

46. Asking Questions



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With Your Host

Maisie Hill

Period Power with Maisie Hill

46. Asking Questions

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 and welcome to episode 46 of the *Period Power* podcast. This is going to be a cracker of an episode. But before we get into it, I want to remind you that today is the last day that you can join The Flow Collective for this enrolment period which is also the last one for this year. You can get all the details and sign up using the link that's in the show notes, or you can head to my Instagram profile, or go to maisiehill.com and click on The Flow Collective tab.

The Flow Collective is my monthly membership where I teach and coach on things to do with your menstrual cycle and to do with your life. Because as you've heard me say before, your cycle impacts your life and everything in your life shows up in your cycle. So, we cover both. And if you like what I share with you on the podcast, then you're going to love what we do inside The Flow Collective. We have webinars, group coaching calls and the most incredible community. And we'd love for you to come and join us.

So, if you're listening to this after Wednesday though, then the doors have already closed. But you can get on the waitlist for next year. Okay, let's do this. I'm all fired up for this today, not least because I've just gone on a bit of a fly killing spree. There are these flies in my studio, a bit of behind-the-scenes info for you. I don't know where they're coming from, but they seem to be breeding, so every time I do a recording, I have to chase them around and get them.

Anyway, I've got rid of the flies, and I'm ready to talk to you about asking questions, specifically the difference between low value questions and high value questions. This is a topic that's been on my mind quite a lot recently

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because I've been working on a new guide for the new members when you join The Flow Collective that you'll get, an orientation guide. And it's also for the existing members. All really just to help you succeed and get the most out of being in our community.

But as well as considering it from that angle, I've also been thinking about the various successes that I've had in my life and why. And I've realised that I ask myself a lot of questions. But I mean that in that I ask myself a lot of questions in a helpful way. They're constructive, they're purposeful questions, not unhelpful ones where I'm just questioning myself and never getting anywhere.

And I'm also willing to be asked questions. Like when I'm getting coached, I'm willing to sit with a question and answer it honestly even if my brain's freaking out about what I want to say or what I don't want to say, to be more correct. And sometimes there's an answer there immediately. Sometimes it can take me weeks to really answer a question that someone has asked me. And it's so valuable to take any coaching that you receive and to keep exploring it, to keep returning to it and taking it deeper.

But I've had coaching that only lasted three minutes, where I was asked one question that would have had an immediate impact on me. But which I then took and reflected on for three whole months to get even more from it. So, I think that has contributed to my successes. And I also know how to ask others great questions in order to get a high-quality response. So, I do this as a coach, I ask great questions in a skilful way so that my clients can explore things in their own brain and figure things out in a way that isn't available when we do these things on our own.

So how I coach and who I am as a coach has certainly helped me to succeed as well. But what I mean for the purposes of this conversation is that I know how to ask high value questions that elicit a high value response either when I'm asking myself these questions or when, if I'm doing some self-reflection. But also, when I'm asking someone else for

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their input or for their coaching because asking questions is great. I love it when people ask questions.

And our community is one where we really encourage them. But taking the time to ask a high value question will result in a higher value answer from yourself and from others. Because some questions are low value and others are high value. Note that they're still valuable, all questions are valuable. But there's just a difference and I'm going to show you the difference between them and why it's important as well as giving you some examples just to help illustrate the difference and why it matters so much.

Now sometimes when we ask a question, we're looking for suggestions and that's what's most useful to us when that is the case. Like if you want to find period underwear that's size inclusive, or if you want some new breakfast ideas that are protein rich, or if you want a personal recommendation for a healthcare practitioner in the area that you live. Then having a group of people that you can ask is fantastic and it's helpful.

We recently had a thread in our community about supporting a loved one during the grieving process. And there were lots of really great practical suggestions that we all found really helpful to read about. We've also had members in certain cities ask for recommendations of acupuncturists and gynaecologists. And it's great to have a room of people who are all clued into this kind of thing so that you can ask them. So, there's a time when asking questions like this, which is when you're crowd sourcing, is useful.

And I will also say that questions that are versions of, what would you do in this situation, or have you ever gone through this, can be helpful. If something you're trying to make headway with, which is I would say usually only available to those who are in the know and those who hold privilege and access to certain resources. Then there are times when having someone walk you through something which you have zero clue about is most useful.

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That being said, here's the big but. Questions that are along the lines of, well, what do you think about this, or has anyone else experienced this? They are what I would call low value questions. So low value questions are ones which have the following qualities to them. They aren't specific enough to get the quality of answer that you want. Low quality questions will get low quality answers. It's just like going into a Facebook group and asking for recommendations of builders versus looking for builders who specialise in loft conversions.

Or if you're looking for a great hair stylist, again, very vague. There's lots of hair stylists out there. But you're going to get responses from all sorts of people. But if you ask for hairdressers who specialise in a particular way of colouring, or afro, or curly hair you will get a higher value response that's more useful to you. We're going to take this a lot deeper today but these examples will start to give you a sense of what I'm talking about here.

Low value questions also position others as the expert because you're valuing other people's thoughts more than your own. When you ask questions like what do you think or what would you do, is because you're valuing their brain more than you value your own. Low value questions also have a vibe about them where you're asking others to decide something for you. In that moment you're handing over responsibility to someone else, asking them to take responsibility for your life.

And I spoke about this in episode 35 which was the one about not taking responsibility. And low value questions also increase the value in someone else's brain rather than increasing the value of yours because you're asking them to figure it out for you which also means that you're asking others to over-function for you. It's like, I'm sure you've had this experience when, so you see someone asking a question on Facebook that they could have put into Google.

Or we've all done this, I will say, but if you've had a friend who's texted you and they're assuming that you're going to Google things for them. And like I said, we've all had those friends and we've probably all been that friend as

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well. I've definitely asked friends things that I could have Googled. I don't anymore, but I used to. And ultimately low value questions are ones that don't help you to build trust in yourself, trust in your own opinions and decisions. So low valued questions aren't just low value, they're also costly. They cost you something.

So, I came up with a specific example to illustrate this. Are you ready? Think about if you were in a situation where you were considering the likelihood of being promoted and you went to your team leader or boss and asked them, "Do you think I should apply for this promotion?" This isn't specific enough to be helpful and I'm going to show you why in a moment. It also positions them as the expert above you. And within that you're likely also asking them to decide on some level. "You tell me what you think I should do because you know more than me."

And it's not the question you would ask if you were trusting yourself. Now, if you can't quite get your head around that let me show you the difference by comparing it to a high value question. Because a high value question does the opposite. It's specific. It's one where you value your opinion and ability to make decisions. It's one where you've already explored the topic yourself in some way. And it's useful to you and it provides others with a way to give high quality feedback, a high-quality response.

So back to our promotion example, instead of asking, "Do you think I should apply for a promotion?" Let's say you ask this instead: "I'm going to apply for this role in 6 months' time. These are the things that I have identified as areas of growth for me that would strategically position me in line for a promotion. What are your thoughts? Is there anything that you can see that would hinder or progress my application?" Can you see the difference between them?

You're still asking for feedback but it's specific. You're valuing your opinion. You've already come to a decision and you're bringing that to your team leader. You're also not explaining, or defending yourself, or anything like that. That's a conversation we will have in depth another time here on the

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podcast. It also helps the other person to contribute and add to your thoughts with a high value response. It meets all of the criteria of being a high value question. And it increases your resourcefulness and trust in yourself. Can you see why this matters so much?

We often look to others for opinions, and even ask them to basically decide something for us because we're worried about failing somehow. And we want to get things right and to avoid any kind of failure, or discomfort, or rejection. So, we look to others, but all this does is it just erodes your trust in yourself, and it can also damage your relationship with others. Because if you delegate responsibility to them and you do what they suggest then you'll just blame their advice when things go wrong, if they go wrong, rather than being 100% responsible for yourself.

So, to begin asking higher valued questions I recommend training your brain to ask the question that's underneath the initial question. And the way to do this is to ask why you're asking it in the first place. And to be really honest with yourself.

So, an initial question that you might want to ask a group of people could be, "Is anyone taking this medication for PMDD?" Which is Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder. This is an example of a low valued question. It's an understandable question to ask. So, if you've asked questions like this, there's no need to jump to any judgment or shame that you did because we've all done it. But it's not the most useful question to ask.

For a start it will only be answered by the people who have used that particular medication for PMDD. Which in our community, there's a strong chance that at least one other people will respond, which is great. But how they respond may or may not be relevant to you in terms of they might not answer in a way that responds to what your real concern is. Because your key concern wasn't clear to them when they read your question and answered it.

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And how they got on with the medication may have zero relevance to your potential experience on that medication. And often what questions like this do is confuse matters even further. Now, that's not to say that getting a sense of how a drug might impact you isn't valuable, but a question like this is usually asking something else.

We can find a higher value question by asking why. "Why are you asking this? Is it because you're concerned about side effects? Or is it because you're feeling disappointed or unsure about taking it for some reason? Are you looking for permission from others? Or are you worried about what people will think of you if you use the medication?" Which by the way, is really your thoughts about you but do you see what I mean? So, there could be all sorts of questions underlying that initial question, and this is how you'll find it. This is how you'll find the higher value question to ask.

So, the question that's lurking beneath, "Has anyone used this medication?" Might be, "My doctor has recommended this medication. I'm concerned about the side effects they mentioned. Here are my thoughts about it all. And this is where I've landed. Is there anything I haven't considered here?" This is a high value question. For a start, more people will respond, including me, because what you're asking for is coaching on your thoughts about this decision.

And just remember, coaching isn't about giving advice or telling someone what to do. And we don't give medical advice in The Flow Collective anyway. But a lot of our members do make decisions about their healthcare using the processes that I teach. And that includes opting for medication and surgery.

It's also easier to respond and to offer coaching to a post like this because you're sharing context and providing avenues that we can explore. And because you've done some work on it yourself, just through the process of posting, we can take things deeper. So, it's a high value question because it's asked in a way where more people can respond. It's also specific, it gets to the point of what the person asking really wants to know, the side-

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effect in this example. And they're sharing where their brain is at with it all which gives multiple opportunities to coach them, but the value goes beyond that.

So, when you answer your own question first and do some thought work, which is what I teach you how to do in The Flow Collective, you become more resourceful, and you build trust in yourself. If you ask low value questions, and specifically if you ask me questions, all you do is make my brain more resourceful and you keep doubting yourself, which goes against all the work that I do because you know your life better than I do. You are the expert in your life. You also know yourself better than I do.

Now, as your coach there are things that I see, like when you post in the community, and you share your thought work. I can usually see a few areas where I can coach you. Or if I'm coaching you live on one of the calls, I'll ask you questions so that you can see, and explore, and understand things in a way that's hard to do on your own.

But those of you in The Flow Collective will know that I rarely give advice. I share all sorts of helpful teachings, and tips, and strategies with you when we're on our webinars and when we're doing workshops. But when I'm coaching you, it's rare for me to weigh in and offer a suggestion of what you could do because it's more valuable to the person getting coached and everyone else on the call for your brain to figure things out.

And sometimes examples can help bring things to life and they can get you going with your own ideas. And this is where having a community of people is so helpful. But I never want to create a situation where people are reliant on me. It's not healthy. It's not helpful. And besides, I wrote two massive books and I've created a whole load of content in the membership for you that you can access and here on the podcast.

Those suggestions are already there, which means on our calls. And in the community, I can coach you on the application of them, and on the real-life issues that get in the way of you caring for yourself, that get in the way of

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you reaching your goals and that get in the way of you building the life that you want to have.

High value questions are also respectful of people's time, yours and theirs. And I had this the other day with my brother. So, I went to ask him a question about home improvements that we're planning on doing. And I typed a text out that was a very basic question. But I caught myself and I changed it so that it had context. And I shared my understanding of the situation and the conclusion that I had come to.

So, it wasn't just one question. It was just three short paragraphs in one text. But that meant that he could give me a helpful answer that included the stuff that I hadn't considered because he's the expert when it comes to these things. And if I hadn't done that, what would have happened if we'd have gone back and forth, trying to get to the bottom of what I was really asking? And I'd have been asking him to do the stuff that was mine to figure out, and it would have taken up time, both of our time.

So instead, I sent one text and he replied. And it was so valuable to me because he drew attention to something that I hadn't considered. And in the process, I got to increase my trust in myself that I know how to approach home improvements. Instead of being, "Oh, Sam, please help me with this. I'm so overwhelmed and I just don't know what to do. And tell me everything that you know about this." That would have taken up so much of his time and not been helpful to me.

So instead of that I got to be, here's what I'm thinking. Here's my solution. Is there anything I've missed or need to reconsider? Which is so much more powerful. And after all of that you might be thinking, well, what's the point in asking if I've already answered it for myself. And that, not to get too meta, is a great question to ask yourself. What would be the point? I will share why I think it's valuable. But this is an opportunity for you to ask yourself and find an answer. Why is it valuable for you to share your thoughts and any decision you've made?

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Have you come up with an answer? Here's mine. It is the process of doing this that leads to answers. I can't tell you how many times we have had members submit requests for coaching or they post using the format that I've shared here in our community. And through doing that they figure it out for themselves through the process of posting or submitting a coaching request. That's why it's so valuable to do this. You develop the skill of answering your own questions, of being resourceful and trusting your opinion and your decisions more than those of others.

And then any comments, any feedback, any coaching that you then receive is more valuable to you because you've already worked on that first layer or two just through the simple act of posting. And that's what we see happening on our calls as well. People submit a coaching request, they go through this, they type it out for themselves. And then when they come on the call, they're ready to take that deeper.

And then the other benefit of course that in sharing with the group, everyone else gets to benefit from that coaching. And they will have their own realisations too. And this is why I love group coaching more than one-on-one, because you get to experience coaching that you wouldn't have otherwise received via everyone else in the group.

We hear this feedback all the time from our members. They come off a call, and they jump into the community, thanking another member for getting coached on a particular topic because it helped them so much. But it wasn't something that they would have ever thought to bring to coaching but they got so much value out of it.

Okay, I told you today was going to be a whopper. This has been a really fun one for me to reflect on and prepare for. And I hope you found it valuable to listen to. And if you're onboard with what I've been talking about today, then you're going to be into how we roll inside The Flow Collective, this is what it's all about. And the doors close today. So, if you're listening to this after the day this episode airs, just get on the waitlist via my website

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or the link in the show notes and we'll let you know next time they open, which will be in 2022.

Alright folks, 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 for more.