

**Ep #132: Taking Up Space Unapologetically
with Flow Collective Member Martha Hoffman**



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Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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This is episode 132 of *The Maisie Hill Experience*. Today I'm talking to Martha Hoffman about taking up space unapologetically in all the ways. Enjoy 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*.

Hi everyone, welcome to this week's podcast which has been brewing for some time. For quite a while I have wanted my guest today, Martha, to come on and have a conversation. I will be honest I have no idea where this conversation is going to go because there's all sorts of directions we could end up going in. Martha, welcome to the podcast, thank you for coming on.

Martha: Thank you so much for having me, I'm super excited to be here.

Maisie: Well, why don't we start off with letting everyone know your name, your pronouns, maybe where you are in the world and what you do because I think people are going to be very interested to hear what you do.

Martha: Wonderful. My name is Martha Hoffman. I'm super excited to be here. My pronouns are she, her, hers. I am in Washington DC. I've been here now over half my life. And I am the founder and CEO of Grounded Learning. And that is my business. I primarily support families who are navigating the IEP process which is what it's called here, the special education process, supporting parents of kiddos with disabilities and/or are just really struggling in school and they need to figure out what supports their children need.

And not only the knowledge and kind of law and compliance and skills that go into that but then also how can families do that in a way that doesn't really consume them with stress and get super overwhelming because it's very easy for that process to get really overwhelming. I do some teacher

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coaching and I work with schools as well to develop their knowledge and understanding around special education. But primarily my work is with families.

Maisie: I love that. I love that the primary focus is on families but that you do work with educators and schools as well because in my mind that just makes so much sense. And it's having the awareness, knowledge, experience that comes from both of those, each supports the other.

Martha: Correct, yes. And I've been in all three seats. I've been a teacher. I've been a special education teacher. I've been the representative for the school. So, the person that really had to make the decisions for the school. And then I've been a parent. I navigated the process for my youngest. So having all those perspectives I think is why I can do that mix in a really skilful way. So yeah, I've been working in that field here in BC since 2003, so about 20 years now. I am married. My partner and I have been together almost 20 years. He owns a restaurant here in Washington DC.

Maisie: I didn't know that.

Martha: Yeah. So, our schedules are very interesting as you can imagine, not a dull moment around here. And to that end I also have an eight-year-old and a five-year-old daughter who are amazing and wild and it's, yeah, that's me.

Maisie: Amazing. So, our paths have crossed in several ways as colleagues and peers. I think I first heard about you through our mutual friend, Keina and then you came. Did you join *The Flow Collective* first or did we do business? I feel like it was business coaching, or did it all happen at the same time?

Martha: No, I did *Flow Collective* first, but I was slow to start in *Flow Collective*. And then we did business coaching and then I kind of for myself, it was *Flow Collective 2.0*. I ramped it up a bit.

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Maisie: So, I'm quite curious about why you decided to join *The Flow Collective* because you're a coach yourself. I'm sure a lot of the stuff that I teach in there, the things that we coach on are familiar to you professionally and personally. So why did you sign up? I've never asked you that.

Martha: Great question. I felt like I did have many of these skills to support others. And I was maybe too focused on supporting others. So, I was talking a lot of the talk and using a lot of the strategies in my coaching. I used to run a teacher licensure programme, so I was using it with teachers, and they were having amazing results. And even in friendships, somewhat in my parenting. And I don't think I really had all the skills yet to turn that all inward. Or maybe I had some of the skills, but I had some fear and reluctance about treating myself the way I would treat others in terms of what I use in coaching.

So, I felt like *The Flow Collective* was really about me, really selfish in a good way, the good side of selfish. I really just wanted it to be about me, not about my business, not about my marriage, not about me being a mum, just about me. And that was really important to me, and it was a very good decision.

Maisie: That's so interesting because one of the things that I wanted to bring up in our conversation that I don't know if you're aware of or if it was something that you did intentionally. But some things that I really see in you as a client is that you're really able to be the client.

Martha: Yeah. I mean that makes sense, that's what brought me to your work. I had read *Period Power* actually, that's how Keina and I first made the connection. She saw it on my bookshelf and said, "I know her." And I was like, "Oh my gosh." So, I had read the book, I feel like that in addition to some other coaching I had done, we both know Vic, I had worked with her. That really brought me in touch with a lot of the somatic side and understanding my body and listening to my body, quite frankly.

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And then again joining *The Flow Collective* was kind of that next step and just knowing that I deserved it and that also it was a benefit to others if I really poured that into myself. So yeah, when I'm being coached, I'm 100% being coached. I take off my coach hat entirely.

Maisie: Yeah. I really love that because I think to me that's really important, particularly in our community where there are other coaches and not just coaches, but other professionals kind of, whether they're teachers, therapists, kind of within that healing helping realm is that often there is that, just with the way that we're socialised, we need to keep helping. And so, you actually join something that is for you but end up still being yourself professionally. And I've had this experience and gone through this shift myself. There's Facebook groups that I'm in where things get discussed that I know about.

I really know I could answer questions, I could make recommendations. And it's really been beautiful work to do to just sit back and maybe to offer things once in a while but really not feel that urgency in me, I've got to help, I can help therefore I must help. So, I think it's a really cool thing to acknowledge in you as well. So go you.

Martha: Thank you, yeah. I even in the chat, I try and offer encouragement. I don't need to prove myself to anyone so I don't need to say, "I know exactly what you should do or check out this resource." If somebody asks, of course I'll always offer something. But otherwise, if someone's being coached, I love to offer encouragement in the chat. Or kind of a, you've got this, or this is relatable, thanks for bringing this up. But I don't need to be the coach.

Maisie: Yeah, I love that and that's what I want for everyone regardless of whether, what professional role is or not, that you come in and your experience of being in the membership is being the client. Okay. So, what have been your kind of favourite takeaways from being in *The Flow Collective* so far? It can be anything.

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Martha: There's so many. First and foremost, and I know you've mentioned this before on the podcast, this idea of there's no right way to be in *The Flow Collective*. For me that was just so powerful and has translated into so many other pieces of my life. So, it was probably my biggest reluctance in joining, I had this self-doubt, this hesitation that I wouldn't follow through or I wouldn't do it enough or I wouldn't consume the content in the 'right way', which now I can kind of laugh about. But at the time that was a really solid fear and I'm glad I joined anyway, and I have done it my own way.

I mean as I said, the first few months I was just kind of lurking. There was some here and there, I wasn't incredibly active in the beginning. And I just kept getting this message from you over and over again that that was fine, that's what it was meant to be, that there wasn't an instruction manual for how to do this thing, which is so small but it's so genius and it's so important. And I remind myself of that now all the time, any time I sign up for something or I don't know, plan a trip with my family or launch something for my business.

There isn't one right way to do this. And now I have a greater understanding of how that is steeped in white supremacy and systems that have suppressed women as well for years and years and years. And the freedom to just say, "Do this however you want", was really, really powerful for me and still is.

Maisie: That's so interesting. That's taken me by surprise I think because I do think that the way that we encourage people to be in the membership is a fantastic mirror of how you are in life and how you're going about your life. So, there's definitely a relationship there but I wasn't expecting you to tell me something that for all intents and purposes is part of the onboarding of, come on in to be so meaningful. But it really is because especially for many of my clients is this idea of there is a right way to do things.

And if you don't do it right then it means all these things about you and you're a failure and you're going to get in trouble. Someone's definitely

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going to come and tell you off. And well, this isn't the experience I wanted to have so I'm out.

Martha: Right. As if somebody on your team is going to email me and say, "You're not active enough." I mean how ridiculous. But I remember my sister-in-law and I joined at the same time. And even in the beginning we were like, "We'll take a weekend. We'll go back and do all the [crosstalk]." And then I was like, "What are we doing?" So, neither of us actually went down that path but it was a thought, it was there at the beginning, and it was really powerful to be able to let that go.

And even now there are weeks I do everything that's offered. And then I'll go three weeks and not show up and that's okay. I don't feel like I'm missing anything, but because there are other things happening in my life. So, it served me really well in that way.

Maisie: That's perfect. Yeah, because I think sometimes people, I don't know, it's like we're studying for our exams at school again and everything counts, and you've got to use everything. And you're never going to get this opportunity again so rinse it for everything that you can get. Everything's dependent on this and we, well, I'm sure you see that as you'll work with educators. So, it is such a skill to unlearn that, not just unlearn it mentally, you caught that thought about you have to catch up. You needed to take a weekend.

Martha: Ridiculous, I know.

Maisie: I mean I absolutely love and adore you that you wanted to do that. And I'm also so thrilled that you spent your time doing something else.

Martha: Yeah, it was a good choice.

Maisie: But it's unwinding that mentally and then also unlearning that physically in the body because, well, can you speak to that experience at all?

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Martha: Yes. I think of that phrase, let it go. We've become very popular in recent years, just let it go. And I have found that mentally, cognitively being able to let something go and physically being able to let something go are two very different things. I will actually share that it's another result that I've had. This is very, very specific but the sheer number of stomach aches that I have now is so much less than before because I used to let things sit in my stomach and that's where I felt a lot of turmoil, discomfort, angst and experiences would happen.

There would be a circumstance and I would get a stomach ache. And it's so interesting now that I can have a circumstance and say, "I'm still thinking about it, but my stomach doesn't hurt." And to me that's truly letting something go, where I've been able to not just say, "Let it go and move on Martha." But really then for me sometimes it's actually moving. It's taking a walk, or I like to put on very loud music and dance it out. And then I can really let something go. And if I don't have a stomach ache, that's kind of a real test of okay, you actually let this go.

You actually were able to move on from this and not hold onto something that wasn't serving you. It's one thing to say that but it's another thing to feel it. And I know now what it's like to really feel that.

Maisie: That's incredible.

Martha: Yeah, it's made a huge difference. And again, I know something like a stomach ache sounds so specific but there are topics I can talk about now that I didn't before because I physically didn't feel good. My shoulders would hunch, and my stomach would hurt. If things got really bad, I'd get some upper back aches. And now I know if any of that starts to bubble up that there's just something there I need to explore and I'm not fearful of that. For me that's kind of the full picture, not just writing it down in my journal or saying to you, "Okay, that's what I'll do, I'll let it go."

But really feeling it makes a big difference. And I was just missing that. I hadn't gathered that really from the last two or three years of my life.

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Maisie: Just an amazing result to create and such a shift. What's that journey been like for you?

Martha: It's been interesting. It has not been linear which is probably takeaway number three.

Maisie: Yeah, that's so important for people to be reminded of is that it isn't linear and well, I have some other thoughts. I'm going to write this down before I forget. You finish your thought and then we'll come back to mine.

Martha: It has not been linear at all for me. In fact, every time I think I'm on this journey of progression, here we go, here I am, then something kind of wallops me and it's just a beautiful reminder that hold on, life is still living all around you. I had been on a really positive path. I had started my business and I had given my job that I had been with for at the time almost 13, once I left almost 14 years, I had given them notice, just been making some really big shifts. And a couple of months later had this kind of epic collapse, another kind of episode of burnout.

And it was almost harder that time because initially I had thoughts around you know better and you've been taking care of yourself, how is this still happening? And as hard as that was it was also incredibly powerful because it was a reminder that, one, things aren't linear, and that two, it hurt as bad, and it was just as hard as other times that I've had symptoms of burnout. But I was so much more resourced. And was able to notice how supported I was as well.

So, when I look back on that time now, I think more about the support I had, the village that I had, the resources I had. And how I was able to cope instead of looking back on it as I fell apart or something was wrong, or I did something wrong. So that journey has been beautiful but also really hard at times. I don't want to sugarcoat it and say it's all beaches and rainbows. There were days that were hard to get out of bed if I'm being totally honest. But knowing I wouldn't get stuck there forever because of the resources I had now made it just something that I could endure.

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And just a reminder that life is the highs and lows because I definitely grew up coating emotions as good and bad. We should be happy. We shouldn't be sad especially as women, we should be cheerful and smile, we should not get angry. And now it's different. If I have anger now, I know I'm experiencing this anger, what do I want to do with it instead of this is bad or something's wrong with me. So that part of the journey has been at the risk of coating something, just better for me. It's just been easier to live that way.

Maisie: Yeah. Well, you've actually brought up exactly what I was going to ask you about because I think often, and I notice this in peers and other professionals, but I also see it in my clients, particularly the ones who have been working with me for a while. And they're using the tools and the resources that they have and then going through a patch that is stretching them, challenging them. Maybe they're experiencing burnout or a struggle of some kind.

And whereas I think if you've just learnt these tools and you go through that, it's perhaps more of, thank goodness I now know this, and I can use this. But then further on down the road, instead of that, fantastic, I can use these things, I'm well supported. It's why is this happening, this shouldn't be happening basically, you have all these tools, therefore there shouldn't be any bumps in the road in life now. That's kind of, I think, the thought error and expectation that we have.

And yeah, I was actually coaching someone on this the other day because I was like, "I just want to check in. Are you having some thoughts that this shouldn't be happening because we've been working together for some time", and all of these things? And she was like, "Oh, yeah, totally."

Martha: The shoulds creep back in. I should be able to handle this. I should be able to prevent this. I should be, it just, it creeps back in a little bit. But it is different then, when you have those resources and can call on them. And for me, when I'm having a hard time, it is hard to call on my resources. I feel like I have learned to just take action and sometimes it has to be really

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small like get in the shower. We live in the city, take a walk just around the block. Call a friend. Really small and then that momentum builds.

And then sometimes it's bigger action, sometimes it's I'm really taking care of myself super consistently. I'm going to acupuncture and doing my yoga class and journaling every day but sometimes it's not. And I have ADHD and I ebb and flow with implementing in a consistent way and that has to be okay for me. I can't think that if I don't do these five things every week in this order then I won't be okay, I will, it just it looks different from week to week, which again goes back to that there's no right way to do this. That journey has been good.

Maisie: Yeah. And I think that's when things that sound fantastic on paper and can be really beneficial sometimes can also become restrictive, perhaps even harmful and there can just be this rigidity around things. And so, I think it's just always interesting to look at, well, where is that coming from and what's your experience of it and that being a dynamic process of awareness and dipping into things and leaning into some things more than others. And it just goes back to the way that you described engaging in the membership.

Because there are times when you lean into it more, there's times when you come away from it and that's going to be different for everyone. Just don't make it a problem, whatever we're talking about, whether we're talking about going to the gym, being in the community, work projects whatever it is. Just that expectation that it should be the same all the time and if it's not then that means something about you personally is, it's just heavy. We just all need to let that one go.

Martha: We really do, we really do. I came up with something with my therapist and I think I brought it up to you in coaching once. And when you said rigidity it reminded me, this idea of flexible consistency. So, I had made a commitment to myself this summer that I would be consistent in that I would do things for myself. But then I would be completely flexible in what those things were. So, every week I was doing something, be it

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acupuncture or yoga or take a nap or go to bed really early. So, it was something for me to make sure that I was taking care of me.

But that what the thing was could be from a very long menu and it could change every day and every week. That was important for me because I didn't want to not do anything when I was having a hard time because then it was harder to kind of come out of it. So, as I said, sometimes it was small, stop, go downstairs, get a tall glass of water and take your vitamins and sometimes it was big. And that flexible consistency has been something I've been able to maintain and definitely serves me.

Maisie: I love it.

Martha: Yeah, it's been good.

Maisie: So, you've already mentioned some really incredible shifts and results that you've created, are there any other wins that we can celebrate with you?

Martha: I have to mention flying, being on an aeroplane is a big one for me. It's never been my favourite thing and after I had kids it got a lot harder for me and it felt really restrictive, and it was something that I wanted to change. And you sharing so openly about building a new relationship with the wind for you just gave me a different perspective and helped me to continue building a new relationship with flying. And this spring, me and my husband and my girls flew to Costa Rica to visit my sister and my nieces.

And I just kept saying, "I'm just building this new relationship." It didn't have to be perfect, but I could physically let go of some of the angst. And then we built in all these things that were really joyful. I packed bags for the girls that had really fun things in them like activity books and snacks. And I asked my husband to pack one for me so that I also had something like that.

Maisie: So cool.

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Martha: That was very fun. And just all the small things, the way I dressed to make sure I was comfortable, and I was really hydrated, and I just kept saying to myself, “You’re building this new relationship. You’re building this new relationship and it doesn’t need to be one way and it doesn’t need to be perfect.” But it doesn’t need to be the way it has been in the past. And I don’t know, maybe four years ago I got on a plane with my youngest and I had to get off. I couldn’t do it and that was a real low for me because I want to travel by myself, with my girls. I want to be places.

And I gotten to a place where I didn’t know if I could do that. So that new relationship has been amazing. And I feel really, really proud of the work I did to get there.

Maisie: Amazing. Yeah, let’s celebrate that. That’s incredible.

Martha: And again, it bleeds over into other things. When discomfort creeps in and things, just reminding myself of that, which is why I think it’s so important to celebrate the big things and the small. Because for me, flexing that celebration muscle is like then when something starts to creep in, I have that to remember. Hold on, remember that really hard thing you did. Or remember when you felt awful, and you were fine. Or remember when that didn’t go the way that you had hoped it would. It all turned out.

So, I think the celebration is probably another big piece from *The Flow Collective* that it takes some time to say, “Hold on, what did I do that was great this week?” Let me pull it out and that time is well spent. It’s an investment in me and that’s super important. And I was not in that practice before *The Flow Collective*.

Maisie: So, for everyone who’s listening who isn’t a member, and you may not have heard me mention it on the podcast before, but we have a really big culture of celebration in the community. And once a week we have a fresh post that goes up where you get to celebrate your wins. And they can be wins of any kind, whatever you want to celebrate. And it’s one of my

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most favourite things to see in terms of transformation in individuals because it's quite confronting to begin with.

And we have lots of members who struggle with it, resist it, feel awkward, feel like they're bragging and that's a negative thing rather than a positive thing. And just really find it uncomfortable to be seen to celebrate themselves, to let others celebrate them, everything that that brings up. And then it just happens so quickly just posting, I can't wait for Friday, I'm just sticking my own post up and the wins, it's really interesting. Sometimes I go through, and I look at individual people and see their journey of what they've been celebrating.

And it starts off with these kinds of hesitant celebrations, almost apologetic, and minimising, which our kind of loose rule is don't minimise, don't apologise, all of those things. And then there's just at some point a switch just gets flipped and the celebrations are detailed, very specific and lengthy. And it's just so cool to see.

Martha: It's really cool to see, and I think it's an example in taking up space, again, another term that's been used a lot lately. And I've had people say, "What does that even mean?" And I think this is a good example, I can celebrate and say, "Well, it's really small but I did this thing for my business and I'm proud of myself." And I can feel that I'm little when I say it like that, I'm almost shrunken in versus this big boastful braggy celebration. And again, socialised as women, we are told not to brag and maybe even not to take up a ton of space.

So, the celebration is an example of how to take up space. Make the list long, celebrate the big and the small with no apologies, no conditions, no, but I didn't do this part. No, just brag, celebrate, let people cheer you on and take up that space. I think it's a really good example of that. So, it's interesting to hear you saying to follow one person's progression. I have this visual of being actually getting bigger and bigger, taking up more space and yeah, being more powerful.

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Maisie: Yeah, in very literal ways as well as within themselves. So how was it for you navigating that?

Martha: It was similar, I often, and to be fair, I probably still find myself doing this sometimes. I often would have a disclaimer. This is really small, or this might not seem big to you or even with flying I would say that. I'd say, "I know this is no big deal to somebody else because you love to fly but I don't need to say that anymore." It was a big fucking deal for me to get on that airplane and not feel super anxious. So those disclaimers have come off my celebrations. And then I also like I'm saying with so many things, it just bleeds into other areas.

I use it on calls with my clients. I use it with kids that I work with. I work with a couple kids at a time and usually they're students that have not learned to read yet and think they're at an age where they need to know how to read, and they don't yet. So, they're experiencing that, I'm not a reader, I can't do this. So, I use it there, what are our wins here, what are we doing? Building up their self-confidence. I use it with my daughters.

The restaurant industry is not an easy industry. I use it with my husband. I know 10 things went wrong this week but tell me two things that were great. Tell me some celebrations there. It's just a beautiful habit to bring into everyday life for yourself and for those around you. I think gratitude is also very important but for me it's almost celebrations I think are even more powerful for me in the same way that some people have a really consistent gratitude practice. I think the celebration practice is even more powerful for me.

Maisie: Yeah. The visual that came to my mind when you were describing that difference is like someone timidly knocking at someone's door, like an office door, "Am I interrupting? I'm so sorry." It's like that energy versus just flinging the door open and just it's actually the scene I have in my mind is from Friends when Joey and Chandler are on that, I don't know, is it a dog? They brought some art deco interior sculpture.

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Martha: I feel like it's a horse, the white thing.

Maisie: Yeah, a horse, yes, the white thing. And they just come in, like that's the vibe we want.

Martha: Look at me, yeah. I love it. I love it, and it's loud and it's big and it does, it's interrupting again that big, taking up space. We all need practice with that.

Maisie: Yeah. And even with the things that we're celebrating. So, Mars and I, we have an ongoing WhatsApp kind of daily bragging thing. And my one to her yesterday was my daily brag is Paul thinks I'm being rude to him this week, which for me was a massive celebration. For a start, I really don't think I'm being rude, it's definitely not intentional. His interpretation is that I'm being rude. So, for him, he sees that as not a good thing. For me, even if I am being rude, that's a huge celebration because it's unwinding my conditioning tendency to people please.

All of that socialisation and managing my words and managing my tone so as not to ruffle anyone and cause any issues where I could be then confronted with something that's challenging. Just always accommodating and what's the phrase, is it pouring oil on troubled waters? I feel like I'm just randomly going on [crosstalk].

Martha: I don't know that one, that might be an English one I'm not very aware of.

Maisie: But that I'm just going to smooth everything over so everyone's okay and then I can be okay in myself. So, for me it's really significant that he's thinking this whether or not it's actually the case. Because there's that liberation inside me where I'm speaking more freely.

Martha: Yes. Two things came up for me when you said that. One, was I received coaching from you once for my seasons, my winter can be tricky. And I said something to you like, "I'm bitchier during my winter. Right a couple of days before I start bleeding, I am bitchy." And I had noticed some

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patterns, I had noticed, this was actually really cool, last spring I had an incident where I raised my voice at my kids and I'm not a yeller, but I did, and I didn't feel great about it.

And then something made me pay attention to what time of the month it was. And I remembered the last time that I had yelled at them. And I looked at my tracking app and then I went back one more month and I noticed that I had yelled at my kids three times in three months, and it was day 27 of my cycle. And holy shit, this is crazy. I mean I'm not promoting yelling to children, it's not an effective strategy but wow was that information for me. So, I was talking to you about that. And I remember part of your coaching was, "Maybe you need to be a little bitchier throughout the whole month.

Maybe there is some withholding and maybe even a touch of masking going on the other three weeks of the month and it's just harder to conceal at that time." So, this similar idea of maybe if I'm a little bitchy, showing my irritableness sometimes more consistently almost, that's okay if it's really there rather than bottling it up 25 days out of the month and then kind of letting it pop off, which just kind of blew my mind. [Crosstalk].

Maisie: Yeah, I can remember your face being like, because the thing is, because I have this experience as well when I get coached. You think you know, especially professionally, we're probably going to end up coaching on this, especially if it's something that you've self-coached on a bit. Then you're just wanting the coach to help you take it a bit deeper. And then you just get something out of left field and you're like, "Wow, we're going in this direction, okay." And I can remember that look on your face like, oh, I can be bitchy.

Martha: Yes, not a problem. Doesn't mean something's wrong with me, not a character flaw. Yeah. And the other thing that came to mind when you were talking about celebration was, I don't know if you've ever discussed this explicitly but something that I got out of celebrating too was the difference between celebrating for yourself and celebrating others versus celebrating in a comparative way. So, I have a text thread with three great

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women friends of mine. And recently somebody was bragging about one of their children.

And there was some apology in there, some disclaimer. And I wrote something back like, "I think we should be bragging about our kids whenever we can. Let's go for it. Keep it coming. What else is amazing that they've done?" And someone else said, "Yeah, but you don't want to be that mum." And I said, "Yeah, but that mum, we're talking about someone that is comparing, my kid can do this thing your kid can't do." And I had no time for that. I just, I don't want to hear it. I don't want to participate in it, see you later.

But to say, my child reached this goal, for my kid, she passed the swim test. I want to brag on her behalf too and I damn sure want her to brag about that because she worked her butt off for it. So that difference of bragging for ourselves or in this example, for our kids is great. And it doesn't need to be comparative or at someone else's expense. And for me that's an important distinction.

Maisie: You're so right and now that I think about it, the phrase that comes to mind is one upmanship. But there's, well, at least my experience of our celebration threads is that doesn't exist within it.

Martha: And it doesn't, I've never seen it.

Maisie: So, I've never thought about it in that context because it's absent, so I've never had to.

Martha: But you could see how easily it could go there. I mean I think that speaks a lot to the community that you've created, that that's just not even a fire you all are having to put out, but it could easily go there. And what I said to this group of women was, "I don't think we have to worry about that here. None of you are bragging about yourself or your child to diminish something that me or my child has done. So, let's just put that aside, start bragging, what else have they done? Bring it on, I love it. Let's just do it."

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Maisie: Amazing. How is it for you being in a membership because I bet you have lots of experiences of, well, we did small group in the business coaching. That group was very special.

Martha: That group was wonderful, and it was just what I needed right when I needed it. I love coaching in a group. And actually, my first experience with coaching was in a group. And I don't know why I didn't have reluctance. I kind of jumped right in. It was Victoria Albina's, *Anchored*. And I'm not someone, again, I'm not going to apologise here. I'm not someone that gets nervous when I get coached. So even in that group, the very first time I just kind of, "Here I am, I want to try." And I knew I would fumble but I just did it. So, I love coaching in a group because I do like being coached myself.

But I also love that I can keep my camera off and listen to someone and just think, oh God, I needed this too, what they're saying completely resonates. And I got a few instances where the coaching topic is about relationships and dating and I mean I haven't dated in a long time, been half my life. And somehow, I'm still taking something out of it, for a friendship or for a family member. And I'm like, "This is wild." I could not relate to this exact topic, but I can absolutely relate to the coaching that's going along with it.

And I just think in terms of connection and community that that's really important, that it's not always, again I said I joined to be selfish. It is all about me but in a way that I'm still building this connection with others and seeing others' perspective and then still benefiting from even their coaching when I don't raise my hand which is really, really powerful.

Maisie: That's why I love group coaching as well. Just like, oh my God, this is, yeah, I have this happening in this part of my life. And for me, it's kind of a fun game that I like to play. Listening to other coaching is how can I apply this to my life somehow? And there's always multiple ways, it literally doesn't matter what the topic is.

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Martha: Yeah. It's a way you get to be like it's all about me without it being all about you because the coach is focused on that individual, but you get to say, "Okay, what do I want to take from this?"

Maisie: Yeah. And I think it's really powerful, and I'm thinking particularly of one of our most recent coaching sessions. There was some really quite deep kind of raw vulnerable stuff that came up. And I think whether it's a topic that's quite deep and profound for you or whether it's something that's more kind of light-hearted. I often think about coaching about buying yourself some new underwear, something that doesn't have the kind of root system that something else would have but it's always so valuable for the people witnessing the coaching to see, yeah, I totally have that thing too.

But also, for the person who's receiving the coaching directly, and they're the ones being coached, for people in the community afterwards and things to be saying, "That really resonated for me, thank you so much for getting coached. I found it helpful for all of these reasons." Because I think often when we keep things in our own heads, we're just thinking, I'm the only one who has this problem. No one else is facing this issue. It's me, it's me, it's me.

And so, when you have that beautiful moment of being witnessed and held and supported and people are like, "Oh, no, that's also my experience, thank you." It's just that community, that connection is so powerful.

Martha: There was a time where I questioned that and thought, do I need that validation? What's going on here? And I know now it wasn't about validation, it was about connection. It's the not wanting to feel alone. So, when somebody in the chat or then the community afterwards, that resonated, thank you for bringing that to coaching. I was really able to hear that. That for whatever reason sunk in today, just not feeling alone and feeling lifted up by this community of women is really important. It's not about the validation, it's that community feeling.

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Maisie: Yeah. And has there been anything that kind of stands out to you as being particularly challenging or confronting?

Martha: So, it's interesting because it goes back to why I joined. I was using these tools on others and not on myself. And I think the lesson that I think in this lifetime is just one that I am going to need to learn over and over and over again is some version of I don't have to set myself on fire to keep others warm. And actually, most of my kind of growth in that area through *The Flow Collective* has not been through direct coaching, a lot of it has been through others.

So right now, there's someone very important to me in my life who I love dearly going through a really hard time. And my instinct is to make it better and swoop in and fix and almost be a buffer for her and that's not what I need to do, not for me and not for her. And to know that I can show up for her by unconditionally loving her no matter what choices she makes in this scenario is really important to me, but it is a practice. It goes against my instinct and but again I've heard others get coached on this in a variety of scenarios.

And this has happened in my life in a variety of scenarios as well but this one right now is really important. And I can be there for her, but it is not my burden to carry because not only is that not right for me. That's not right for her. She needs to go through this and live this. And I remind myself of that constantly. I can be there for her without trying to absorb all of this. Doesn't need to be my stomach ache quite literally. And I can just love her unconditionally no matter what steps she takes in this process. That's the best that I can give to her. And I feel proud of that also, I really do.

Maisie: Yeah, it's such big work to be doing, that process of sitting on your hands, keeping your trap shut and being there.

Martha: Yeah, still showing up. And don't get me wrong, when she asks then for something, yes, I'll do it, here I am. She'll say talk about blank. And then I can share them, but I don't do that unless she asks now. And I think

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that that's an unspoken norm that we have now. And I'm hopeful that that's what's serving her and it's definitely what's serving me.

Maisie: Yeah. Because it's again, I think that's not having that rigidity and things. I can only be this way or in order to not do this I have to be this way. And then we just get very all or nothing about things. And rather than that dynamic dance in the middle, which is also where we can fuck up, let's face it.

Martha: Absolutely. And I just need to be okay with that. That's part of it.

Maisie: Can we switch tack and talk about your business and your work?

Martha: Please, yes.

Maisie: Well, I'm curious, recently when we were messaging about having this conversation, you'd mentioned going back to watch some previous coaching. Was it business coaching or was it from the membership?

Martha: It was business coaching.

Maisie: It was business coaching, which I love because I do the same thing. So, you had shared that you'd gone back and watched the coaching that you'd gotten from, well, six months ago I guess at this point.

Martha: Yeah, the fall, yeah.

Maisie: Yeah. And still found it helpful and re-used it, which I love because I do that too. Either I'll replay it in my mind or I'll actually, actually I don't really have anything to watch these days but I can go over it in my mind and go back to coaching that I got years ago and still get the benefit from it and I think even get the benefit from it at a deeper level because you've already ideally applied it once and taken it in and then going back for round two or three or 10.

Martha: Yeah. I don't know if you remember but with business coaching, our very first meeting you greeted us and then said, "And Martha, I'm going

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to put you on the spot and you're going to get coached first." And I was like, "Okay." And with the time difference, it was 6:00am here and my room was dark, and I was like, "Okay, I didn't volunteer, here we go." So that was great, it was just what I needed. But you started right out and said, "It seems like other folks have this sorted, you don't yet, let's just dive right in", which is really good for me.

So, I've rewatched that just around clarity and offer and things like that. And then for me, issues around money and charging and things like that come up over and over again. And I've gone back to that, sometimes when I get the desire to, I need to sign up for something else, I need to find something else. I pause and think, hold on, you have a catalogue of coaching you have already received. See if that still feels relevant. So that is a good practice for me because it doesn't feel like I'm just consuming, consuming, consuming.

I'm reminding myself of what has already served me and coming back to it. And if there comes a time where it doesn't, that's different but that time has not come yet.

Maisie: I love that because that kind of touches on what you said earlier on in the conversation in terms of being aware of how resourced you are and what resources are already available to you. Because I think kind of one of the products of the societies that we live in is that always going for the next thing. And that's not, I want to be careful here. It's not like that's good or bad, it's just kind of a fact of life. And it depends where it's coming from. And it's the same for me. Sometimes I'll be like, "Oh yeah, do this thing."

And then I'm like, "Wait a minute, why? Where is that actually coming from." And nine times out of ten, no, I'm not going to do that thing, completely unnecessary.

Martha: For me, it can come from avoidance for me. It can actually be a buffer for me, and I know that now. I'm onto myself now when that starts. It can be a way of avoiding what's right in front of me, that I know I need to

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work on. And my word or concept for 2023 was just integrate. Integrate what you already have, put it into practice, keep working with it.

Maisie: You're doing that so successfully.

Martha: Thanks. I don't need to consume tons and tons more content. I need to live with what I have and experiment with it and fuck up and be okay with that. So that's been part of that. So, when I get that urge, rewatching coaching is a really good way to fulfil that and not feel like I'm avoiding whatever's right in front of me. Yeah, the business has been, some of what I was coached on was just being visible too, getting on Instagram and being visible. And I've absolutely succeeded there.

And I have really practised what I preached around being a recovering perfectionist there. I will record something and there's a mistake and I post it. I'm just not willing to spend hours and hours a day editing. And don't get me wrong I'm not trying to be sloppy. And it's important to me, but if the content is valuable for a parent or a teacher and I have flubbed my words for a minute it's fine. I'm just, I'm going to put it out there. The value is still there.

Maisie: And that's such an excellent form of self-care in all the ways, time, energy but also, I think more importantly that that internal conversation about fluffing the words for a moment, and just being able to do that and moving on.

Martha: Yeah. It's more important to me to put something else out there that would benefit a family than to keep editing this one thing until it looks 'perfect'.

Maisie: Yeah. I think that's so often what comes up in business is and particularly in the work that we do is people get stuck because they're just, the focus is on them. The spotlight is on them rather than being like a lighthouse letting other people know, hey, I'm here and I can help you. I think that for me when I look back to kind of, I don't know, 15, 20 years ago,

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I remember realising that's what I was doing. I'm just all me, me, me here. What do I look like? What do people think of me? What are my needs?

It was just all that rather than who do I want to help, who can I help, how do I help them. And that's the thing that really helped me with putting myself out there. Just thinking, there's someone out there really struggling, and I know 100% I can help them. So therefore, it's my job to be that lighthouse and then they know, and they can come to me which is the same for you with your work.

Martha: Yeah. What's so interesting about what you just said, I'm going to get a little meta for a second, is I end up doing that work often with parents. They are so focused on wanting to support their child, of course, but sometimes we unpack a little bit of what's going on for them with that is their shame around admitting this disability. Is there reluctance to get an evaluation? Sometimes I'll ask, "How does it feel when you say out loud, my child has dyslexia? How do you feel when you say that to your parents or to your in-laws?"

Some of that work around you can say you want to support your child. You'll do anything you can, but we do also need to look at how this is impacting you. And again, not as a judgement, not as a good or bad, but if it feels hard for you, let's admit that and have that be here and not pretend it's not. Or if it feels scary then that's there. Not talking about it doesn't mean the scary isn't there and your child might be picking up on that too. So, let's really unpack that to whatever level the client is comfortable doing because if that's there for you, it's showing up in your support as well.

And for some families that's leaning in, for some it's leaning out, for some families it's having really unrealistic expectations. My child has ADHD and I want to just manage it and that's it. Well, let's talk about that or my child's not reading, and I want them to be reading by the end of the summer. Or my child's showing symptoms of something else, but I don't want that label. There's just, there's a lot there.

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Maisie: It's so interesting that labelling thing, I often hear that from parents who are like well, they know that their child is autistic or ADHD or dyslexic. But they don't want to tell the kid, or they haven't had a formal assessment of some kind, maybe they've had kind of feedback from professionals, they have their own understanding of things. But they don't want that label, and this isn't my profession, but my personal opinion is these kids are going to be labelled with all sorts of things, lazy, unorganised, problematic, all of those other labels are going to come in.

To me, a label that's more about neurodiversity for example, is completely fucking neutral. It doesn't mean anything.

Martha: All those other words are already so weighted in a lot of ways. Yeah, exactly. And so, this started by saying the focus is on them. This is a parent's, I might say, "This is about you too." And I think the tendency is then for a parent to almost feel bad, you're right, it shouldn't be about me, it should be about my child. And I'm actually saying the opposite. No, no, no, this is about you too.

This is your life also and you are supporting your child and that also means managing. And this burden falls disproportionately to mums managing the appointments and the evaluations and the therapies and talking with the teacher and advocating for what they need. I'm not telling you it shouldn't also be about you. I'm saying, let's give some space to that. Let's actually look at how this is impacting the whole family as a unit, not just the child experiencing this thing. Let's give that some space and care and hopefully then provide the supports for your child, yes.

But then also what do you need? What does your partnership need? Is it putting unnecessary burden on your marriage or on another sibling and all of those pieces? And some families want to dive really far into that and some we just kind of dip our toes in and that's okay, but just, even just bringing some awareness to that for me feels a really important tool to bring to parents. Instead of just what do I do, what do I schedule, how do I read?

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I can give you that list too and I can recite the law for you, and I can give you a checklist, but my work is about much more than that.

Maisie: So how do people get a hold of you when they decide to work with you?

Martha: Yeah, so Instagram is where I'm most active and my handle there is just groundedlearning. And then website or Instagram, you can book a free call just to find out more about if I can support. The website is groundedlearningbc.com. And yeah, I'm responsive on both of those, like I said, most active on Instagram. I'm accepting new clients at the time and new families.

And as I said in the beginning I do also work with teachers and with schools as well because it is important to me that I'm bringing my knowledge and skill base into all of those areas because they all work together. We're not operating in silos. We're all operating together and the more knowledge that I can bring to schools especially as well and understanding, the better all the adults in the building are able to support kids with diverse needs.

Maisie: Amazing. I just love you. I love the work you do. It's so great to be able to hang out.

Martha: Thank you. This has been wonderful, yeah. I'm really glad we finally made it happen. This has been wonderful.

Maisie: Well, thank you so much for coming on, we will drop the links to your website and Instagram in the show notes so that if anyone does want an easy way to check out your work and get in touch then they can. But I'm sure everyone will have benefitted from just hearing you talk about all of the things. So, thank you for coming on.

Martha: Thank you so much for having me, it's really been a pleasure.

Maisie: Alright everyone, that is it for this week, I'll be back next week, see you then.

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