

55. Setting Intentions



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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 folks. I am recording this on December 20th, this is one of my favourite times of year, not because of Christmas, even though it's later on this week but because of the solstice. So the winter solstice is tomorrow, December 21st. It is the shortest day of the year and the darkest day. And at the same time it is the day that light comes back in. We'll start to get more light. The days will start to lengthen even though it might not feel like it for another couple of months.

But to me it's just such a special day because it's like it's the end and the beginning all at the same time. In the same way that the end of your cycle is also the start of the one that follows it. And it's a time when I like to go inward and reflect on things, which I think a lot of us do kind of naturally at this time of year anyway.

But there's just something about this seasonal change, this moment of transformation that helps me to go deeper within and to check where I am in alignment with myself, and my values, my calling, my goals and where I'm out of alignment with them. Where have I strayed off the path and why? And of course where I am in my cycle influences this. So currently it's day eight for me.

And that means I kind of need to be a bit more intentional about creating a space in my mind and physically to kind of foster the quietness and the stillness that enables me to answer these questions. Just as I'm reflecting on seeing where I'm in alignment with things, what my vision is, kind of what's getting in the way of that. At this time in my cycle I just want to be out in the world doing things. But in order to answer these questions I need

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to kind of create an environment in my mind and physically where I can really reflect on those things.

Whereas if I was feeling premenstrual or it's around the time my period is due then those answers will probably be a bit more accessible to me because my experience of the cycle, there's often a tenderness and an exposing quality when I am feeling premenstrual, and my period is about to start. And when that's going on it means I can go deep within very easily.

But because I'm in the run up to ovulation the benefit of that is that I'm able to dream really big and consider what I want to create for the year ahead to really align my goals with what's important to me. And to find the ways that I'm holding myself back. And although the solstice is a powerful day to do this on, I think the vibe of it extends before and after it. So I started reflecting on this last week. And when this episode comes out it will still be a really valuable time to just take some time for yourself, to reflect on things, to decide on some stuff and to plan ahead.

So I encourage you to do that. And this all relates to today's topic. So a few weeks ago I was planning out some episodes for the podcast and thinking about this time of year, what would be most useful for you to hear, and I started preparing this episode. I was like, the notes I'm taking feel very familiar. And then I realised that I was basically preparing the same episode that I did for episode 3, which came out this time last year. And my brain just immediately went to how you need to hear the same thing again. The message hasn't changed. It's still the same thing.

It's still just as important perhaps this year more than ever. So today we are going back to one of the most popular episodes of the podcast, living with intention. But what I've done is add an update for you at the end of it. This is a really powerful episode, a really powerful practice for you all to be doing. And what's happened is throughout the year is people have discovered the podcast, people still head over to that original Instagram post all the way back from January and they leave a comment.

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So what I'm going to do is start a new post for this episode and you can all head to that and let me know your word for 2022. Okay, so enjoy the episode and I will be back with an update at the end.

I have had the last week off just hanging out with my partner and our son, which probably sounds more idyllic than it's actually been. I mean don't get me wrong, it's great to have had this time together and we've had some lovely times going for walks and watching movies together. But please don't create a picture-perfect version of my life in your head and use that against whatever your reality is because we're so prone to doing that, the whole compare and despair thing.

And so many of you tell me over Instagram that it's such a relief for you to hear that I have challenges in my life. And I totally get that because let's be real, what we see on our feed is totally curated which is why I always like to keep it real with you by being transparent. My family is amazing, I love them to bits, but life is always 50/50. Half the time it's great, half the time it's not. And that's just how life goes, including mine.

One of the things I have really loved these past few weeks is that my partner and I have been watching *The West Wing*. We've actually been rewatching it and I really love *The West Wing*. The characters and the actors who play them are so on point. And the humour is really quick, and I find it really interesting and highly engaging. But although I've watched most of the episodes several times, I haven't watched all of the final season yet, so, I have that to look forward to.

And of course, New Year's is around the corner. I have to admit that I have never really been into New Year's celebrations. My experience of going out on New Year's Eve is queuing for a long time to get into a venue. Queuing up a long time at the bar. Spending a lot of money. Having an average time. There's so much hype about it and it never lives up to that in my experience. And then struggling to get home not because of inebriation,

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well, sometimes because of inebriation, but often because it's just hard to get transport to get home on New Year's Eve.

But when I think about it. I think I stopped bothering with New Year's Eve when I started working as a birth doula because I'd often be on call over Christmas and New Year's, which meant that staying up late was a no, no. And definitely being somewhere without a reliable and quick way of getting to a client in labour in the middle of the night was an even bigger no, no. So it's been a while since I went out and partied. I'd maybe do it this year just because it's been the year it's been.

But my favourite New Year's Eve memory is the day that my partner and I got together. And I also proposed to him on New Year's Day two years ago. We haven't got around to getting married yet though, mainly because I keep writing books, but we will get there. Now, although I'm usually asleep by 10:30 on New Year's Eve, I stopped drinking alcohol two years ago as well. So staying in and staying up late really just isn't appealing to me because one, I'd be sober, two, tired at that point.

And I also have a boisterous four-year-old who wakes up very early and sometimes in the night. But I do love New Year's because of the whole starting off fresh. And I think collectively we're ready to leave this year behind us. So, on New Year's Day I love going for a walk with my family. Where we live is a five-minute walk to the beach. I can actually see the sea from my office, a tiny part of it at least. And there's this amazing tidal pool that lots of our friends all jump in on New Year's Day. And many of them actually do it all year round.

My good friend Natalie goes in without a wetsuit. And bear in mind that today it's degrees Celsius, which is 36 Fahrenheit. I lived in New York for a while, so I used to have to do this calculation a lot. And it's one of those ones that's easier with lower temperatures but anyway, you don't need to know the math, it's not my strong point.

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So, let's move swiftly on to talking about New Year's resolutions and how they relate to your cycle. I'm not really a fan of New Year's resolutions. So, this isn't a podcast where I'm going to be encouraging you to make them. There are several reasons why I think this way about them, which I'm going to share with you. But there's also a practice that I use instead of making resolutions, which I'm also going to share with you. And this is a practice that I like to do at the start of every calendar year. But it's also a practice that I like to do at the start of every cycle.

So, today we're talking about something that you can be doing today and over the next week in consideration of the year ahead. I don't recommend letting it drag on any longer than that. But it's also something that I want to invite you to do at the start of every cycle.

Okay, let's start with why I'm not into resolutions. Resolutions are often set from a place of not good enough-ness. Like if we can 'just' run three times a week or quit sugar, or whatever your particular resolution might be, then we'll be better somehow. And here we absolutely have to question what better is. Because usually we don't stop to qualify what we mean by better and can be misguided in believing that life will be daisies and rainbows if we can just do the thing that we've decided we should do in order to be better.

Again, I'm not saying that you would be better but that's often how we think about it. And I also really recommend questioning the whole being 'better' side of things. Because if you're thinking that by doing X or Y that you will be better, then by inference you're saying that you're not perfect exactly as you are. And you are perfect exactly as you are. Okay, I'm going to return to this theme in a moment.

But I also want to point out whilst we're here that if you're in the northern hemisphere like me then we are in the lean months, the dark months. And in the same way I don't think the start of your period is the time to go wild with an intense plan of action, I don't think the start of the year is either. However, all you folks in the southern hemisphere, it's your summer. So

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feel free to go wild should you feel up to it at the moment, but you may not. And it's fine if you're not.

But I do think that the start of the year and the start of the cycle is a perfect time to set an intention. The start of the cycle is a great time to reflect on what's been and what's coming up and to come up with an intention. This might sound a bit vague and woo woo. I promise you it's not. This is about deciding something for yourself and your life on purpose, so stick with me. This is a really powerful practice and it's really easy. It doesn't take long and it's something you can do for the new year and, as I said, you can do at the start of every cycle. Here's how you want to do it.

Just think about how you want to feel. That's literally it. I told you it was simple. Feelings are important because they're what drive our behaviour. An example of this is if you feel accomplished as you head into a work interview then you're going to show up very differently than if you're feeling unsure or doubtful. So, what I want you to do, if you want to, is to come up with one word that you would like to feel more of in 2021 or in the menstrual cycle you're currently in.

And when I say feeling I just mean one word that describes an emotion such as connected, inspired, secure, playful, strong, fun, fearless, resilient, courageous, anything along those lines. Essentially, you're picking an emotion that you want to experience more of. And there's probably several that you want more of, if so, congratulations you're human. But you get far better results by constraining to one. The good news is that you're going to have other cycles and other years where you can focus on other feelings. So there's really no need to try and cram it all in.

So, now you have your feeling. And there will be a link to a PDF with a list of feelings in the show notes in case you're having trouble coming up with one and you want some inspiration. But once you have your feeling, you're going to think about all the ways in which you can experience more of this feeling. How you can bring this feeling into your life in a more intentional way.

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I'm going to pick the example of feeling connected, which is something that I wanted to experience more of earlier on in 2020. And given that humans are social mammals, and we tend to hang out in groups, and that 2020 has been a year where we haven't been able to have the kinds of interaction that we're used to. I'm going to hazard a guess that many of you would like to feel more connected.

So, what does feeling connected look like practically? Well, when I'm working, I'll feel connected to you. Chances are we've never met but I spend a lot of time thinking about you and the problems I imagine you have, and then problem solving for them. So, I work best when I'm feeling connected to you. And I do that through the thoughts that I'm thinking. If I want to feel connected then I need to think thoughts that create a feeling of connection because how we think generates how we feel.

Now, your brain might be a bit boggled by that concept so I'm going to give you an example of this because you can feel connected without actually seeing someone. Even though, especially right now, you might prefer to see someone face-to-face and not through a screen. So many of you who have been following me for a while on Instagram will know that my mum died last year but even though she's dead I feel hugely connected to her. And I don't mean in a connecting with the other side kind of way. So, how is that possible?

Well, connection is something that we create inside ourselves and doesn't depend on others. I can feel connected to my mum just by thinking about her and deciding to feel connected to her. Wild, isn't it? In actual fact I think I feel more connected to her because I have these great conversations with her in my head where she answers in the way I want her to because now I'm in control of her responses to me, which just cracks me up and I think would crack her up too.

The same might be true for some of you. You might feel connected to me because you've read my book or you're listening to my podcast, but we've never met, well, probably most of you. You're feeling connected to me

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because you're thinking thoughts about me that create a feeling of connection. Our thoughts create our feelings. And I'm sure some of you are thinking other thoughts about me and they'll be creating other feelings.

But maybe there's someone else that you've never met but you feel connected to because of something they've shared publicly or because you like their sense of humour. I like Allison Janney's character C J Cregg in *The West Wing*. I think if she and I were to hang out we would have an absolute blast together. And because of how I'm thinking about her character I experience a feeling of connection to her, but she has no idea who I am and she's also a fictional character.

Now, If I'm feeling connected to you and to my work when I'm working, here's what I won't be doing. I won't be scrolling on my phone, and I won't be procrastinating. And this is the cycle of how our thoughts create our feelings, which in turn impact on the things that we do and don't do. Back when I was focused on feeling connected, this impacted my body too. I was more connected to my need for food, drink, rest, and movement.

When you're connected to your body, then you'll be in tune with your physical needs and more likely to honour them. And this goes for your cycle too, which is why this is such a powerful practice. And then in my romantic relationship if I'm feeling connected, I'm more likely to be having ongoing communication with my boyfriend. There's more space for emotional and physical intimacy. And when it comes to parenting if I'm feeling connected, I'll be actually present with my son and not just with him physically whilst I think about my work or whatever else is on my mind.

So you can see how deciding to feel a certain way can really impact things. You can use your word as a way to prioritise your diary. It can act as a really effective filter for making decisions in your life. When I wanted to feel more connected I was more boundaried with my time, took care to leave my work at work, arranged dates with my partner, and was basically proactive in creating ways to connect with people and projects in my life. I

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also said no to a lot of things that would result in less connection. So, this is what I mean when I say that it can act as an effective filter.

And I love this way of working with the cycle because it really focuses your attention on feeling the way that you want to feel more of the time and working with your cycle in a way that allows you to create things on purpose and use your cycle to get what you want out of life. So I told you it was simple. It's really powerful, And I've been working with this concept really intentionally for the last 18 months or so and it's changed so much in my life which is why I've been really excited to share it with you all today.

But I do have a caveat for you. When you're coming up with your word you don't want to come up with this from a place of internal criticism, which is what we often do. For example, let's say that I want to feel organised, which is likely to be music to many people's ears, my partner, my assistant, my publishers, my agent, if any of you are listening. I know that this is something that you long for. And I also aspire to be organised too. But here's why picking organised as a word could be not so great for me.

Let's say I want to feel organised, but I come to that because I'm feeling shame. Maybe I've done a bit too much and I'm feeling dysregulated. There's a thing called autistic shutdown and autistic burnout that I've experienced quite a lot of this year. But you don't have to be autistic to know what it's like to have done too much. So, maybe I'm feeling burnt out and the best way to care for myself is to go off radar for a few days. To switch off and not talk as much as I can get away with. Then I start to feel better and ready to kind of get back into work.

And so I start tiptoeing my way back into work, but I notice that there's a couple of emails in my inbox from people chasing me for things. Very nice and entirely reasonable emails by the way. Now, if I'm not keeping an eye on my thoughts, I could think things along the lines of I'm not organised enough. I should be more on top of things. Other people are more organised than me. Other people don't have this problem. Notice how

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quickly this basically becomes that I have a problem, or if we go a step further, that I am a problem.

Thoughts like this can create a range of feelings and the big one for me is shame. Now, this is not the place to come up with an intention of being organised because it's originating in shame. Another way to think of this is that it's coming from lack. That I'm not good enough and that if only I could behave differently then I would be good enough. This line of thinking, particularly the idea that someone can be good or bad is not helpful.

It would be very different if I'd done some thought work, which basically means having awareness of my thoughts, exploring them and deciding if they're helpful or not. Like, do I want to keep thinking this way or think about things in a different more helpful way?

The image I have when I think about thought work and when I think about having an unmanaged mind versus a managed one is of a wild horse versus one with a rider. And as I'm saying this, I have a sense that I'm about to butcher a lesson that comes from Daoism or some kind of eastern philosophy. But let's just roll with it because I think it will help you to understand this and that's what I ultimately want. So, forgive me if I'm butchering it.

So, the unmanaged mind is a wild horse who just goes where it wants to. Versus the managed mind is like a horse with a rider who is directing the horse where to go on purpose. So, let's say I've done some thought work, I've explored my thoughts. I've managed my own mind instead of just letting my thoughts run the show unsupervised. I've cleaned up my thoughts that were causing me to judge myself and feel shame and probably anxiety and other things too.

If I then decided I want to feel organised, that would be very different because I'd be deciding that from a place of sufficiency instead of not enough-ness. Do you see the difference? And this is what I spend a lot of

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time coaching my clients on, making decisions that come from sufficiency, self-love, and compassion towards yourself.

To get back to what I was saying earlier, so often we come up with resolutions because we're judging ourselves, critiquing our bodies and our lives. And I want to encourage you to not do this. Instead, the starting point of this process is knowing that you're a fantastic human being, that you are perfect exactly as you are. From that place you decide what you want to feel more of.

So, what do you want to feel more of? If you're struggling to come up with a word then check out the link in the show notes for this episode because I've put a list of feelings together for you. This is something you can use now to come up with a word for 2021, and at the start of each menstrual cycle. I'm telling you it makes such a difference. So simple, so powerful.

And I usually, I like to pick a word by the end of day three because my experience of my cycle is that after that point my brain is just already off on one. So, I know that I need to pick something to focus on before that happens so that I can have that focus throughout the cycle and to really be prioritising things.

My word for 2020 was 'uncomfortable', which might sound like an odd choice. But I picked uncomfortable because what I really wanted was to grow this year. And I knew that the key to that kind of growth lied in my willingness to feel uncomfortable. And I have felt uncomfortable a lot this year, maybe not as much as I could have. But I don't know, it's weird because when you're willing to be uncomfortable things happen quite quickly and you also adjust and get used to them quite quickly.

So, I'm maybe glossing over some of my own achievements with my ability to be uncomfortable here. But this has been a year that I've stretched myself very much on purpose and that has come from deciding to feel uncomfortable. It was easy for me to pick 'uncomfortable', but I found it a bit harder to pick my word for 2021. It was close between fun and ease for

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a while, because I tend to like picking the hard way in life, going for the growth, going for the hardest things.

But what I have ended up landing on is effective. I want to be effective this year. And what a great way to start off being effective with my work in the world and by launching my podcast.

Once you've picked your word for the year, or for your cycle, I would love it if you would just head over to Instagram, my handle is [_maisiehill_](#) and find the post that relates to this podcast episode and let me know what word you've picked. I'm really curious to see what you decide you want to feel more of, either for this year or for your cycle. So, I will see you over on Instagram.

Okay, so how was that to go over that again? Or maybe it was your first time. So I'm going to give you an update now but what I want to remind you is that we have put a link to the list of feelings that are going to help inspire you as you're picking your word for the year. And we'll put the post up on my Instagram today so that you can let me know what your word is. But you can get the link to the list of feelings just by heading to the show notes or the page on my website for this episode.

So my handle on Instagram is [@_maisiehill_](#) and I really love to read these, so I'll see you over there. Now, my word for 2021 was 'effective'. And what I did throughout the year was reflect on that word and how I was working with it. So really the way I did this was at the end of each quarter I'd think about how and where I was being effective and where and how I wasn't being effective as well as kind of looking ahead to the next quarter. And you can think about this in terms of seasons too which is how I'm going to do it this year.

So instead of the typical quarter one dates, January 1st to March 31st, I'm going to go with December 21st to March 20th which is the first day of spring. Now, my word for 2022 came to me last week as I was walking

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around my home. It just popped into my head, and I felt my whole body respond to it. So that's one way to arrive at your word. And another way is to decide what's important for you and what would be an area of growth for you and to then think about it in a way that generates the emotions that you need in order to really go with it.

So this year 2021, when I picked effective, that was a very cognitive decision because I knew that there would be significant growth for me in working with that word. And how I knew that is that I felt very resistant to it. And I felt resistant because I was thinking that it would be hard work which is fascinating because it reveals a belief that being effective requires a lot of effort and that isn't true. And that's kind of what I discovered with it as I worked with it as a word.

So as 2021 went by there was quite a difference between the first half and the second half of the year. And as I was preparing my notes for today this just became really clear to me which is very cool. But in the first half of the year I was believing that being effective meant me doing a lot of things and putting a lot of effort in. So I put a lot of effort in, and I went into full on creation mode because I was thinking about how that's the most effective way for me to help you.

And there was truth in that because what I did was create loads of stuff for the podcast and I created and delivered Harness Your Hormones which is the programme you get when you sign up to The Flow Collective. Because I was spending a lot of time thinking about what's the most effective way that I can help my clients to improve their cycles and their lives. And of course the podcast is also a very effective way of me helping a lot of people and the same with the webinars inside The Flow Collective.

So I was really focused on that and that was fantastic, and very useful, and very effective. But I had some shifts over the summer, and I started to see that at times I was conflating being effective with effort or effort-ing. And actually sometimes what's most effective requires the least effort. So I had to start watching for where my brain wants to go to the hardest thing

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because I'm really good at getting things done and doing hard things. And I love putting in effort. So sometimes it's actually the hardest thing for me to do is what's easiest.

And once I started working with these realisations something started to shift in my self-concept as in how I view myself and what I see as being possible for me. So in the second half of the year I have been seeing how what's actually most effective is for me to do the stuff that only I can do and hire people to do the other stuff and to help me with all the other aspects of the work that I do.

So this is something that I've been actively and purposefully working on really hard since mid-December. And I'm going to talk more about that at some point. But I'm kind of in the middle of it right now where I am brushing up against some resistance to this. My brain is coming up with all the excuses as to why we shouldn't do this and that's okay. I'm just letting that be there and working with it.

So this takes me on to my word for 2022 which hit me recently which is expansion. And the dictionary definition of this is the act of being larger or more extensive. And its Latin roots mean to spread out. So the last few years I've done so much inner work. And I have also put a lot out into the world in that time but my thought there is that I'm only just getting started which is such a fun thought for me to have. I really love it as a thought to think on purpose because it just lights me up and energises me.

We've also been doing a lot of things behind the scenes in my business which I'll be able to share about soon but there's been a lot of inner work for me as a leader, as a business owner and as a human. And there's also been a lot of backend work in the business all of which means that I am ready for an expansion, the business is ready for expansion. We're ready for more and more people to join The Flow Collective and get help there. And I want to help as many of you as I can, whether it's through the podcast, my emails and social media, through The Flow Collective.

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I want to grow our community and expand the impact of my work. And I'm not mucking around. This is my legacy. And this year I want to step fully into that commitment by continuing to show up for the folks who want my help in the most expansive way that I can. But in order to do that I have to continue the work I've been doing these past few months of realising how, what was once effective is perhaps no longer, particularly when I have the vision of helping as many people as possible in mind.

So part of expansion is expanding my team and hiring more people in 2022. And that also requires me to expand my vision of myself. I also want to feel expansion in my body, more time outside, more weight training, bigger muscles and more expansion in my heart, more love. And I want to live an expansive life where I travel and connect with people, to go away with my family, meet friends.

I want to take a holiday in 2022, whether or not that will be possible or not we shall see. But I recently went to Paris for 24 hours for my birthday at the start of December to meet two friends that I'd never met in person before, and that was the first holiday I had taken in six years. So the last time Paul and I went away was to Marrakesh when I was six months pregnant so I'm ready for a holiday of course, COVID dependent. We will just have to see.

But I want to expand my mind to see what's really possible. All of us have brains that limit us, including mine. And I want to courageously face my limiting thoughts and blow right past them. Paul and I just watched a film on Netflix called 14 Peaks: Nothing is Impossible. If you haven't seen it I really recommend that you watch it. It's a story of Nims Purja who is a Nepalese mountain climber. And the film is all about his journey to do what everyone told him was impossible, to climb the 14 mountains of the world that are higher than 8,000 meters and to climb all of them in seven months.

And the film, it got me so fired up about my goals and thinking bigger, thinking about what is impossible and making it possible. And I think it was such a special film to watch for so many reasons but especially when there's so much focus right now on survival which that's important, it's right

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that we should be focused on that. But to watch a film and spend some time living in what's possible just felt such a gift. So if you haven't seen it, go watch it.

So, expansion is my word for 2022. I would love to know yours so come on over to Instagram and let me know and have a fantastic week. I'll be back next Wednesday.

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.