

Ep #71: The 'Coming Home' Moment of the Cycle



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

Period Power with Maisie Hill

Ep #71: The 'Coming Home' Moment of the Cycle

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. If I sound tired today, it's because I am. I woke up at 4:15 really unusually because I was sneezing. It was very weird. So I sneezed a bunch, blew my nose and tried to get back to sleep but my brain was just like, okay, we're ready to get up. So I laid there for a long time doing a variety of things to try and convince my body, my brain back into sleep and it just didn't happen.

So I'm feeling pretty tired but nonetheless I am very excited about today's episode because it's a topic that I've been musing on for years. And it's what I would call the coming home moment of the cycle. So it's that time just before your period starts when you experience a coming home of sorts or an urge to get home. So today's episode is all about that. I'm going to be sharing some examples of how this might show up in your cycle and in your life so that you can identify if it's there in yours.

And I'd be really curious to hear from you if this does show up, if this does resonate because this has been something that's been in my brain for a long time. And I've just been kind of returning to it usually with my cycle when I reach this point, but I couldn't quite put it into words. And I hadn't until very recently been able to make sense of it in the way that I wanted to in order to then share it with you. So I would just notice my experience of it when it happened. And I would also recognise it in my clients in their descriptions of their cycles.

But then when I was on holiday this past week, I had an enhanced experience of this and it just kind of all came together in my head. So you can see why I'm excited to share this with you today even amongst the tiredness. So speaking of my holiday, we want away for a week to Porto in

Ep #71: The 'Coming Home' Moment of the Cycle

Portugal and had a wonderful time. I really recommend it as a place to visit. It was lovely weather.

So this is mid-April we went, it was 20 degrees every day which is my kind of weather. I really like that. I used to really love hot, hot, hot temperatures, upper 20s and into 30s but I've definitely changed since then. Going away to Sicily in the summer so I'm slightly concerned about the level of heat then. But I think I do actually like the heat.

But of course when you're on holiday and you have a young child and you're busy parenting in the heat, that I'm not so much a fan of. If I'm going to be lying down under a parasol or an umbrella, I'm sure I'd be perfectly okay. A good book, under some shade, lovely. But Porto was beautiful, lovely architecture, gorgeous views of the river and it's a very short tram ride to the coast and to the seaside. And the day we actually went to the seaside I had my first alcoholic drink in three years.

But what I loved the most about Porto was the people. Everyone there was so friendly, so helpful and I think they really made the trip what it was. And I want to shout out a few people because I met some of you who listen to the podcast. I met the lovely Louisa outside the toilets at Heathrow and we had a lovely chat. And then Emily was on my flight. And I didn't get the name of the woman who came up to our table whilst we were having lunch in Porto but hello to all of you. It's always so cool to meet people face-to-face.

And I will also by the time this episode comes up, there'll be a post about Porto on my Instagram feed showing you some of the highlights, where we stayed, and we ate because I've been getting quite a few messages about all of that. And we'll link to the post in the show notes so that you can find it. So if you fancy a trip there, you can check out where we went.

The only thing I have to say that was a struggle was listening to Nelson complain about the hills and having to walk up them. So if you have young kids, I would just be prepared for that. I would still go but just be mentally prepared for it. And of course because I track my cycle and I put my cycle days in my Google calendar I knew that we'd be on holiday the week

Ep #71: The 'Coming Home' Moment of the Cycle

before my period was due. So I was also prepared for that. I had packed my period underwear.

I was kind of guessing that my bleed would start around the time when we'd be flying home or maybe the day that we got back. And our flight home was at 7:45 in the evening. This is relevant to today's topic by the way. So our flight home was at 7:45 in the evening and we needed to check out of the hotel/guesthouse that we were staying in by midday. So we knew we'd be out and about in the afternoon which is actually the opposite of what we'd been doing all week.

So all the other days we were out in the morning, coming back to the hotel after lunch for a couple of hours and just chilling and then going out again. So we'd be avoiding the hottest part of the day until the final day where we had to reverse things. And this is important because I don't like to feel hot when my period is starting. So if I'm in the hot sun or if I'm in a hot bath then I can feel a bit restless and agitated. And sometimes it can even border on anxiety.

And I can literally hear the brains of the Chinese medicine practitioners who listen to the podcast turning over as they diagnose me through this information. But all this to say I didn't really want to be outside that afternoon. I knew my bleed was coming because I'd felt that change of energy in my pelvis and in my uterus that morning. You know when sometimes you'd get that physical awareness of things shifting. But a late checkout wasn't an option.

We ended up having a great time, we were on holiday, we were strolling around, were getting one last ice-cream, and just hanging out on some grass. But there was this point where things shifted for me. So we still had a couple of hours until our taxi picked us up. There was no shade on the grass, but Nelson was just having a lot of fun doing gymnastics and being Spiderman. And we were all there as a family, it was lovely, sun shining, Nelson's having a great time.

Ep #71: The 'Coming Home' Moment of the Cycle

But within all of that I also had this urge in me to get home. And it started out as a whisper and it got louder to the point where I said to Paul, "I think we should change our travel plans." Because we'd originally planned to stay in London overnight because we didn't land until 10 o'clock. And then we were going to get the train home the next day. But I really just wanted to get home. So we ended up changing the plans and just booking a cab to pick us up at the airport and get us home which was a really great decision to make I have to say.

And it was because all of this was going on, me feeling this urge to get home and not being able to follow that urge to even go back to the hotel. So it created the situation where, like I said, I had this enhanced experience of this moment of my cycle. And there's the heat there as well so that's adding to this restlessness. And I am going to talk you through some other examples of this because you might recognise it in your experience of your cycle.

So as I've described, it can be the urge to get home physically. And that might come from physical symptoms that you begin to experience or anticipate experiencing, like pain, or heavy flow, or it could be period poos, because those happen too. And I get quite a lot of questions about period poos. So let me take a moment to fill you in on why they happen in case you've always wondered.

So around the time that your period starts you produce prostaglandins. And they're hormone like substances. And the purpose of them in relation to your period is that they stimulate your uterus to contract to help with the process of menstruation. But this chemical message can extend beyond your uterus and to your bowels. And so you get contractions in your bowel, and it just stimulates the need to poo.

So this urge to get home can be about the presence of symptoms and the urge to get home because you're already having them, or you expect that you're going to have them. So you just want to get home so that you can deal with them. It can also be a need to be home that isn't about physical

Ep #71: The 'Coming Home' Moment of the Cycle

symptoms, but it can be physical in terms of environment. And I'm going to do my best to put this into words for you.

So my most significant experience of this was actually when I was about to go into labour because that time in the menstrual cycle when you're about to start your period is very similar to the time in pregnancy where you're about to go into labour. So if you think of the cycle and pregnancy as being a build-up and then that build up reaches a tipping point where the energy starts to move into either starting your period or going into labour. I keep meaning to record an episode about my birth story. I will at some point.

But for now I'll share that I had this sense that I was about to go into labour before, two days before I did. Yeah, I just had that sense. I didn't know when it was going to happen but there were some indicators that things were shifting. And along with physical changes that were going on, a key indicator for me was that I just didn't want to stray far from home. And at the time we lived in Peckham in South London.

And our flat was about 10 houses away from Peckham Rye Park. So really close to the park which is my favourite park in London. I love it. If you haven't gone there, definitely go there. There's a common, there's some football pitches and then in between those two grassy areas there's this wooded area and some landscape gardens. And it's just beautiful. There's the Japanese garden, there's a pond, two ponds actually. There's a stream. As you walk through there's this sense of a journey as you walk through the different areas of it. I really miss it if you can't tell.

They've also got a great kids' playground that was recently built. So definitely check it out. So when we lived there, we spent a lot of time in the park, especially during pregnancy. But we usually just skipped the football pitches. It just wasn't our area to walk around. But the football pitches were the closest bit of the park to where we lived. And so we'd usually go just to the landscaped area and the common, and on from there.

And I will point out, for those of you who don't know the park, it's a decent size but if you're walking at a decent pace, it only takes five minutes, 10

Ep #71: The 'Coming Home' Moment of the Cycle

max to walk from one end to the other. So it's not a big distance, it's not that huge. But when my labour was kind of – well, when I was anticipating it there was no way I was going to walk into the middle of the park where the landscaped areas were. And very unusually, this was so telling, I said to Paul, "Let's just walk around the football pitches."

And that was when I really recognised in myself, oh yeah, we're going to be going into labour soon, we as in me, myself, and I. And that was actually the afternoon of the day that I went into labour. I went into labour at, I don't know, 11 o'clock at night or something like that. So I just didn't want to be far from home. And we were only a couple of minutes away.

It wasn't far but the gardens in the middle of Peckham Rye, they were only a little bit further away physically, but they felt way more further away than they actually were because I just had this urge to be close to home. So that's what I'm talking about here. This urge to be at home or to return home and with your period that might show up as deciding to do something local rather than travel on public transport or go any distance to do something. Or it might be to have friends over rather than to meet up. Or it could be cancelling plans altogether to just be at home.

And if you don't live in your country of origin or you live far away from where you grew up, where you were born then this may be a challenging time for you because you could experience a longing to return home, to be on your home territory. Although I also want to acknowledge that many of us live on colonised and unceded land. So although it's your country of birth, your country of origin the area in which you were born and raised, you may also technically be the occupier.

But this has come up a lot with my clients who have moved areas or moved countries. And what they can experience is towards the end of each cycle just before their period starts, they have this need to return to where they came from. And other ways that you could experience this is wanting to speak your mother tongue, your native language or wanting to connect with your family of origin. I mean I'm sure there's also plenty of you who just

Ep #71: The 'Coming Home' Moment of the Cycle

want to stay clear of your family at this time in the cycle. But you may also have a juxtaposition of both.

It could also be wanting to eat the food that you were brought up with. So for me that's macaroni and cheese. It's the first thing my mum taught me how to cook. I practically survived on it growing up and it's definitely the food that I want at this point in the cycle. So they're some of the ways that this can show up. And you might be wondering why this happens. And I've got some theories to share with you.

Now, they are just based on my personal experience, on my professional experience in terms of what I've seen in my clients and what they've described to me. And how I have come to understand what they've shared with me. So every cycle that we go on is a journey. It has a beginning, an end, it also has a middle actually. It's classic, it has a beginning, a middle and an end. And in fact the beginning is also the end. Because the end of each cycle is also the beginning of the next.

But if you think of it like leaving a house to get to a destination. So when you leave the house, that's the beginning of the journey of your cycle, the start of each cycle. And then you get to the destination, our middle part which is of course in the cycle, ovulation, the main event. And then from ovulation onwards you're on the journey home. So there's this sense of returning home at the end of each cycle as your period is about to start or once it's started. So I'm being loose with the timing because that's going to vary.

And I know that sometimes what I describe can be taken very literally. And some of you end up thinking that your particular experience is 'wrong' in some way. So I want to account for variation here. For some of you this experience could be days before your bleed starts, for others it could be hours before, it could be as your period starts. Or you could even experience this at a completely different point in the cycle or not at all. There's no right or wrong. It's really important to hear that.

Ep #71: The 'Coming Home' Moment of the Cycle

I'm just offering an understanding of the cycle that's an option for you. You get to evaluate that through your own experience and through your lens of understanding. You can filter it through. You can also reject it. And a bit similarly to what I mentioned earlier about the physical need to be home. There can also be a need or a desire to be enclosed. And that can be broadly in terms of being inside instead of out and about. Or it can be on a smaller level. You might want to feel enclosed and wrapped up. So that could be a duvet day, being amongst blankets and pillows and your duvet.

It can be picking clothes that somehow satisfy your senses. You could have certain clothes that you prefer to wear around the time of your period. For me this is definitely the case because of my sensory sensitivities, and needs, and preferences especially around the time my period's starting, they take centre stage.

So one way I honour that is making sure that those clothes aren't in the laundry basket. I mean I'm not above picking them out of the laundry basket to put them on. But my preference is that they're clean and ready to be worn. So I just make a mental note, occasionally I'll make a physical note if I can remember.

But I just make sure that my favourite tracksuit bottoms and socks, and soft tops are all available for me to wear. And that's because they help to regulate me, and they also prevent me from becoming dysregulated. But they also have this cosiness and this softness to them that is just so lovely at this point in the cycle. And that just makes so much sense to me for all sorts of reasons.

But one reason is that your first home was your mother's uterus, or your parents' uterus if they aren't female or if the person who carried you in pregnancy isn't someone you consider your mother. Because there's lots of considerations here like surrogacy, adoption, etc. But think of your first home being a womb, an enclosed safe space where you grew from a collection of cells into a baby. It was your first home. It was where you first experienced connection to another.

Ep #71: The 'Coming Home' Moment of the Cycle

And the walls of the womb surrounded you and they held you. And whilst you were in there you also produced the eggs that you went on to release once you started ovulating. So there's this ancestral line going on as well, this connection to your mother or the person who carried you in pregnancy. And for some of you, for some of us that experience of bleeding can bring us back to that somehow, to that first home. And we can also consider, and I'm somewhat hesitant to say this but let's entertain the idea that there are cases, occasions when we are more vulnerable when we're bleeding.

And I hope it goes without saying but I'm going to say it just to be really clear, I am in no way inferring that we are weaker or that we can't do things when we're bleeding. I know that some of you that actually is the case because you feel faint, or your flow is heavy, or the pain you have is debilitating. So of course I'm holding space for that reality and consideration. And at the same time I don't want to be painting a picture of we're feeble and we need to be protected.

That being said maybe the time when we're bleeding is a time when in our evolutionary history we sought out safety and protection by being in community. Even if being in community also meant retreating from those around us, and again this is just my thoughts, but it makes sense to me to return home to our communities around the time when we are beginning to bleed. To return to our family so that we can benefit from safety in numbers.

And in some cultures and communities it went beyond protection in terms of safety and into protection of the process of menstruation. And what I mean by that is that in some cultures, in some tribes, for example, menstruation was and still is a time in which someone is able to access parts of themselves or even something beyond themselves. So it was important to honour that time as sacred. And you may have experience of that in some way too.

And the time around when your period starts can also feel vulnerable emotionally. Sometimes it can just feel very raw, like everything is closer to the surface. It's where doubt can really show up along with tears, and grief,

Ep #71: The 'Coming Home' Moment of the Cycle

and other emotions. And along with it often a need, a desire to be cared for, to be mothered and looked after. And however this experience of coming home, of wanting to return home in the cycle shows up for you, it's important to acknowledge and honour that.

You may not be able to fly around the world back to your country of origin every cycle, but can you connect with friends and family from there? Can you sit with the emotions that come up, the desire, the longing, the sadness? Maybe you can cook the foods that you grew up with. Can you look at your schedule and see what can be adjusted to suit your need to be at home, to make space for it?

And I think that's the thing that's really key for me is making space for this experience. And that can be in terms of your calendar, arranging practical things. It can be actually being at home, but I think overall it's creating space in your mind for this, if it's there. For some of you it may not and as I said, I'd be really curious to hear from you.

We can talk about it on Instagram. If you're in The Flow Collective, we can certainly have a discussion in our community because I'd love to hear about your experiences. Because this is something I've been kind of keeping close to me as I figured this out. And I just haven't really wanted to speak that much about it to clients. I've just been waiting for things to make more sense to me. And so it's quite nice to reach this phase of now, okay, let's talk about it, let's have these discussions.

So that's it, that's my thoughts on this moment of the cycle of coming home and returning home. So I hope you found it helpful. Have a fantastic week and I'll 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.