

Ep #127: Feeling Pulled in Different Directions



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The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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You're listening to episode 127 of *The Maisie Hill Experience* which is all about feeling pulled in different directions, why it happens and what to do about it.

If you want to do things differently but need some help making it happen then tune in for your weekly dose of coaching from me, Maisie Hill, Master Life Coach and author of *Period Power*. Welcome to *The Maisie Hill Experience*.

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening wherever you are listening, whatever time it is. At the time I'm recording this we are a week into May and it's finally warm enough to have my ankles out which just feels so good. It feels like a momentous part of the year when it gets warm enough to do that but it's not hot, hot, hot. And as the seasons change, I'm noticing that I'm beginning to feel the urge to shift my routine because as it gets lighter in the mornings I like to start work earlier.

I can't stand working or starting work at 9:00am or after. All through the year for me that's just too late. I'm a real morning person so I like to start around eight o'clock over the winter and do a two and half, three hour stretch of work that's really focused. That's when I do my deep work. And I usually do that in a local café. But I have my blinkers on when I'm in there and I'm just in my own world with my writing.

But once we're solidly into spring and there's more light in the mornings, that deep work session starts earlier, at least that's my preference. I try and make it happen as much as possible. And then if I'm working on a big project then I'll often add a second deep work session in once we're in the afternoon. And I'm in an intense work phase at the moment.

And actually, by the time this episode comes out, I will have my head down, blinkers really on because I've got two weeks pretty much blocked off so that I can just focus on this project and so that there's less open tabs in my brain. But typically, this is when my brain likes to start going off in all sorts of other directions. I start to think of other things that I would rather do or

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that I could do, things that are far more interesting and fun and enjoyable, but that's not actually true. It's just an avoidance strategy.

So, the brain's job is to keep us safe, and its second job is to conserve energy. That's why any time you go to do something a voice inside will go, "Yeah, but we don't have to do that. We could just stay here instead or just browse online a little bit more?" So, my brain knows that this work that I'm doing is going to require my attention, my focus, my energy. So, it's trying to distract me with shiny object syndrome basically.

That's something that's spoken a lot about in the world of entrepreneurship, but it really applies to all of us. And it's just a state of distraction that's brought around by the belief that something new or something else is better and worth pursuing rather than the existing plan.

So rather than stick to one strategy and really apply it and see the results of it, you change strategy all the time. And never see the full benefit of each strategy, each plan that you come up with. So, you're just kind of chasing yourself around in circles. And it affects your results, but it also affects you because your energy and attention is spread out. And you also never have to address your mindset and how you're approaching things because you're just always chasing strategy. And that usually comes from a place of scarcity.

This comes up a lot when I'm doing business coaching and people tell me about all the ideas they have and how they want to implement all of them at once because they're all so amazing. And trust me when I say, I get it because I have so many ideas. And I think anyone who's remotely entrepreneurial usually is great at coming up with ideas but that has to be balanced with the ability to constrain. Most of the ideas I come up with I don't implement.

Have you ever heard the phrase, 'kill your darlings'? I don't know who first said it, but a lot of writers talk about it and I know it's used in other industries too. But it just means to get rid of an unnecessary storyline, a character, sentences, a chapter, elements you may have worked really

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hard on and feel very precious about, very attached to. But that they have to be removed for the sake of the book. And I had to do this with *Period Power*.

There was an entire chapter about Chinese medicine and the cycle, a topic that I love, was important to me to cover but my publishers recommended removing it. And internally when they suggested this I was clinging, I could feel myself clinging like no, don't take it away from me. I love this, we've got to keep it. But I could also see the wisdom behind their suggestion, so I just let myself feel the feelings and went with it. We scrapped that whole chapter.

And they were right, it really was one too many things in a book that was already bursting with information and different concepts and ways of thinking. So, I removed a chapter that I loved for the sake of the whole book and for the reader's experience of reading it. I still used it though because I created two webinars that are inside the membership all about it. I've also got notebooks from 10 years ago that are full of ideas that I haven't taken action on. One of them I do plan on doing, I really want to.

I've not stopped thinking about it since the time that I originally came up with it. But I keep putting it to one side because although it would be great to do, I know it would be successful. I also know that it would be a distraction and come with a cost. So, if you get distracted by shiny new things, which I like to think is just going to happen if you're human, then train your brain to ask what will doing this cost me?

And there might be times when you decide that the cost is worth it and you're up for it. But you're agreeing and committing to that in an intentional way in advance rather than feeling like it's happening to you in the moment and that it wasn't foreseeable. Because most of the time we can foresee things like this. And for me, most of the time I realise that it's not worth it yet. It will likely create substandard results with that project and in other areas. And it will lessen the impact of the other things that I'm focused on and really believe in. And probably create undesired results as well.

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But this isn't about settling, settling feels very different. And it's not that you can't create results in different areas of your life at once because you can. I've spoken about that before and putting all results on the table. But when it comes to your attention, your energy, getting down to business, there's only so much to go around. And there is a point where you're putting too much on the table, expecting too much and overextending yourself. This is especially true if you're approaching things without considering mindset and creating results through your thoughts which is what I teach my clients to do.

I also know that if I decided to do it at a certain time, if I put it on my calendar for October then by the time I get there I'll be talking myself out of it and coming up with the same nonsense my brain has about this current project. Forgetting that this was once also a great idea that I came up with when I didn't want to do something else. There's a cycle, there's a pattern here. And I just have to remind myself of that because it normalises it happening and I can just say to myself, "This is just the thing that my brain does." Which just takes the weight out of it. And it means I can move on and get on with things.

It's like when I'm in the shop with my son and then we get to the section where the crisps are, and the sweets are. Of course, he's going to start asking for things. Or when I'm on my own because let's face it, the same thing happens to me. Of course, that's going to happen but that doesn't mean I have to go along with it. It's just an urge. I can tell myself it's okay to want to go there, I get it, we're going to but not now. This is what we're doing now. It's a very loving boundary with myself. I'm not going to lie; I might have a bit of a hissy fit about it. I might throw my toys out of the pram.

In the same way that when I tell Nelson, I'm not buying all the things he wants, he can get very upset with me. That's okay. That's reasonable to expect. So, I'm not going to make it a problem, but don't get me wrong, some days I'm just not in the mood for it at all, I have limited capacity. I actually do my best not to take him to the shops with me. So that happens

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too, but your own brain might do the same thing. It might get annoyed and frustrated and resentful, maybe even entitled to be able to do these things. That's okay.

You're allowed to have some feelings about it, but I really recommend finding the thoughts behind those feelings because we want to interrogate them. So, this is just what brains do. It can be about avoiding getting down to hard work. Brains also like novelty. They get interested in and distracted by new ideas, projects, opportunities, so that's the thing too.

But being pulled in different directions can also be a sneaky way of avoiding failure or avoiding success because it gets you out of doing the thing. And then you don't have to experience the potential success or the potential failure, both of which can feel uncomfortable or even alarming to you on some level.

It's one of the most common ways that I see my clients self-sabotaging. They have something that's going well, it's either already underway or already successful. And then they start bringing their other ideas to coaching or talking about how they want different things that are competing for their time and attention, whether that's in their personal or professional lives.

Sometimes it's friends that want to hang out or invitations to social events. Tantalising projects that are on the table at work and it can also be related to the needs and the expectations of others. But that's really the expectations that you have of yourself.

And so many of my clients struggle with balancing their needs and desires with the needs and desires of those around them, whether that's their colleagues or family members, friends, partners. It can even be complete strangers on the street or on the bus. This comes up a lot in coaching calls in the membership and that's been particularly true recently and I love to coach on it. But this also relates to the seasons both of the cycle and the year because as we continue through spring and into summer we're surrounded by abundance.

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There's an abundance in nature, plants and crops are all growing and blooming, fruits are appearing. It's lambing and calving season. So, you have a natural abundance around you and perhaps you might be feeling that inside you too. And with that comes a desire to do all the things because there's an abundance of choice, but that doesn't mean that it's coming from abundance in you.

Sometimes it is but sometimes it comes from a lack of belief because if you believed that something was inevitable, as in guaranteed to happen and to work out and be successful, would you be in such a rush to do it now? Maybe you would. I do think there are times when it's a hell yes, let's do it now, the timing is relevant in some way. But it's worth asking yourself if you're in a rush because you need to prove yourself to yourself or to others that you can do this thing and make it work so that you can think differently about yourself.

The reason this is important is because if you are doing that, you will always be chasing external goals in order to try and feel good internally. And that's related to always needing to achieve things as well as perfectionism which is related to burnout. So, you might have all the achievements, all the accolades etc, but your worth in the world is tied up in achieving rather than being inherent as in you are a human, you are worthy, period.

Now, the caveat to this is not using what I've just said to avoid taking any action of any kind and telling yourself, but Maisie said if I'm in a rush then it's because I don't believe. So, I should build belief before doing anything because that's also unhelpful. When you feel pulled in different directions you have to steer your brain where you want it to go. And this is very much rooted in the ability to make decisions. I've got a whole episode at some point in the past. I think it might be one of the early ones where I did a whole episode on making decisions.

There's also an amazing webinar in the membership. It's one of my favourite things that I've created. So, if you're a member of *The Flow Collective* go check that out. But you have to be able to make that decision

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and then continuously steer your brain where you want it to go. This is the power of making decisions and planning in advance using your prefrontal cortex. There are many different parts to the brain. For the sake of this discussion, I want to talk about two key components, the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system.

So, the prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain that's responsible for planning, decision making and regulating your behaviour. It's the very rational, logical. It allows us to think about long term consequences of our actions and it's involved in our ability to delay gratification. It's the part of us that can make a plan in advance, like deciding to work on a specific project tomorrow morning instead of watching a new Netflix series.

Now, we also have the limbic system, and the limbic system is the one saying, "Forget the project. Let's just binge watch that series instead." So when you feel like you're being pulled in different directions, often it's these two parts of the brain in conflict. Prefrontal cortex is looking out for your long-term interests and goals while the limbic system is more focused on short term pleasure and avoidance of discomfort. So, you've got to exercise your prefrontal cortex and it's just like a muscle, the more you use it, the stronger it gets.

And this involves setting goals, making plans and sticking to them. It's the art of saying no to things in the present moment in order to say yes to your long-term goals. That doesn't mean you always have to dismiss the impulses of the limbic system. In fact, it plays a vital role in providing us with motivation and emotional responses. But it's all about balance and knowing when to delay instant gratification for long term success. So be aware of how these areas of your brain influence your actions and recognise when you're making a decision based on immediate desires rather than your long-term goals.

But this is really about just understanding how your brain works and using that knowledge to just navigate life more effectively with more self-compassion and self-acceptance because this is a thing that's going to happen. Feeling pulled in different directions is often just a result of this

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internal tug of war. But when we bring in some awareness and with practice you can take steps towards doing things that are more in alignment with your long-term goals and values.

And on that note, feeling pulled in different directions might indicate a lack of alignment in your life. So, it might be worth just spending some time assessing your core values. I've got an episode about that as well. Your goals, your priorities and just making sure your daily activities and also the things that you're not doing, your commitments, just make sure they all align up with your long-term vision and goals. And in doing so, might just find yourself just less scattered, more directed and unified.

I also have to mention the impact of the thought, I'm being pulled in different directions because how does it feel when you think that thought? It doesn't feel great to me, probably doesn't to you either. It's just one of those thoughts that I don't know, the visual I have with it is just spinning wheels in mud and not getting anywhere. You can also consider in what ways are these not different directions. Maybe there's some ways that they're actually the same direction. So, is it true that they're different?

How are you not being pulled in different directions? And if you are, then how can you honour the parts of you that want different things? Because you're human so it's going to happen. Alright my loves, that is it for today. I'll catch you next time.

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