

34. Taking Unnecessary Responsibility



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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.

Hello, hello everyone and welcome to episode 34 of the podcast. So this is one of those episodes that I hadn't planned on doing. Usually I have this rough idea of where I'm taking the podcast in terms of the topics. And I always pick things that relate to what we're doing inside The Flow Collective or that I see would be helpful to the members. So that's my starting point. And then I think about you all and what will make sense to those of you who aren't in The Flow Collective and the journey that you're a part of as you are listening in week after week.

And what sequence of topics is going to make the most sense and will be most useful to you. And it's the same with the monthly themes in The Flow Collective. I'm always gauging where the community is at as a whole and considering what we're ready to dive into next. And is there anything that we need to work on first before we go to a particular topic. Is there an order that makes the most sense? But there are times, this being one of them when other topics suddenly come into focus, and I just think we have to do that now. And that's what happened today.

I was going to talk to you about something else but yesterday was my day when I was coaching all my one-on-one clients. And all of them brought topics that had a particular theme in common. And because my brain was really focused throughout the day on this commonality and noticing this theme emerging in each of the sessions I did but in very different ways it just hit me that I have to talk to you all about it. And it's actually ended up giving birth to a three part series so today we're starting with part one of the series.

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We're talking about taking responsibility for things that you aren't responsible for. So usually I talk a lot to you and to my clients, everyone in The Flow Collective about the importance of being responsible. But as I was coaching my clients yesterday through these very different situations I could see how they were all in their own way taking responsibility for things that they had no business taking responsibility for.

So I'm going to give you some examples of how this might be showing up for you with your health and your medical care as well as in your personal and professional lives. Because I suspect it's a big one. Can you tell, I'm quite excited about this episode?

Okay, let's start with how this can show up with your healthcare. What it'll look like is you thinking that you should be able to figure out what is wrong with you and diagnose yourself and even treat yourself too. So I've had multiple, multiple clients over the years chastise themselves for not knowing that they had a fibroid, or endometriosis, or ovarian cyst, or a growth on their pituitary gland in their head, or for not being able to put the pieces of the puzzle together.

But how can you do that when you don't know what the puzzle is meant to look like and you don't have the frame of reference that comes from years of medical education training, or the experience you get through that and on the job? And this is also important. You can't see inside your own body. One of my clients was essentially beating herself up a bit for not being able to scan herself. She was being overly responsible. Listen to me, it is not your job to know. It is the responsibility of your medical team to investigate, diagnose and suggest treatment plans to you.

Even if you yourself have also undergone the same training and are a licensed healthcare practitioner, when we're talking about your health, you are the patient. That doesn't mean you have to be subservient or uninvolved in your healthcare. You all know I'm a big believer in collaborative healthcare. But I will also say, self-diagnosis is valid. We've touched on that before. Sometimes it's the only available option in a

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medical system that often minimises or fails to prioritise reproductive and hormonal issues.

I know many of you have self-diagnosed with PMDD. I know we have neurodiverse listeners who have also self-diagnosed. And often those of you with cycle related issues will end up becoming highly informed patients and sometimes your doctor won't have heard or be familiar with your condition or suspected condition. You might be the one informing them as to the ins and outs of your condition. And I laugh, I mean it's awful, it's ridiculous. It's often the case with PMDD for example. But I want to remind you that it isn't your responsibility to educate them.

Yes, doing so will hopefully be helpful to you and to them and to whomever else they end up caring for. But the burden of educating professionals shouldn't be on the patient. Taking unnecessary responsibility can also show up in your personal and professional relationships. So I'm going to give you some examples of that. But first let's look at why we end up being overly responsible.

We can become overly responsible because of various factors as you well might imagine. But maybe you grew up with a caregiver or multiple caregivers who weren't able to adequately be responsible. And so you had to be responsible because no one else was going to be. Maybe you were more of a parent than a child. Or you got the sense that your needs didn't actually matter, that there was no space for them. You might have been the eldest child in the family or one of many children.

Maybe you had a sibling who was ill or who had things going on that resulted in them getting what we could call attention, or taking up resources, whether that's time, money, love. And so you were rewarded for not making a fuss and for being helpful. There might have been an air of thank goodness we don't have to worry about you. You're so helpful, and understanding, and sensible. My dad recently gave me some of my school reports from my childhood and those descriptors ran throughout them which was fascinating to read.

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So I think I've shared here before that I grew up on benefits living on a council estate in the suburbs. And I actually had a great upbringing, but I was very aware of how hard life was for my mum, financially especially. And I didn't want to make life any harder for her because I thought that in sharing stuff with her I would be making her life harder. So I learnt to fold things away inside myself rather than kick up a fuss, which is how I viewed it.

And my mum was incredible, and she absolutely did the best that she could for us always. But she was also human and she's not around anymore for me to ask her this but my impression of my mum as a child and as an adult was that she was overly responsible herself as well. So we're talking about generational patterns here often. So perhaps like me, you were rewarded for being kind, for caring for others and helping to make life easier in the home, particularly if other family members or things outside the home required a lot of our parents.

There's also a people pleasing element to being over-responsible. And by the way, we are going to be doing a whole month on people pleasing soon in The Flow Collective. So if this is something that's an issue for you, make sure your name is on the wait list. Send me a DM over on Instagram letting me know so that I can let you know when the doors open. This is an issue that so many of you struggle with and I can help. So I promise we'll be opening the doors for new members to join before we start that particular theme.

We've been getting a lot of emails asking when we'll be opening again. I promise it'll be soon. Now, let's look at the people pleasing that's going on with over-responsibility. What this looks like is that you'll suppress your needs and desires and prioritise the needs and desires of others in order to avoid conflict and what we would describe as negative emotions. They're not really negative, you know my thoughts on that. But we'll just call them that for the sake of the podcast.

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So you respond to the demands and expectations of others, which might be expressed verbally, or by text, or in your head, you have a thought that you just know that there's a done thing. And woe betide you if you don't do what's unsaid, what's unspoken. Something that often comes up is the idea of not going to your mum's or your in-laws for Christmas dinner. In actual fact that's a great example to work with this topic. So let's roll with that as an example.

Let's say there's a pattern of you going to your mum's for Christmas or alternating with your parents and your in-laws or whoever. And if that's not the case, maybe there's another holiday or particular day where you would be expected to spend some time with your family. But you don't actually want to go. Maybe you want to spend Christmas with your own family, or on a beach in a tropical destination, or you just want to be at home on your own watching the new series of Succession which by the way is going to be coming out in the autumn.

Whatever it is that you want to do and whatever your reasons, it doesn't actually matter. You don't have to explain yourself or apologise, which I know is going to be such a radical idea for some of you, but it's true. You don't, you're just not going. And you're simply communicating that with her or with them. It's very straightforward but your brain is making it a big thing. And it may be important to her. I mean it is also an option that she'll feel relieved that you're not going.

Maybe she wants to order pizza and watch Succession too. But she thinks you expect to come and for there to be this big meal, this big event. But let's stick with the story that's in your brain which is that she will be hurt and upset or more specifically, that in saying you're not coming that you will be hurting her and causing her so much upset. And some of you will have parents or siblings who will explicitly tell you how much you've hurt or offended them. So I want you to hear me on this, listen up all of you.

The only reason your mum or whoever would feel hurt by you not attending Christmas dinner is because they have a thought that you should be there.

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Or they have a whole bunch of thoughts about what they're making you not going mean about you and your relationship with them. I know this is a huge thing to wrap your head around, but life gets so much easier when you realise that your thoughts really do create your emotions. And that other people's emotions are created by the thoughts that they have.

Sure, we can influence other people's emotional wellbeing, but that's different from believing that we're responsible for creating someone else's emotional state. Seriously, let that shit go and your life will change. Also think about are there occasions or particular relationships where you don't say things, or you do things because you worry about hurting the other person. Where you're taking responsibility for their emotional wellbeing. It might be your mum, could be your mate, could be a colleague at work, could be your boss. Think about where you do this.

Where in your relationships do you silence yourself or hold back from doing the things you want to because you worry about hurting the other person? An extension of this is when you're being over-responsible, you also anticipate the needs of others. You don't even wait for them to say something because you're already there, you're on it. Then you end up over-functioning for them instead of letting them be them. Just let them be themselves. Let them ask for what they want. But instead of that you just take over.

And by the way when it comes to over-functioning. Here's how I like to determine whether I am being helpful and if I'm just being responsible for myself, or if I'm over-functioning and trying to do things for someone else. So in your mind, picture someone trying to climb over a garden wall, the kind of height that requires some effort, not just a piddly wall that you can step over, one that's pretty high up. So if I'm helping someone what I will be doing is just offering them a bunk up, that's what we call it in the UK at least.

So I might be on my knees holding my hands out so that they can step into my hands, and I can give them a bit of a bunk up, a bit of a push up to get

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them a bit of height. But from there it's all on them to get over the wall. That's me being helpful. If I'm over-functioning on the other hand, I'll be pushing them all the way up. I'll be on the other side heaving them over. And just putting in so much effort. So can you see the difference between those two things?

One is I'm helping them to get started. The other is I'm doing it for them and not letting them do it for themselves, which is really the exact opposite of helping them. I have to say, I'm fantastic at doing this. But I've learned not to indulge this urge to be overly responsible and to over-function because that's all it is. It's an urge. So I have learned to sit on my hands and shut my mouth and let someone else be responsible for themselves. And I can give you a recent example of this.

So I am going to Mexico soon on a work trip. It's part of the business coaching mastermind that I'm in. And actually I'll probably be there around the time that this episode airs. So I'm there for I think six days in total, but I'm away for nine days including the travel time. And Paul and Nelson aren't coming because I'm there to work. And what my brain wanted to do was over-function and organise their time together for them whilst I'm gone. To be very clear with you, Paul does not need me to do this at all. He's perfectly capable of parenting on his own whilst I'm away.

But my brain was telling me to organise playdates and I really can't stand that phrase if I'm honest with you. But you know what I mean when I say it. So organise playdates, and my brain was telling me that I should schedule some online food shopping deliveries and to organise times to visit people and do all these things. Thankfully I am skilled at noticing when I do this now. So I clocked what I was doing. I could see what my brain was doing and the route it was going down and I gave myself a talking to.

I realised that I was literally heaving Paul over the wall when he hadn't even asked me to help him get over the wall. In his eyes there probably was no wall, let's be honest. Instead, what I ended up doing is I didn't do anything other than to say to Paul, "Is there anything we can do before I go

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that would help you and Nelson to have a good time together whilst I'm gone?"

And his reply, very different to what I'd come up with in my head, he said, "I'd love it if you and I had some time alone before you go. And it would be great if all three of us had some quality time before you leave. And I also don't think it'd be good if you're rushing to pack on the day that you leave." Notice how he didn't need me to do any of the action items that I had come up with. And how that last thing was actually about what I needed to do, nothing to do with what they needed. That's it.

And when you're overly responsible for others, you might notice this that you're being under-responsible for yourself. And that's something that we're going to explore in the next couple of episodes. But in this example with Paul I was focused on him and on them. And I wasn't focused on getting my shit together before I leave. I was being overly responsible for them and under-responsible for me. Thankfully I didn't spend a lot of time on this. I saw what my brain was doing, and I redirected it.

But imagine what it would have cost me if I hadn't done that. And now apply that to a lifetime because I indulged in being overly responsible for a long time. It still shows up in different ways once in a while but I'm on it now. I can clock it. Had I not trained as a life coach I would have certainly kept going because I think I just thought it was part of my personality, that's just who I am.

And before we finish up, another way you're being overly responsible is when someone bumps into you when you're out and about and you apologise to them. Maybe this happens less now with COVID. If you're just in the supermarket and someone bumps into you, but you apologise to them. This has been a really challenging one for me to overcome.

I think I have mentioned before on the podcast about the Wanda Sykes special on Netflix called Not Normal. But if you haven't seen it, go and check it out because she is just hilarious and she talks about us

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apologising when someone bumps into us. And she talks about hormones and menopause, it's so good. So please watch it and have a laugh.

But also between now and next week I want you to be aware of when you're being overly responsible and just see if you can rein yourself in. Even just 1%, if that's all you do, if even all you do is just notice when you're doing it, just bringing that awareness in, and noticing things. That is a great place to start, even better, if you can actually rein yourself in and not fulfil that urge.

Okay, I will see you next week with part two in this series. Thanks for tuning in. 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.