hard time." And it's great when we're able to ask for that explicitly. But often when we're talking about pregnancy loss, people just want to be met where they are and have that space held for them where they can just be themselves. It's great to have an opportunity to be miserable and not feel like you've got to put on a brave face for the sake of the people that are around you.

Other things that you could consider doing is cooking a meal or sending some food, that's better than flowers in my book. I know people like to send flowers. And some people I'm sure like to receive them. But it can end up being this other thing that you've got to take care of. You've got to water the flowers. And I would hazard a guess that most people aren't in the headspace to be able to do that. And in fact, it could bring up all sorts of things about them not being able to care for even a bunch of flowers. So, you might want to steer clear of that one.

Stick to sending food, some meal, a gift voucher, or something along those lines.

And you could also ask if they're having a service or memorial of some kind. So, some hospitals actually offer this, some NHS trusts here in the UK offer this, an opportunity when you've had a pregnancy loss to go along to a memorial service that it's just space to grieve and acknowledge that pregnancy. So, you could ask if they're doing that or if they're doing something, just not to do with the NHS and hospitals.

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And if their baby was stillborn then use their baby's name. This is something I've heard a lot over the years that people want to hear that baby's name and for that baby to be counted. And things like remembering their baby's birthday. That's important. And I think people can be very worried about saying the wrong thing and that's completely understandable. In worrying about saying the wrong thing we often say nothing and that's such a shame.

Okay, next question. Does grieving prevent healing? I love how honest this question is, so thank you to the person who asked it. It's a really interesting question because it places grieving and healing in opposition to each other. When really grieving is the path to healing. We don't do a great job of grieving I would say as a society. And it's very healthy to grieve. I do wonder and I don't know without asking this person, but I wonder if what they were asking here is can you get stuck in grief? So, I want to give you my thoughts on that as well.

Firstly, as I just mentioned we rarely really grieve even if we do, those around us might be highly uncomfortable with us grieving. So, because of that and your thoughts about that you can end up not letting yourself fully express your grief or you cut it short somehow. And when we do this what happens is we pack it away. We try to push it down and that doesn't work.

It's like having a beachball and trying to push it under the water. And the more you push it under the water the stronger that pressure builds up. And it just ends up coming up and whacking you in the face, or at least, splashing water in your face. So, there's that.

And another thing that can happen is we let a little out. So, picture if you're boiling a pan of water and you've got the lid on top. But even though the lid's on top once that water is really boiling, steam starts to build up and some of it starts to come out of the sides. And the water might overboil and start coming out between the gap, between the lid and the pan or the pot. I always forget which one's what. So, if that's happening you might take the

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lid off for a moment and let that steam escape. But then you quickly button yourself back up again.

You've put the lid on, and it doesn't take long for all that steam and pressure to build back up. Then you take the lid off for another moment, have a little cry and then it goes back on again. And this process goes on and on. And there are times when doing this might be what you feel able to do and you just do that. That's okay if that's where you're at. I don't want you to judge yourself if that's what's working for you or that's what you feel able to do. It's important that you acknowledge and have compassion for where you're at.

If you can't do more than that right now then just work with that. But I would say that you need times where you can take the lid off, leave it off, let it all out, even take the pot off the stove and just let the tears out, really express what's going on.

And that's what I would often see happening in my clients when I was working as a practitioner. They'd just be keeping it together all day in their work life, in their relationships, with family members as well. And then they'd walk in to my treatment space and just fall apart because my clinic was a place of safety where there was no expectation on them, where they could just be themselves. And their grief was welcome, it just wasn't a problem for me. I wanted them to be able to let that go.

So, the answer is no, I don't think grieving prevents healing, but I do think lack of grieving prevents healing.

Right, next question and this is a really big one. I see this one a lot. So how do you get confidence in your body back and trust it again? And as I said, a lot of you asked this question. And I really suggest listening to episode two of the podcast because I spoke about the relationship you have with your cycle. And you can apply what I spoke about in that episode to this scenario. So, you can explore the relationship that you have with your

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cycle, with your ovaries, with your uterus, you can really use that to explore all the thoughts you currently have about your body and your cycle.

And for this, you really want to let loose without censoring yourself or editing. It's important to just see what's really there, so writing these things down is going to be useful. That's your starting point, just look at your existing thoughts. Then I would find some more neutral versions of those thoughts. So probably most of the thoughts you have are going to be what we could call negative thoughts. And we're not going to jump to super positive thoughts because they're probably going to be unbelievable to your brain right now.

So, we just want to find some more objective thoughts, some more neutral thoughts. And I would also look for ways in which you already trust your body. So, this is a less direct way. It's more of a sneaky round the back door way because working directly with your reproductive system might be challenging to you right now. It might be quite loaded for you at the moment. So, we want to find other ways into this. And I recommend doing this with really obvious ways to begin with like my heart knows how to pump blood around my body.

My body does a great job of keeping me upright. Look, my legs are walking. I'm walking. My teeth are doing a great job of chewing. I know these things probably sound ridiculous to a lot of you. But we just want to get in the habit of seeing how your body does function because so many of the negative thoughts that can be going on around this time is to do with how your body doesn't function. So, we want to do the sneaky back door way of looking at all the ways in which your body functions fantastically.

Right, next question was how to cope with colleagues and friends having babies. Yeah, this sucks. It's like everyone else is pregnant and having babies with complete ease. It's easy for everyone else, they're just popping them out left, right and centre. And none of this is necessarily the case. That's just your perception, it's not necessarily the truth. And you all know I'm a big fan of doing the internal work, the thought work that I talk about on

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the podcast a lot. But there are times in life where reducing your exposure is really helpful and this is one of them.

You're probably already doing this in some way and if you are I want you to be truly okay with that. It's okay that you're taking care of yourself like this. My clients sometimes judge themselves for needing to do this. So, I want to emphasise that it's okay, this can be an act of self-love, maybe even self-preservation. But it won't be that if you heap on a load of thoughts about how you should be able to do this, or you should be able to do that. So don't make you needing to do this mean things about you. Do it from a loving place.

I actually knew someone who was due within a few days of when I had been expecting to give birth with my first pregnancy. And a while after my miscarriage they actually asked me to be their doula. And I was so offended. I was just incredulous, livid that they'd asked that of me. But they were just making a request. They were actually, I think now, letting me know how much they valued my work and just wanted me to be involved. They were just making a request. They weren't forcing me, they just asked.

But I made that into a big thing, and I came up with all sorts of things in my head. And that's just where I was at, at that moment in time. I have kindness towards myself when I think about how I reacted then. I understand it. I have a very different perspective now on things. And this is one of the benefits of time passing and doing this inner work. So, it's okay to stop following people you know who are pregnant. You can mute them on social media. You can give yourself grace when you receive news that someone's pregnant or given birth.

Okay, next question is, how to approach work and take space to heal. So, I touched on this in last week's episode but it's important so let's tease it apart a bit. Firstly, I would look at the legal situation in the country you live in and see if you're legally entitled to time off. Next up, does your place of employment have a policy in place for loss of any kind? They might not

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have something for pregnancy loss specifically, but they might have a more general policy, so check that out.

And I get it, if there's hesitation around doing this and telling people what's been going on, and job safety can come into that. That's a real thing. And you might not want your employer to know anything about this. And if you are trying to conceive and you do want a family or to grow your family then you might have concerns about them being aware of your family planning plans in terms of what it means for promotion cycles and opportunities that are available to you. So that's definitely something to take into consideration.

And something else that I've thought about is kind of independent of whether you choose to do any of what I've just mentioned or not. But what helped me was having time every day where I could fall apart, where I could cry, and rage, and just let whatever I was feeling out.

And I did this 30 day yoga challenge once I felt physically recovered and able to do that, and strong enough to do that. And that really helped to break open the grief I was holding. It was like that physical practice just opened up my body and let the grief out and then it put me back together again in 30 days. It was an amazing thing to do. It had its challenges but that was helpful to me at the time. But there are other ways of doing this. You can create your own version of that. You could journal every day. You could just give yourself five minutes at the end of your day to sit and feel your feelings.

Alright, next question. How to interact with others who aren't sensitive or don't get it. Yeah. Other people won't get it. So, my first response to this is I would do yourself a favour and drop any expectation that they will get it because then if they do get it it's a nice surprise rather than nobody ever meeting your bar of expectation. And I'm there with you on that bar of expectation. That bar of expectation isn't wrong. How you and I would like to be responded to following pregnancy loss is great.



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The world would be a much better place if everyone followed the plan that you and I have in our minds. But unless someone's gone through it or is familiar with it in some way they're not going to get it. And even if they have gone through it, they won't get your experience.

I remember telling someone that I'd miscarried. And this person had had multiple miscarriages themselves. They even worked with people professionally to support them through loss, and they still rubbed me up the wrong way. They actually, they told me that I would absolutely be highly anxious in any future pregnancy. And that this miscarriage, this loss would have far reaching consequences and just basically be awful and that I wouldn't get to enjoy any pregnancy that happened thereafter.

And my internal response was, this is like classic Maisie Hill, how dare you tell me about my future, what do you know? I was so pissed at this person for some time. But you know what? It was literally the best thing they could have told me because it made me so determined to do everything I could, everything in my power for that not to be my future. It was like waving a red rag to a bull. And this is a prime example of how the people that annoy us are our greatest teachers often, our greatest helpers.

You can also have boundaries in place like if someone's talking to you and you're not liking where it's going or you're just not up for it at that particular time. You can just say, "This is not a conversation I'm up for having. Let's talk about something else." Or "Thank you for caring enough to bring this up but I don't actually want to talk about it." There's lots of options there.

Lots of you were also asking about how to track again after a loss. And this is important to say. There's no rush. You can take a break from tracking any time you want to. You don't have to do it all the time. And you don't have to jump back into it. In fact if there's any urgency or need to do it I would question why. So, if cycle tracking is what you're doing or wanting to do, what's the thought and feeling that's leading you to take that action? Is it coming from love, or curiosity, or is it coming from feeling desperate?

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And I mean that in terms of do you feel graspy or like you really need to do it, this attachment to doing it? Because if you are then I would hesitate to jump in with tracking and work on taking care of yourself in other ways, definitely. There are times to stay clear of tracking, everyone.

Okay, question eight. How do you deal with other people's expectations of your emotions and feeling like you're not allowed your feelings? So yeah, again, as a society we're not great at letting ourselves be emotional and accepting other's emotions. Most of us are socialised to just keep them all in, button them all up. And that there's this point where healthy emotional expression is enough and needs to be stopped. The key here is to know that you are responsible for how you feel, and that other people are responsible for how they feel.

It's okay for you to be feeling all your emotions, whatever they are. And it's also okay for other people to feel uncomfortable. That's their emotion. Or they might be worried or concerned. It's okay for them to feel that way. We don't need to change it. I mean it would be nice but it's unlikely to happen and it's also not our responsibility. Whatever emotions you are feeling they are valid and so are theirs. But that doesn't mean that you have to change your behaviour in terms of how you're expressing your emotions.

If you're in a puddle of tears because you feel sad and heartbroken and your friend, or your colleague, or family member is uncomfortable, which by the way, we don't actually know unless they expressly say that they are uncomfortable. But for the sake of this let's just say that they are, you don't have to start over-functioning and taking responsibility for their emotional wellbeing. If they are feeling uncomfortable it's because they have a thought that's creating that emotion for them. You are not creating that emotion for them.

It's okay for you to have your emotions. It's okay for them to have their emotions.

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Okay, last question. This is another big one. How do you know when you're ready to try again? So for me, and this may be familiar for you, there was this rush to try again, to get straight back on the horse. And that was where I was at. I was just trying to rush out of the grief with, yeah, I'm fine, okay, let's just get on with things, time's ticking, let's go. And I was just wanting to get away from the grief and the sadness by moving into hope for another pregnancy and all that comes with kind of planning that and getting onboard with that. That feels nicer rather than sitting in grief.

So notice if you're wanting to rush and by the way, I just want to say, I don't think I've had a client who didn't do this. I wanted to jump back into trying to conceive but we actually weren't allowed to. I mean I'm not really a fan of the word 'allowed' so let's say it was strongly advised that we didn't because with a partial molar pregnancy you produce high levels of HCG which is a pregnancy hormone. And it's important that those levels return to within normal range because if they aren't then that requires medical intervention.

So after my miscarriage I was having fortnightly blood tests at Charing Cross Hospital in London to make sure that my levels were lowering, which they did. And I can't remember when we got the kind of official signoff that we could try again. I think it was about three months later. But by that point I didn't want to try again because that urgency had gone because I was so focused on taking care of myself rather than trying to conceive. And I was willing to stay in the discomfort of the grief, and the sadness, and the heartache.

It's also very common to have thoughts along the lines of time's running out, I am such and such an age so I can't wait around. I don't have the luxury of waiting. I don't have the luxury that 28 year olds have or whatever the story is you're telling yourself. And here's what I think about that. Investing some time in recovery and grieving is worth it. You're not losing time, you're gaining it.

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This is even true if you're whatever age you are because I know some of you are going to be listening to this and thinking, well, that's okay, if you're such and such an age but not if you're my age, whatever the age you happen to be is. My general recommendation with waiting is to wait three cycles, to wait three full cycles to really focus on recovering. But in all honesty, I might be even longer. This is just a general thing that I am offering you. But notice your reaction to what I'm saying. If that's affected you then pause and really ask yourself why.

If you take nothing else from this podcast, take the awareness of what's going on in your mind when it comes to this. What are the beliefs that you have about your body and the idea of waiting? They might be ones you're already aware of because you're just thinking them on the daily. They're just regular thoughts that come up for you, but check-in now and consider where the idea of waiting three full cycles takes you. Some of you will feel relieved at the idea of that. Some of you will be feeling panic, or disbelief, or annoyed at me for even suggesting it.

And that's all it is by the way, it's just a suggestion. It's something I'm offering. You can take it or leave it. But the reason that you feel the way you do is because of what you're thinking. So find those thoughts. And also know, I just want you all to hear this, that there's no right time to try again. Our brains really like to fixate on this especially after a loss. There is no right time.

Okay, that is it for today. I hope you found these two episodes on pregnancy loss helpful, please share it, share these episodes with the people you know who have experienced loss, who could do with receiving some support in some way because I want this podcast to impact as many people as possible. So I always appreciate any time you share an episode of the podcast, whether you do so publicly on Instagram or privately when you send it to a friend who is in need.

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Okay, that is it for today. I hope you are doing well with all of this. I'm thinking of you. I am hoping that you've got what you needed from these episodes. Okay, 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](http://maisiehill.com) for more.