

Ep #129: Automatic Thoughts



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The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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This is episode 129 of *The Maisie Hill Experience*. Today's going to be a punchy one, folks. I've had this in my back pocket as a topic for the podcast for a while and it's time to unleash 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*.

Alright, hello, hello. Today we are attacking and dismantling the nonsense that our minds come up with. Mine does it, yours does it and it's time to just deal with these thoughts. These are thoughts that I see all the time in my clients, whether they're explicit thoughts that someone says to me out loud on a coaching call or when we're coaching, and I can just sense that these thoughts are lurking around in the background. And that's actually how I want you to think about these thoughts. See them as suspicious characters lurking around in the shadows.

Watch out for them and bring them into the light so that you can see them for what they are, which is exactly what we're going to be doing today. So, we all have these automatic thoughts, ones that we've been exposed to time and time again, ones that you've thought over and over. And we just believe them to be true because they sound true. They often sound very factual and in some ways they can be. But they become the soundtrack to your existence affecting your day-to-day as well as the bigger vision that you have for your life.

They're unhelpful and they can be very untrue. They can be these untrue narratives that just take on a life of their own, holding you back and sabotaging your success in numerous ways. So, they have to be dealt with. They must be dealt with. It is imperative that you spot and address these thoughts because if you don't they will become the weeds that take over your life. So, we're going to dig them up at the roots and expose the fallacies that lurk beneath their surface.

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So first up, we have the classic, I'm behind. Please, please eliminate this from your vocabulary. This is such a low value thought, it's pernicious and it's one of those thoughts that's contagious, it spreads, which is why we don't talk about being behind in my community, because it just takes on life of its own. One person posts about how they're behind and then suddenly everyone is believing that they're behind. So how do you feel when you think I am behind? Like crap I would expect. It creates pressure and stress, overwhelm, panic, anxiety, things like that.

I'm yet to meet someone who tells me, "I feel great when I think that I'm behind." I doubt I ever will. And how do you know that you're behind? Really think about that, according to whom and what timeline? Because it suggests a rigid timeline and a fixed pace at which you must progress. It's also usually like this very externalised, capitalist, productive way of doing things. It's all nonsense. And women in particular are socialised to believe that we have things that we need to be doing.

I don't hear this thought from the men in my life ever, ever, they might think it. Some men might say it, but it's not something that I hear whereas I hear it from women every single day and I can't take it anymore. Stop it, stop saying it, stop thinking it as best as you can. It might still come up. It still comes up for me once in a while. It came up recently for me and I just had to keep steering my brain to where I want it to be. I talk about this all the time on our coaching calls. Your brain will want to go off in all sorts of directions. You've just got to keep bringing it back to the track that you want it to be on.

So do this for you, do it for me. Let's do it for each other because this is a crappy thought that spreads like wildfire. And just remember, I say as best as you can, because it's not like we can control every single one of our thoughts all of the time, that's just not going to happen. But you don't have to get tangled up in it. Don't invest in it as a thought because there are some thoughts that we want to feed, others that we want to weed out. This is a thought to weed out.

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Some of my clients will share about that they feel behind on watching the calls or using the resources in the membership, but this presumes the idea that you're meant to consume everything which you're not. The membership was designed to fit around your life. It's not meant to be a part-time job. I would rather you 'be behind', which again there's no such thing but I'd rather that and you are watching one call a month but applying the coaching in it and seeing the difference it makes in your life rather than watching everything and doing nothing with it.

So, we always want to be determining if it's helpful by the impact, not by measuring how much you're watching or taking part.

Alright, next up we have I'm going backwards. This has been coming up with some of my clients who have experienced huge shifts in their internal and external worlds and then they plateau, which that's also just a thought but we're going to run with it. In my opinion that's what's meant to happen, nothing has gone wrong, but if you think it has, then you're going to make it a problem and you really don't need to. First of all, it's not like you regress and slip down a hill and you can never get back up again. But I think that's what some of you think is happening.

Also, I'm going backwards implies that setbacks and challenges signify regression rather than growth, but it's not just that. It can also be that life becomes alright especially with all the work that we do, whether you're listening to the podcast, whether you're a member of *The Flow Collective*, everything that we're doing here is about increasing your capacity and your resilience. And sometimes a plateau can just signify that those things have increased.

Life isn't meant to be an upwards trajectory. It might be news to some of you. But what happens down in the valley is just as important as what happens on top of the mountain. As I said, plateaus are also important. Catch your breath, enjoy the view, see how far you've come. You're not sliding backwards down the hill and even if you were, it's so much easier to get up again when you know how to do it from doing it the first time

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because it's already familiar, but more than that you have the level of belief that comes from doing it once before.

So, my thought is you're just acclimatising, you're not going backwards. And how do you even know that you're going backwards? Because you can't rely on how you feel. It might feel like you're not getting anywhere or that you're going backwards, but you need perspective that comes with time in order to know that. There are times when I've felt like I haven't been getting anywhere but it's the slowing down that's happened in those phases that has actually caused me to speed up, it just doesn't feel like it at the time, but you can tell yourself that.

The only way you'll go backwards is if you tell yourself that you're going backwards. Okay, what nonsense have we got next? Yeah, I'm not doing enough which is often I'm not enough in disguise. Here is the thing, you probably aren't doing enough according to some people's standards. But do you want to be working to those standards or your own definition of what enough is? And what is enough? Get specific about what enough is because usually it's just this vague statement. It's very big and amorphous. And as soon as we interrogate it, we realise that it is a load of nonsense.

The caveat here is to be onto yourself when you do want to do more. But I'd say the majority of my clients are unwinding perfectionism and their relationship with an overbearing inner critic. So, their work and perhaps yours too is to learn that they are doing plenty and that they're good enough without needing to do anything. Again, this is one that comes up inside *The Flow Collective* in relation to being a member where my clients think they're not doing enough in terms of using the materials and the services that are available to them.

And I love coaching on this because once a client addresses this in terms of their experience of being in the membership, that shift then ripples out into other areas of their life. Because as I mentioned, the whole point isn't to watch and access everything, it's there and you can, but I don't want people to be consuming everything and ticking things off. The membership

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is there to support you and help you to get results whatever they happen to be for you.

So, think of it like a buffet. If you're at a buffet the aim isn't to consume everything that's there. You might try a little bit of everything and determine what you like so that you can establish what works for you. And then you find a rhythm that you tend to follow, maybe switch things up once in a while but that's completely different to thinking that you need to eat everything at the buffet every single time you go there. So, I want you to watch one coaching call or take one topic to our written coaching service where you can get coached one-on-one or watch one webinar and then use it, apply it to your life.

So, I'm not doing enough is really an opportunity to look at what standards and expectations you have for yourself. Often my clients are thinking that they're not doing enough at work, and they're experiencing stress and pressure and overwhelm but they're actually doing everything according to their job description. They're meeting their deadlines. They're getting positive feedback. No one is complaining that they're not doing a good enough job but there's still this looming thought of I'm not doing enough.

So as is the case with many of these thoughts, they exist in spite of evidence to the contrary. This is why we get to work on increasing self-worth because once you believe that you are enough, the idea that you're not doing enough loses traction and melts away.

Next up we have, I can't afford it. Now, this one is true in a lot of situations and I'm not arguing with that. There are things that I can afford now that I never used to be able to but there are plenty of things that I can't afford, and I imagine that there are things that you can't afford too. But when I tell myself, I can't afford that, and I really tune into how that feels, I experience this drop in energy. I feel smaller and there's a vulnerability to it. And as I stay with that feeling it has a touch of helplessness to it. I feel very young, very little.

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Now, your experience of thinking, I can't afford it, could be completely different to mine. It could feel just way more factual to you and not a big deal in which case feel free to ignore me. But if it does something to you like it does to me then consider reframing it. This is a thought that was very prevalent in my mind. I used to think it a lot when I was younger. It was just an automatic response to a lot of invitations and opportunities or when I saw people living in a way that I wanted to but that was well and truly beyond my means.

But I've spoken about this before, at some point I heard someone, I can't remember if I read it in a book or I heard someone speaking about it. I wish I could remember who, but they just spoke about reframing it as, well, this just isn't what I'm investing in right now. So, I adopted that thought because when I think that I feel very differently. So, it's still factual but without the kind of weight that comes with I can't afford it or the disempowerment that I experience with that thought, but that's just me. It might be very different for you.

And this just helps to keep me out of a scarcity mindset that just focuses on lack and limitations which can occur at any income. So, while financial constraints are a reality I do think it's important to challenge this thought and seek alternative possibilities, other thoughts that are also true and therefore they're believable to your brain, but they keep you in your thinking brain way where you're able to be creative and come up with solutions rather than just feeling fear, very different.

Similar to I can't afford it is, I don't have enough time, which again stems from the notion that time is a scarce resource and it's true that time is limited. It is a finite resource and whilst we all have 24 hours in a day, we don't all have the same amount of time in a day. One person's 24 hours is going to be very different from someone else's. My day of parenting and work is very different from my friend who's a single parent because I get to tag team with Paul, my partner.

And even for that matter, people can be in a relationship, but their setup is very different, and it might not feel like you get to tag team with the other

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person. So, it's important here to acknowledge that access to resources, whether that's grandparents that can help or having money to pay for help or being in a community of some kind. They all make a difference. And alongside that is how your experience of time is impacted through your stress levels and patterns of thinking.

So what response do you have when you're thinking about how you don't have enough time? Again, it's going to depend on how that thought feels to you, maybe the tone of that thought, its emotional resonance for you. For many of my clients they feel rushed or harassed and stressed. There's this ticking clock that they're always up against and don't stand a chance with. It doesn't usually create a sense of spaciousness, nor does it engage your thinking brain where you're able to see what options are available to you and be focused on what you want and your goals.

Instead, you'll probably experience a degree of activation of your nervous system, a bit of a stress response or a significant one. And because of that you'll be threat oriented, unable to see the options that are available to you and more prone to black and white thinking. So, when we're thinking about time, our perception and allocation of time is what matters and your belief about what you can do in a given timeframe. I love seeing this unfold in my clients, to see how they just collapse these timelines that they're used to doing things in or that they expect to do things in.

And it's not about pushing and flogging yourself to work like crazy and sacrifice your wellbeing in the process, 100% no. It comes from deeply trusting yourself, feeling capable, unwinding the limiting beliefs that hold you back, addressing fear of failure and your fear of success and letting go of perfectionism and taking messy imperfect action instead. That's how we do it.

Okay, next up on our list of whoppers is I'm not ready. Okay, telling yourself that you're not ready means that you don't have to do anything, which is really convenient. But when this comes up in coaching, it's important to look at where it's coming from. So sometimes when I'm coaching someone we'll sit with that thought. And I might say to my client, "Well, you don't have to.

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You don't have to do this thing.” And that for me is such a loving thing to offer someone especially if how they're approaching it is coming from some kind of forcefulness or strong-arming themselves or feeling strong-armed into it.

I like to say it to myself when I'm considering doing something, about to undertake something that's a bit of a stretch for me, I'll say in my head or even out loud to myself, “We don't have to do that.” And it's just such a loving experience and I can soften into it. And once I do that, once I'm tender with myself and giving myself grace in that moment usually what comes through is, but I want to. This is really fun and that's what happens with a lot of my clients as well, not all the time but probably 97% of the time.

You can also just decide that you're ready, that's a decision to make because you bloody well are, alright. It's patriarchal nonsense that's telling you that you aren't, so stop taking on that belief, stop lying to yourself or taking on the lies that are coming from other people and go for it.

Last one, this is similar, I need to be more prepared. More lies. This thought insists on just acquiring infinite knowledge and skills before taking action as if a perfect moment is going to befall you. This is how you end up with a lifetime of missed opportunities. And what does being prepared even mean? We want to interrogate that. We want to interrogate all of these thoughts. And how do we become more prepared? I'm really asking you this.

I talk about taking messy and imperfect action because it's a quick way of accumulating knowledge and experience that you will never be able to predict or acquire from preparing. And again, I don't hear men going around saying this, maybe they do but I don't hear it. We also know from research that women hold back from applying for jobs unless they meet all of the hiring criteria, whereas men just apply. I can't remember what the statistics are but it's something like when they meet 40 to 60% they just apply.

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Okay, that is it for today my loves, a fun one, a punchy one. I just want you to notice when these thoughts are coming up for you and just see them, these suspicious characters lurking around in your mind, bring them into the light, see them for what they are, question them. Do you want to keep them? Do you want to change them? Alright, I'll catch you next week.

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