

Ep #97: Finding Joy with Flow Collective Member Ann



Full Episode Transcript

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.

Welcome everybody to another podcast episode and I've been really looking forward to this one because today I have a guest with me, one of my clients from The Flow Collective here who I've been kind of secretly hoping would want to come on and have a conversation about what's been going on for them in recent years. And well, I don't want to give too much away. We're going to get into it but needless to say, Ann, welcome to the podcast. I'm very pleased that you're here and really looking forward to this conversation.

So why don't you go ahead and introduce yourself and let us know anything you want us to know, where you are, your pronouns etc.

Ann: Hi, Maisie. Yeah, I'm Ann, I am from Germany. I live in Frankfurt, Germany. My pronouns are she, her. I work in the theatre. I work in marketing of the Frankfurt Opera House in the marketing department which is challenging in its own right but yeah.

Maisie: Amazing, alright. And did you join the membership, was it this year or was it last year?

Ann: Yes, this year in March, literally half an hour before the doors close again.

Maisie: I'm always that person. I'm always the like, oh.

Ann: I have been thinking about joining ever since, I think I've been an avid podcast listener from episode one. So I was in the loop of The Flow Collective, the doors opening every time and every time I was like, "Maybe I should join." But I don't know, because I never really struggled, I don't

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have PMDD, or endometriosis, or any of the 'real' period related issues or problems. So I was like, "Maybe I don't deserve to be in The Flow Collective. Maybe it's not for me."

But then this year in March, something shifted, and I was like, "Maybe." Something inside me told me, now is the time to join.

Maisie: Can you remember what it was?

Ann: Yeah. I'm in the middle of a really long fertility journey. And I had been going through a first trimester miscarriage three years ago today actually. And then throughout, we went into fertility treatment and throughout our journey we did everything. So at the beginning of this year we were facing to start our first IVF cycle, the ICSI cycle. And I thought, maybe a little support from The Flow Collective couldn't hurt. So at the beginning of this year I had lost all joy in my life because it's just, going through infertility, it's so challenging.

Every month you wish you had these two stripes on the pregnancy test, and they just wouldn't appear. And the thoughts around fertility or infertility became so dominant in my life and they were there every day.

Maisie: Which is such a common experience, and this is the thing, it does I think often very quickly become all consuming and especially when you're beginning to plan out IVF and ICSI cycles and things like this. It's time, your perception and experience of time is very different, relationships change, your relationship with yourself, your body your reproductive system. I mean I have I think quite a strong awareness of it just because of the work that I've done with clients over the decades of doing this.

But I think it's, you're in the club that nobody wants to be part of but it's only when you speak to other people who are also in that club that it's like other people get it to the level that you as someone who's experiencing does.

Ann: Yeah. Because pregnant people are popping up left and right especially at the beginning of the year in spring and summer, when the coats leave the bodies, you see all the pregnant bellies. And that's a really

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challenging time. At the end of last year I had stuff that I was happy about and joy, but it always felt like a wet blanket was spread over it. So I could feel joy, but it was always subdued. And I was just so sick and tired of that dominating my every, like every aspect of my life.

So when the podcast episode came up where we were encouraged to choose a word of the year, joy immediately kept bubbling up. And I was like, "Okay, so something's tell you that joy."

Maisie: How was that for you? Yeah, how was it for you because it was bubbling up and I just wonder, did your brain argue with that as a word at all, or did you instantly go with it?

Ann: I think I instantly went with it because the suffering is probably too strong a word. But I had just two shit years basically and it escalated. And then with everything that's going on in the world and the pandemic. And I was like, "No, I can't go on not feeling joy." So there was no arguing.

Maisie: Yeah, became non-negotiable. Yeah. And then so how has it gone? So you had this awareness that joy was the word that you wanted to go with and to lean into and I mean we're recording this, it's towards the end of October, what's it been like for you?

Ann: It had definitely returned, even deciding that this was going to be my word for the year. I was much more aware of everything, every little thing, like leaves changing, or the flowers blooming in the spring. The first rays of sunlight and blue skies after the dark winter because winter, I'm pretty sure in the UK and in Germany, they're so dark here because it's always overcast and cloudy. Basically the sunlight leaves in November and comes back again in April.

I love light, I need the light, it's tough. But once I had decided that joy was going to be my word of the year, I started noticing just small things that brought me joy or things that I thought, yeah, I can be joyful about that. That doesn't mean that everything was flowers and candy since January or since March, but I remember. I keep remembering the word of the year is joy.

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Maisie: Well, that's the thing, first of all, I love that you mentioned making the decision because that for me is just so key and you hear me talking about decisions all the time. But it is just so key that this is a decision that we can make and that's for me really the power of being intentional and picking a word. Because then you do train your brain to find joy in things.

Ann: Yeah, exactly.

Maisie: And this is just so important because the brain, the human brain has this negativity bias where it will always look for the things that aren't working, the things that are going wrong. And so anything we can do whether it's finding joy, celebrating ourselves, we're really just giving things equal airtime at least. And I think particularly when you're on a fertility journey and going through what is often big highs and lows, even just the experience of taking hormones when you are going through a cycle.

But when you're going through the waiting period before you can test or find out. And I think just the ongoing journey of falling apart and pulling yourself back up again and trying to go again.

Ann: Yeah, exactly. And the two week wait that you mentioned, that last year has been so challenging because it's what do you do normally? You ovulate, you have sex, or you don't have sex. But these two weeks between potentially fertilising an egg and then implantation. And then finding out they don't matter, but when you're on the fertility journey these are the most challenging periods of time.

And when it's all consuming, and you focus, and then you lose this time, I felt like I lost these two weeks, these multiple periods of two weeks because I was just anticipating the next pregnancy test. And I was just looking forward to it and almost rushing through it, rushing through the two weeks, and not enjoying myself. And that's something that definitely had changed since I joined The Flow Collective.

Maisie: In what way?

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Ann: I think a big part is the Selfcare Sunday that we do. I love that because you set an intention for the week. And just to take a couple of minutes every Sunday to think about where am I in my cycle? What do I want to do this week? How do I want to approach things? I could with intention look for things I could do that I knew would serve me and bring me joy, make life good and easy.

And even if it didn't work out, even if I, you know, I sometimes set the intention on Sunday and then go through the week and look back on Fridays, well, what did I actually do this week? I meant to not get upset about my co-worker mansplaining, but I did, oh well.

Maisie: Yeah. And I don't think you're giving yourself enough credit here because I know from yours that there has definitely been several occasions where you've set an intention, I think often around your work and relationship with time and things like that to do less in some way and you have. Because I'm always intrigued, I'm always looking at what's going on because we have two regular posts.

Okay, so for those of you who aren't in The Flow Collective, we have two regular posts every week, one is the Selfcare Sunday that Ann mentioned. Where it's kind of regular questions that we just use to focus for the week ahead and consider where we are or what we're wanting, what we could do with not doing what would be fun, that kind of thing. And then on Fridays we have our wins thread where we celebrate something from our week.

And I do find it really fascinating, the relationship between those posts and sometimes I will see someone celebrating something and I'll go back and look at what their intention for the week was or vice versa. And I know that you have definitely done that because I remember.

Ann: Yeah. I think in the past maybe three months because joining The Flow Collective is, as you always say, it's quite overwhelming because there's so much cool stuff I had to go into. And you get overwhelmed by, okay, I want to do everything. I want to do every webinar. But it takes time to implement these things and to really think about it.

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Maisie: Yeah, that's why we're always like, "Just slow it down. You don't need to drown yourself in doing all the things." Just do one call, one webinar and just apply it, yeah.

Ann: Yeah. And that's what I've been doing.

Maisie: Yes. I love it. So the Selfcare Sunday has been really supportive for you. Is there anything else? Because I think it would be really helpful for anyone listening whether they're a member or not because this is the thing when people have a different experience of things. And this is why I was so keen and happy about you coming on is because often when we are talking about changes in someone's life, we can end up in the realm of just talking about things when everything's fantastic.

And I've gone through the horrors of something, or yeah, it was really shit for a while but now I'm on the other side. And we have lots of examples of people having that experience in the membership and some of them have come on already to talk about that. But for me it's just as much about, or if not more about how do we experience these challenges when we are in them and to talk about them when we are in them and not just when we're on the pretty side of it, when we're out of the other end which is particularly relevant when we're talking about fertility.

But I know that to someone else listening, it's like, okay, so you're still going through these fertility experiences and still doing ICSI and things. And I know they're going to want to know, well, what else have you done? Because I know, very understandably usually when we talk about things like this, I get lots of messages on Instagram like, "Well, what exactly did Ann do? Tell us the things." So I think it would be really helpful if you're willing to just share some of the other things that have made a difference to you.

Ann: Yeah, sure. Within The Flow Collective, what I really loved, a webinar that I really loved was the Creating Safety webinar. Learning about the nervous system and being able to name the state that I'm in. And I could, after doing the webinar, I reflected on past experiences. And I'm activated

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quite a lot I realised. But I was never able to have a framework to put that in. It has really helped me. And that has really helped me to work through emotions and name the emotions and especially around fertility because there are a lot of days that are just really shit.

Just last week, I told you before that this is actually the perfect day to record the podcast because my last week was probably the most challenging and horrible that I had experienced on my journey so far. We had our second ICSI attempt that had failed, if you want to call it failed, but that resulted in a negative pregnancy test. And then on Monday I found out that the second embryo that we had didn't develop right and fragmented. And so it wasn't fit for cryoconservation. That just pulled the rug out under me.

Because I'm turning 40 next month, which people tell us that you can't get pregnant after 40 which is bullshit. But it's really, it's so ingrained in me. I'm really still working on it to accept that that is not a fact, that I can still get pregnant. But in the German health insurance system, these IVF cycles, they are subsidised. They are health insurance but only until the 40th birthday of the woman. So this has been a big barrier and a big red flag or whatever you want to call it in my head. So, I had this, I'm turning 40 and I'm done.

So finding out that our second embryo that we had didn't make it, I was devastated. I was feeling like shit. I was crying so much. I was crying so much that I didn't have to pee for three days. But I still went to work. But what changed is that usually in the past I would have gone along and masked my feelings, when anybody would ask how I was, I would say, "Well, we're fine." Not this week. I was just so down, and so sad, and desperate, and disheartened. And I figured, no, I don't have the energy to mask.

So whenever anybody asked me how I was, I just said, "Not great actually." And sometimes they would ask why and then I would tell them, and I would cry. I cried in front of my boss which was perfectly fine, she was very, very understanding. But by doing that and by telling me, of course I feel that

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way, this is perfectly normal. No human being would go through stuff like that and not feel devastated and unfairly treated by the universe and being desperate.

And by letting these feelings be and cry, cry on the subway and whenever I would talk about it, I actually, I think for the first time in my life processed feelings liked this because I just let myself be. And I think that's the thing I learned from the Creating Safety Webinar, recognising the state I'm in and then just leaving it be, going through the emotions and then yeah, still I found glimmers as you call them and little, tiny things that would pull me up and bring me through the day.

Maisie: Nice job.

Ann: Thank you.

Maisie: I mean I completely agree, to be able to fall apart, for me that's just so huge and I just really want to acknowledge you and celebrate you for doing that because it's really, going through fertility challenges and my sense of things and please, correct me if this doesn't resonate with your experience. But the way I've always thought about when people are going through embryo transfers is even if you're trying to conceive by having sex for example, you never kind of really know what's going on.

But when you go through IVF, when you go through ICSI, and you have an embryo transferred back into you, you know there's an embryo there. And so my sense of things is that involves a whole other level, not that it wasn't a whole other level before. But then it's kind of compounded, a compounded experience of that second half of the cycle. And so the multitude of emotions, stress responses, and then when you've got maybe some kind of beliefs that have come in from the ether about stress is awful, it's going to be the worst thing.

That's going to be the thing that means the cycle doesn't work, which that's not what we're saying at all. But there's just a multitude I imagine of experiences all crammed into two weeks. And so like you said, of course you would have these responses, these emotions and still so many people

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going through this experience just go off to work and try their best to put it away and go throughout their day. And I've completely recognised the need to do that and maybe for some people the desire to do that but there really is no getting away from it. What are your thoughts on that?

Ann: Yeah. There really isn't. I have a name for the two week wait, I call it Schrödinger's pregnancy because at the same time you're pregnant and you're not pregnant at the same time. And you only know after two weeks whether the embryo has embedded and you're actually going to keep it. So yeah, going through it, there's so many women who put on a brave face and because that's their only or our only chance to get our dream family, to start a family, yeah, falling apart.

That's something I learned over the last seven/eight months that I have been in The Flow Collective because I've always been the reliable one even when I was younger, much younger, people called me mom because I was always the one they could count on. I had everything under control when we would go out. And I have a little brother, so I was always there for him. And I don't know, falling apart, it didn't mean, this doesn't mean that I was never emotional or never cried. I cried a lot actually when I was younger. But it never really had anything to do with me.

I cried for someone or because something was unfair but the falling apart, that's been on a whole other level ever since I went through fertility treatment. Because you mentioned the hormones because you grow the eggs and you don't grow one egg, you grow multiple eggs. So the cycle is stimulated and in the first half of the cycle I think I called it once, it's like Beyonce on speed. You get oestrogen on top of your own oestrogen. And so it's really like life's fantastic, everything's fine.

And then after the embryo transfer you get, at least in my case and I think it's pretty common, that you substitute progesterone. Sometimes that has felt like, I think you call the progesterone, the Kristen Stewart of hormones. And that's my Kristen Stewart on downers because everything's amplified when you artificially substitute the hormones. And what I do in my last two week wait, I have a pretty good sense of my body. I learnt to really listen to

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my body, and I know what's going on. I learned that through cycle tracking, and just be aware of what's going on.

And so during the last two week wait, after a week or so I was feeling awful all of a sudden and I had these doom and gloom thoughts that this is never going to work. We're going to stay childless, this is just never going to work. And just knew that the cycle hadn't worked. And what I think was that my natural hormones were dropping and preparing for menstruation. But the artificial progesterone level was high because I was still substituting that. And so I was living this discrepancy, I think this was really, hormones can wreak havoc on your mental health, on your wellbeing.

And so this is what happened at that point, I just felt the discrepancy. My body was preparing for release, and menstruation, and bleeding, but the fertility treatment kind of told my body, no, we're trying to stay pregnant. And it's just really a shit time to go through. But ever since I joined The Flow Collective and I'm much more aware of the thoughts that I'm thinking and what's going on in my body. I've gotten so much more self-aware, and I can acknowledge what's going on and treat myself with compassion and kindness and say, "Well, of course you're feeling like that."

And it's perfectly fine that you're feeling like shit now for a couple of days. And once oestrogen spikes up again, you'll feel better.

Maisie: How has that impacted just your day-to-day life having that level of self-awareness?

Ann: It's impacted it in a positive way a lot. I mean I think I've always been pretty self-aware, I'm told that I am a really sensitive person. I know that I react to my environment, when I have people around me that give off a weird energy, it has an effect on me. So being this self-aware, I'm more able to name the emotions that I'm feeling, to put them in perspective. I've gotten more able to communicate my needs or set boundaries. I'm not perfect at it but it works perfect. It's a working progress. And there's still some room for improvement with the boundary setting.

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Maisie: Where have you noticed improvements with that when it comes to communicating your needs? Because especially when you're going through a fertility journey, there's going to be needs coming up and often communication, particularly in relationships I know, there can be real closeness and there can be challenges along with it. So yeah, what's your experience of that been?

Ann: I think I have gained a more open relationship as in communication, open communication and relationship with my husband going through this. Because he's really helpful and he's been my rock, and I call my anchor. When he's with me I just know I'm safe. And this doesn't mean I can't take care of myself but it's just when I know I struggle and he's there, I know everything's fine, and I can let go. But he can't read my mind. So I have become more open and more concrete in what I tell him what I need. And I think that has brought us both closer together.

Maisie: Often people have a fear that doing that is going to create distance, or more opportunities for problems. But it's usually the opposite, usually.

Ann: Yeah, exactly, we still fight, or we have disagreements but it's less snapping at each other and he says something, and I have thoughts about that, and I just snap back. But it's gotten more productive, our discussions, I think. He knows and he supports me that I'm doing The Flow Collective and do all the things I do. He was a little worried that I'd turn into a psychological, I don't know, shipwreck once I dove into everything.

Maisie: That's hilarious.

Ann: But actually, I think by just taking up the space, voicing my needs, I'm creating space and I'm creating space for him to voice his needs. And I don't try to force the models on him or do thought work with him. I just here and there when I notice that he gets upset about something because somebody could think this and that. I was like, "Well, you're not responsible for his feelings or their feelings." And I think it's rubbing off on him a little.

Maisie: Well, it's interesting though because I remember you mentioning in our discussion before recording today that that's been a big one for you is

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not taking on that responsibility for how other people are feeling. What's that been like for you?

Ann: That has been the biggest gamechanger for me. I think pretty early on after I joined, I heard that somewhere in one of the resources. I am not responsible for other people's feelings. I was like, "That is so true." Because I'm a middle child and I crave harmony above all. I'm not really good at sitting in the discomfort of someone else being of a different opinion than I am or just yeah, having feelings that don't coordinate with mine. And I was always bending over backwards to accommodate for other people. And my own needs were totally on the backburner.

And that has left me burned out a lot of times because I was taking care of everybody but myself. Yeah, I was always ruminating, oh my God, I said this, maybe what are they thinking now? Are they mad about me? Are they mad about what I said? Am I responsible that they reacted that way? And so when I heard the simple sentence, I am not responsible for other people's feelings, something in me clicked. I was like, "That is so simple and so valuable." So I have kind of adopted that as kind of my mantra.

Whenever in a work setting, or in family, or a friend setting, whenever there is bad feelings or something going against the grain, I keep telling me, I'm not responsible for how they feel. I'm just responsible for how I feel.

Maisie: That's so powerful and I'm just kind of, the coach in me is tying a few strands here that we've kind of mentioned and bringing them all together. So I'll just go ahead and share them with you and then we can reflect on them together. So I think it's really interesting, and I just want to point this out for your benefit so you can really see the significance of the work that you have done in all of this and where you are now. Because as you said, you are a middle child, you have for whatever reason, well, like most humans, crave harmony and really want that.

And I think the way that we're all socialised to think about relationships is that a good healthy relationship is one that is always harmonious, and there's never disagreements and there's never fights which that's not my

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opinion now at the age of about to be 42. I am like, no, a healthy relationship, a strong relationship is one that goes through ruptures and repairs, not the absence of ruptures, it's like we become stronger in our relationships because we kind of increase the capacity for disagreements and for falling out.

So being able to care for ourselves and care for each other through those moments. So now you're at family occasions or maybe in your work life as well and there are differences of opinions, disagreements. And you're able to kind of ride out any discomfort that is there by reminding yourself that you're not responsible for other people's feelings. Now, I have a theory on why you're doing that. I think it's because you've really taken responsibility for your own feelings.

Ann: Yeah, I think so, yeah.

Maisie: And I really think with you talking about having joy as your intentional power word for this year, that when we are increasing our capacity to experience any emotion, the knock-on effect is just by doing that, even with one that's 'a positive' emotion, not that I believe in positive and negative emotions. But you're picking one that generally feels better and is more enjoyable to be in than really embracing frustration or something like that.

But my point is that whenever we intentionally increase our ability to feel an emotion, it usually means that we start being able to embrace the other emotions as well. So my theory that I put to you is that by focusing on joy, particularly in a challenging phase of your life where maybe joy is not as available or hasn't been as available that actually maybe joy is the really challenging one for a lot of people going through a fertility journey or something kind of in that realm.

But that now means that you are able to experience also discomfort, and other emotions that may come up. But I think it's kind of two sides to the same coin. You're able to let other people have their feelings and know that

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they are responsible because you yourself are being self-responsible for your emotions. What do you think?

Ann: I think that that hits the nail on the head, that you put that really beautifully. This sums up my experience of this year. Yeah, because we only have a limited capacity of dealing with stuff. At some point the barrel is full. So I think, yeah, I'm really focused on myself. I'm not used to being selfish. But I don't think that it is selfish, focusing on myself because as I said earlier, by taking up space we can create space for other people, other emotions. And what you said about me being able and open to all the other emotions by focusing on joy.

That's absolutely something that I've experienced this year. Before I joined The Flow Collective, I knew I could be angry, I knew I could be sad, and I knew I could be happy. But the nuances in between and naming the different emotions. I'm still working on feeling them in my body. I'm a head person. I call myself the head person. But even that has gotten better. I can feel a whole range of emotions now and that's just, it's beautiful.

Maisie: It is, isn't it? I think about it as it's like having a garden with lots of different flowers and wildlife in it rather than just three types. If you were just used to feeling angry, feeling sad, feeling happy, and that's a great start. I mean I was there for ages. I remember working with a psychotherapist for years. And I had no idea how to describe my emotions at all. I couldn't name them. I didn't know where I was in them. I would just disassociate and not be there in my body at all.

I would need to ask him what were we talking about because I would just completely shut down and withdraw from the whole experience. And that was happening in my relationships and in my personal life as well. And so I personally know the value of having a rich emotional life and of having that proficiency in language and how we talk about that. And that can be in terms of our sensory experience of our body when we're going through these things, being aware of our thoughts and how they influence them. But I love it. I just love it.

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So I love that for you as well. It was really funny, Paul and I were joking about this the other day because he's like, "You have some highs and lows." He was like, "The highs and lows of Maisie Hill." And I was like, "Do I?" Because to me that's not my experience. It might be his perception of what's going on for me but it's not, that doesn't describe my experience. But I was saying to him, "I have a rich emotional life like most humans. I'm so comfortable with that that I don't even care if it's a problem for you or anyone else."

And it's not a problem for him, we were just kind of joking around about it. But it is so valuable to be able to experience all of these things and like we've been saying, it's not about feeling great all the time.

Ann: That's another thing. Life is 50/50, it's one of your teachings or your most repeated sayings. And that's it.

Maisie: Yeah, because that's what I remember hearing it from one of my teachers. And I was like, "Oh yeah, it really is." And it's just life is just a whole mixture of all sorts of things. And being willing to go along for the ride a bit knowing that we can't control it but just kind of having a say in our experience of it.

Ann: Yeah. And it makes everything more colourful and beautiful. If everything was 100% and 100% perfect, would we be able to appreciate the perfection? No, I don't think so.

Maisie: Yeah. Wow. This has been such an incredible conversation to have, and I am just curious, is there anything else that you would like to celebrate, or talk about, or anything else that has shifted for you that you would like to share?

Ann: Something that has surprised me since I joined The Flow Collective was that I catch myself in models or thinking thoughts and then I laugh about myself. Particularly if it's an unintentional model I'm in and there is this moment where I feel myself stepping back and looking at myself. And then I, sometimes I literally burst out laughing. I can't think of an example. Also that's again the self-awareness that I've gained.

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Maisie: Yes. I know exactly what you mean.

Ann: I catch myself.

Maisie: Yeah, I know exactly what you mean and for everyone listening who isn't a member, the model is the self-coaching framework that I teach in the membership and that we kind of use in all sorts of different ways. But I've done previous episodes about thought work and the kind of foundation of that. And it's basically that when you think a thought, you feel something, and then that results in you taking action or not taking action of some kind. And it is really interesting because we learn the art of watching ourselves and just observing ourselves.

And sometimes I think when we start off doing that, we're doing that in terms of thinking about something earlier on in the day or something that happened years ago. And kind of understanding how our thought patterns and things have influenced that and we kind of build awareness of a situation. But then like what you're describing, is you start to catch yourself in real time as it's happening. And I'm laughing because I have also had this experience of cracking up watching myself and going, "What the fuck is that about?"

You just catch your brain being really dramatic about something or leaping to a conclusion based on absolutely no evidence. So I know the experience that you're describing very well.

Ann: Yes. And I love that because that's an anecdote now from my early childhood. I have always been a really earnest child. I love learning. And I've always loved learning and so actually my elementary school teacher apparently when I got into school, I didn't laugh for half a year in school, I was just really intent on learning. My elementary school, the schoolteacher, she was really concerned, and she called my parents and asked if something was wrong with me or if I would laugh because I was just so stoic and earnest.

But then I think something, she tripped over a trashcan or something and that cracked me up so much. And I was sitting there, and she went. "No,

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okay, she's fine. She can laugh." And I catch myself in situations because I still get really intent, and earnest, and focused, and it's in times like these where I get really stoic when I step back and then watch myself and that cracks me up.

Maisie: Yeah. Just for me just in my life and I think just how I go about working with you all is I do really think it's important to be able to laugh at ourselves. And our brains just offer us such nonsense a lot of the time. And being able to recognise that, whether it's through humour, or some other way is just so helpful. And very relieving, that's my experience of it as well. And it can be whether there's something amusing there or even things like intrusive thoughts and things of that nature, I can just be like, "That's just my brain misfiring and coming up with something."

And you just think, whatever mechanisms work for us that we can use to not always believe our thoughts.

Ann: Yeah, I get curious about why did my brain go there. That's usually a really good first step, if I catch myself thinking, or reacting, or I catch myself in a nervous system reaction, not always but often now I can stop myself and get curious about, why is that happening now?

Maisie: No, I love that because for me I really think that curiosity is such a great antidote to defensiveness, and self-judgment, and things of that kind. And especially from a nervous system point of view. Because curiosity brings us back and/or is more available to us when we're in a regulated state. And that becomes an option, so we can also use it as a way back in.

I was thinking about if, for example, Paul and I were having a disagreement of some kind and I noticed defensiveness coming up in my body, if I can just bring in curiosity and be like, "Why are you saying that? Tell me more about that." It's like an instant balm on the situation and brings or maintains the connection between us because it's just, yeah, curiosity and it's fantastic.

Ann: Yeah, I love it too.

Ep #97: Finding Joy with Flow Collective Member Ann

Maisie: So we've got two months left of the year. How are you going to be working with joy, have you thought about the rest of your year?

Ann: Yeah, I try to find it in the everyday. I love fall, or autumn is my favourite season, I love, I think it's because I was born in November. Everybody beats down autumn and says, "Not my favourite time of the year." But it is, it's my absolute favourite. I love the leaves changing, so that's a lot of joy for me. I play music.

I'm in an orchestra that has some projects lined up which is something I always, that's always, I sit down and play in community with all the other musicians and it's perfect for me especially this time of year. And I'm pretty sure I can come up with tons of other things.

Maisie: I really admire you for picking that for your word. And I think it's really quite remarkable and I know you said, it came to you, and I think sometimes things can come to us and we can argue with them and find reasons not to. And I think or I suspect that took tremendous courage to go with that as your word for the year. Because you could have just easily gone, "Oh, no, that was just," you could have just thought, that's just a thought. I'm not going to go with that, don't be ridiculous.

But you didn't, you went with it for your word for the year knowing the things that you had planned in terms of fertility cycles and things. And I really admire you for that.

Ann: Thank you.

Maisie: Anything else you want to add before we finish up?

Ann: A lot of things, there's just so much happening every day, but I can't think of anything. I love the community. It's such a safe space and I love the compassion, and the kindness, and the love that is spread there. Our weekly wins thread and the Selfcare Sunday, that's my favourite, those are two of my favourite things that I enjoy. It's so inspiring to read all the wins of the other members or what they're focusing on in the next week, so yeah.

Ep #97: Finding Joy with Flow Collective Member Ann

Maisie: It is, I'm always getting ideas when I read through them all. I'm like, "That's a good one. I'm going to take that one."

Ann: Yeah. And it's also, it's such a good training because there's always someone who picks something 'better.' And then you read it and it's like, oh, man, that is so wise, or that is so cool. I wish I had come up with that but it's such a good place to practice everything that we do.

Maisie: Yes, exactly. That's my sense of it and also my intention as well, so I love that that's what your experience of it is. Well, we love having you. I'm so glad that you joined and also just so grateful for you coming on the podcast today to talk about your experience because there's going to be so many people who are listening to this who have gone through fertility challenges themselves. Or are currently in the midst of it or may at some point in their future as well. And like you said, we don't talk about this kind of stuff enough, so thank you for coming on and talking about it.

Ann: Thank you for having me and giving me the opportunity to share my story.

Maisie: Thank you, Ann. Okay, everyone, we will be back next with another episode, I'll catch you later.

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.