

Ep #68: Revisiting Failure



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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.

Hey everyone, welcome to the podcast. This week we are revisiting another previous episode. You might not have heard this one, it's all about failure. But even if you have heard it, I really recommend relistening to it. And there is a big reason why I'm bringing this one back out for everyone to listen to. Because in The Flow Collective we have just had our Spring Forwards event. It was just over the weekend, and we spent four hours together and it was incredible. I've been cricking this one up for a while.

And I am just so proud of myself. It was so much fun, so transformative. The feedback we've been receiving from the members has just blown my mind. And it was just such an amazing time. We did this whole experience really of a mixture of answering questions like journal prompts, coaching. I was teaching some different concepts in there. There was this really beautiful visualisation that I took them all on. And it was just an absolute blast. And it was basically kicking off our spring season in The Flow Collective.

So for the whole of the spring or for some of the members it's autumn because they're in the southern hemisphere. But basically this coming season we are focusing on how to succeed. And there are some key things that I'm going to be teaching the members and coaching them on. And one of those things is all about increasing our capacity for failure. This is such an important skill to develop. And be willing to feel uncomfortable with failure in order to feel more comfortable.

And I was sharing with one of the members because she had asked me a question about, well, when we're setting a goal for spring, can we set a

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goal that we have previously failed at? I was like, yes, you can definitely do that. And I was sharing with her how I have been working the same goal for a little over a year and so far, I have failed at it four or five times. I can't remember what it is. But basically there have been numerous occasions where I have failed with this goal.

And it has been so powerful for me to keep the same goal because typically what happens is we set a goal; we don't achieve the goal. And then we make it mean lots of things about us that we have failed at that goal attempt. And then we try and negotiate that goal. We drop it down a gear, make it less impactful in order to try and feel a bit better. And what I recommend doing is keeping the same goal like I have done. I have been working the same goal over and over, there have been multiple attempts.

And because I've kept the goal the same that's meant I have had to look at my brain. I have had to look at all of my thoughts that have come up about that goal, all the limiting beliefs that I have, all the unhelpful, most practiced thoughts I have been thinking for years. And I have along the way built this amazing relationship with myself where I can fail at something and not make it mean anything about me.

Where I can instead of getting swept up with lots of stories about myself and how I'm never going to meet this goal. I'm not someone who can do this. This is a goal that's for other people, it's not a goal that's for me. All of that kind of story that comes up, I've had to look at all of those things by keeping the same goal. I've had to look at those thoughts and address them. Why do I have these thoughts? What's going on here? Really understand those most practiced thoughts.

And then get to a place where instead of making failure mean lots about me, I'm just able to look at things in a much more factual way. And to evaluate the things that I've been doing, the things that I haven't been doing, I've been evaluating my mindset, my willingness to be uncomfortable along the way to achieving this particular goal. And because I've done that I have built the most fabulous relationship with myself.

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So I think there's a lot to be said for first of all, setting goals. And for being willing to keep working at a goal, to keep addressing all the stuff that comes up, all the discomfort, to be willing to feel uncomfortable. To be willing to fail your way there. Because I'm telling you, all of the failures are the key. They are so important. Because if I think about for example, if I'd have succeeded at my goal the first time round what I would have missed out on. And of course it would have been amazing to have just achieved that goal straight out of the gate, no problem.

Look, I'm just someone who achieves goals really quickly. I created this. I made it happen. There are times when I do that in my life but with this particular goal instead what happened is I failed on multiple occasions. And that's given me so much. The way I think about myself, the way I talk to myself is just so radically different to a year or so ago. It's not even a long period of time. This is quite recently. I'm a completely different person because I've loved myself through all of those failures and because of that I have increased my capacity for more.

I know all the work I've done over the last year or so around this is just setting me up for so much success that I know is just around the corner. That success is inevitable. So listen to today's episode about failure. This is basically kind of homework for everyone in The Flow Collective because we are going to be focusing on increasing your capacity and willingness to fail your way there.

And everyone else who's not in The Flow Collective, don't worry, you'll have a chance to sign up in a few months' time. But think about how you can use this in your own life and take what I've shared and apply it. And then just that means when you do come and join us that you're just able to get to work and put things into place even more quickly. So enjoy it and I'll catch you all next week.

It is so windy in Margate today. I don't know if you can hear the windows rattling. I had a big puffer coat on with a hood all tied very tightly. But the wind was so strong that I have sand down my back. It's so windy. And I

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was thinking as I was walking in the wind about how this is a time of year when the weather can really shift. And you might experience something similar internally too.

So pay attention to how you're feeling over the next few weeks as we officially make the transition in the northern hemisphere at least from winter into spring because sorry to be the bearer of bad news here. But this can be a bumpy time of year in my personal and professional experience. You might feel stuff coming to the surface and I know you're probably like, "More, why? Why do I have to deal with more stuff?" But I'm just telling you in case you're wondering what's going on with you.

And one reason for this is that the stuff that you've been hibernating with over the winter is now shifting and being released. And actually this kind of makes me want to be back in clinical practice as an acupuncturist because it would be interesting to see if this spring is any different to what it used to be like, what I used to observe in my practice. Because so much has come up to the surface in the last year and I wonder if that will change things.

When I was studying acupuncture in China the doctor I was apprenticing with explained how the pulse changes as we enter spring. And that's what I would see in my clients over the years as well.

So in case you've never had acupuncture before, when you see a practitioner as well as being asked an exhaustive list of questions. We also look at your tongue and take your pulse. We feel the rate at which your heart is beating but we also read your pulse in other ways. We feel for its quality. Does it feel full and surging? Does it feel empty or thin, like there's not much there? Does it feel tight or wiry, a bit like a guitar string?

And the doctor explained to me that in spring the seasonal change affects the pulse. And kind of across the board you would notice that most people's pulses become more wiry over the course of the weeks surrounding the spring equinox which is March 20th. And the point of me going off on a bit of a tangent is that you might be feeling a transition of

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sorts, maybe feeling a bit frustrated or like you want to get going with something but also feeling a bit stuck.

So just so you know, that's the thing in Chinese medicine. And that might kind of ring true for what you're experiencing right now or it might not, we can just see. That being said this is a great time of year to look at goals. I love the spring energy for that, the sense of what's possible, especially as we start to tentatively move out of this lockdown. It's getting lighter. The days are getting longer and I can really feel myself emerging from hibernation mode.

But when we create goals here's what happens. We have to contend with failure which is what I'm going to be speaking about today. And I picked this topic because in The Flow Collective this month we're talking about using the cycle to do big things in life. And some of the members have picked cycle based goals as in symptoms they want to improve. Some have gone with professional goals, some financial, some personal. But I had anticipated that some of them would resist this theme and not want to set a goal.

And I always like to put myself in their shoes as I prepare the content for each month and really think about how I can best deliver it. So I was thinking about goal hesitancy and why they might want to run away from this theme and you can also think about this for yourself as well. So we can say that not setting a goal, not wanting to set a goal is because we don't have enough time or that it's not the right time, that we don't have the energy for it. And if that's you then I would question all of those things. Are they actually true?

I have had to contend with all of these beliefs myself and they are almost always untrue. For a start there is no right time. And when I work on a goal it usually gives me a lot of energy rather than take it away. So that's a couple of examples of how those thoughts can be untrue. So once we question those initial thoughts then we can see what we're left with. And underneath all of that I'm going to imagine that the real reason that you

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would avoid setting a goal is fear of failure, and specifically how you will treat yourself and talk to yourself if you don't succeed.

We have a tendency to pin everything on a goal, how we see ourselves. How we imagine others will see us, and this might be familiar to you. We can rely on achieving the goal as a way to increase self-confidence and belief in ourselves which means that it's only when you actually do the thing and reach the goal that you'll think of yourself differently. And that rarely happens by the way, you have to do the work along the way. So what you actually need to do is raise your view of yourself so that you can reach the goal, not the other way around.

And when I think back to writing *Period Power* its publication didn't determine me seeing myself as an author or being an author in the world. I committed to that identity of being a writer, of being an author at the start of 2017 when my kid was nine months old and I actually wasn't able to write much more than snippets of ideas down. But I decided I wanted to write a book and started to think of myself as an author. This is without a book deal, without an agent, without even writing blog posts.

And I just committed to that way of thinking of myself, because I did that, that's what allowed me to actually write my books. I became an author way in advance of actually writing the book and the book being published. So for me the purpose of a goal is not about succeeding or failing. And I'll tell you why that's the wrong approach in a minute because right now I want to stick with the topic of failure.

So what holds most people back from succeeding is avoidance of failure. So if that's you then I want you to ask yourself why. Why are you so scared to fail? What do you imagine will happen? We can get very dramatic about this. So it's good to force your brain to be specific about what you think will happen. What is the worst thing that could happen?

Recently there was something that I wanted to talk to Paul, my partner, about. And I can't even remember what it was now. But I'm pretty sure it

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was something really minor but my brain was busy telling me that it was a really big deal and that it was going to be awful.

So I made myself get specific about what it was that I was afraid of, what was the worst thing that could happen in that scenario? And you know what I came up with? That Paul might roll his eyes and shake his head, he might sigh, he might say some words and that's essentially all it boiled down to. But my brain before I'd gone through that exercise was going, "This is going to be the worst thing ever, am I going to die?" That's where I was going to.

I mean I obviously wasn't going to die but my brain was positioning it as something that was going to be terrifying when it really wasn't. And just trying to talk me out of whatever it was that I wanted to say. And just as an FYI I'm pretty sure none of those things even happened. I wish I could remember what it was. But notice when you're doing that with your goals, are you being dramatic about what might happen if you fail? Force your brain to get specific about what might happen. And then just decide if it's really such a big deal. It most likely isn't.

The other thing to ask is what you will make failure mean about you. What it all eventually boils down to is trying to avoid 'negative feelings' which is completely understandable because your brain always wants to avoid pain. But when you learn that all emotions are equal and it's okay to experience them then you start being able to inhabit the ones that you've been trying to avoid and resist. And then the potential that you might feel them isn't such a big deal.

And when you know you can withstand any emotion you can do anything. That's why I love coaching so much because this is what I focus on all the time. Right now you might be very keen to avoid shame, humiliation, rejection, embarrassment, and it makes sense that we go to great lengths to avoid these emotions. Because for most of our evolutionary history they would have led to death, social cohesion is a large part of why we've done so well as a species.

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And in the past being excluded from our community would have meant struggling to survive. That means that our brains have evolved to be petrified of emotions like rejection and shame and do all we can to avoid it. That's why you literally feel like you're dying of shame and humiliation. But these emotions aren't bad, they feel like shit but they're not actually bad. And you can survive feeling your emotions. And of course we can question the thoughts that led to them too.

Here's why I love getting onboard with failure. You take bigger steps, you become more courageous and resilient and that is a wonderful, wonderful thing. If I hadn't got onboard with failure my books wouldn't exist. I had to decide to be okay with rejection, criticism, public confrontation, which really isn't that but it's just where my brain can go when it's being dramatic about words on a screen.

And actually that reminds me of a recent coaching session I had with a private client of mine where we were talking about her fears about something that she's working on. And as we explored what that fear was really about she said that she was most fearful of cancel culture and that she would be cancelled. And I was like, "Okay, tell me about how someone can cancel you." And she told me about what could happen to her on social media and these things, they sound so true, so convincing, but they're not true.

Think about it. How can someone cancel you? They can't. And does it actually serve you to believe that someone or a group of people can cancel you? And that doesn't mean that an experience like that wouldn't be challenging, or unpleasant, or hard, but nobody can cancel you.

And then I pointed out to her that the thought I am scared of being cancelled meant that she was actually cancelling herself because with that thought running the show she was holding back and not taking the steps to do the thing that she wants to do. She was cancelling herself in advance without anyone else even getting involved.

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So what if with everything you do or dream of doing in life you just accept that there's a 50% chance of failure from the get go and decide that if you do fail that that doesn't mean anything about you other than that you were courageous and willing to give it a go. There's a difference between failing at something and thinking that you are a failure. And failing repeatedly is literally the quickest route to success because it gives you information quicker than you get it if you're avoiding failure and playing the long game.

If you commit to failing now and I don't mean by opting out and not doing anything, you still have to take action that's going to lead to the desired outcome. But when you take action, whatever happens you're going to end up with information that you didn't have before. And then you can say, "Well, that didn't work out. Now I know that and that's information I needed to know, so now what?" You could even set a goal of failing, flip the script entirely and decide on things that you will fail at to rack up failures as if they are successes.

And those of you who are in The Flow Collective you'll see that in addition to our weekly win thread, we're also going to have a failure thread. And I want to see you all failing. Let's use this month to increase our tolerance of failure. But we fail by doing things that are likely to create a positive outcome, the intended goal or result that you've set. This isn't about opting out and failing by not doing. It's about stretching yourself.

And the reason we usually actually fail is because we aren't willing to take big enough action that will get us the result. And we don't do that because we are scared of failure. So that's actually how we really fail.

And when I think about failure I think about my son when he was learning to crawl because when he first started crawling he could only go backwards. It was hilarious because he'd be going backwards and he'd end up under a piece of furniture. But then his big baby head would get stuck and he wouldn't – he couldn't go any further under but he also didn't know how to crawl forwards to get out. So I mean I'm cracking up now, I want to

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be clear that I didn't laugh at him at the time. I was very supportive and understanding.

But he just kept going, he kept failing over and over and it wasn't a big deal to him. He didn't make it mean anything. It frustrated him. He cried a lot. All those things happened. But those experiences didn't stop him from figuring out how to crawl forwards. But through our education and socialisation we are taught that failure is bad. So we have some unlearning to do here. And whether you achieve the goal or not doesn't actually matter. It's fantastic if you do.

But I've asked you all to set a goal this month, well, those of you in The Flow Collective. Everyone else can do this as well. But the reason for doing that, to come up with a stretch goal is so that you can see all the shitty thoughts that the goal brings up because when we one day our goals, and by that I mean we just put them somewhere in the future, we don't have to be confronted by these thoughts. We just delay it all. And these thoughts are really the thoughts that you have about yourself.

There's nothing like a short-term ambitious goal to bring up all those thoughts which is perfect because we want to know what's there so that we can get to work on changing them which is what we're doing inside The Flow Collective all the time. As I was preparing for this episode, I was thinking about why I feel so able to set ambitious goals and that most people would call me ambitious, determined, probably, bloody minded.

And you might be listening to me saying these things and thinking, well, I'm not those things, I'm not ambitious. I don't have that level of determination and using those things against yourself as a reason to not go for a goal. But what I want to be really clear on is that these things are all feelings. And we are all capable of creating those feelings by thinking thoughts that create them. And that's what I teach you how to do step-by-step inside The Flow Collective.

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So that's the first thing to mention is that you can decide to feel these feelings too, it might take some practice. You might need some help, but it is possible for all of you. So here are the five reasons that I came up with.

One, the reason I feel ambitious and determined is because my why, my reason for doing this is so strong and it compels me every single day. The problems you will face is what motivates me. My clients inspire me. And I sell myself on why my work is important every day and I've done that for years. Just thinking my work is important helps me to focus and to show up.

Even today as I was preparing to record this podcast and I was tempted to go off for a bit of a walk because it's day 12 and that's what I often fancy doing on day 12 and around this time in my cycle. Instead I decided to think there are people who need to hear this. And because I thought that I then felt motivated and then here I am recording it. Notice how all this is purposeful, it didn't just happen.

And yes, hormones do come into it, there are times in the cycle where you might be more willing to do something bold or to take a risk when you feel more resilient to failure. Instead of other times when you might take it very personally and really make it mean something about you. But here's the thing, this is why I love what we do in The Flow Collective so much, you don't just have to go with what your hormones are up to. You can decide to think things on purpose and create a different experience for yourself.

Number two, I have my own back no matter what. I don't talk shit about myself if I don't achieve a goal. That's something I've decided for myself. And you can do that too. That's a boundary that I have with myself. I would never stand in a room and let someone else say nasty things to me. I would say, "If you don't stop talking to me like that I'm going to go." And so I have that same boundary with myself, with my own thoughts.

Number three, I will always better myself because I trust myself. When I came up with the idea of The Flow Collective that wasn't tested at all, and I

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invested a lot of time, energy and money into creating it upfront. Nobody had said yes, nobody had signed up. But I was willing to fail my way to it working because my belief in it, and my belief in myself, and even my belief in you was so strong. So it didn't even feel like a big deal to me to do.

And that's what's interesting because when I tried to think of failures that I've experienced it's hard for me to come up with them. I mean they definitely happen for sure. But they don't carry the weight that they used to. They're not a big deal like they used to be, and I think that's because of the level of self-compassion that I have for myself. And also when you are practiced at failing at things you just do them and you move on.

Number four, I get curious. Why didn't that work out? Do I need to go back to the drawing board, or do I just need to tweak things was the way I approached it and how I was thinking, not in alignment with the result I wanted, I just get curious with it?

Number five and this is a big one. I'm willing to feel uncomfortable to figure it out. Discomfort is the price of growth. And I have learnt to lean into that discomfort, to just take the plunge even when I'm shitting it and my brain is screaming at me not to. My brain can just be going, "We can't do this. It's dangerous." And I'll just tell it, "Yes, it might feel that way but we're doing it anyway, we're not going to die. It's going to be okay."

And feel free to be in conversation with your nervous system, with your brain like that because it makes a huge difference, one of my favourite brain hacks just to tell my body just to calm down. And I'm so inspired by the work I do by my clients in The Flow Collective, by all of you who listen and who tell me things over Instagram. And that just always gets me going and it makes me want to show up and do more and be willing to feel uncomfortable along the way.

So you can decide to feel uncomfortable now in going for a goal and in being willing to experience failure along the way. Or you can decide to feel uncomfortable later on because you didn't go for the goal because that's

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real failure, failure to take action in the first place. And it's up to you, you get to decide either way, you want to have your own back and not talk shit about yourself. When we fear failure, we stay comfortable. We don't stretch ourselves. We don't commit to our goals. And it's really important that we do because your goals matter.

And by the way, you can do this from love. This is another big recommendation from mine. You want to take action, go for your goals from a place of self-love and sufficiency, and not feeling like you have to prove yourself. This isn't about striving for perfection or trying to prove yourself. In fact I really recommend that you don't use goals for that, you've got to love yourself exactly as you are first, and you are wonderful exactly as you are.

Okay my lovelies, that's it for today. I will see you next week, have a good one.

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.