

Ep #152: Making “Bad” Decisions



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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This is episode 152 and today I have something really important to talk to you about and that's what to do about bad decisions. Are you ready?

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*.

Hello gorgeous ones. I have just got back from a trip to Arizona. That was, I don't even have the words for it yet and I'm not sure I ever will, but it was amazing. I went there for a four-day leadership workshop, and it was very suited to me because we were practising our leadership skills with a herd of horses. I mean talk about designed for me. And it was in the middle of nowhere which I wasn't entirely expecting. I knew it was going to be somewhat rural, of course, because horses.

But I checked to see if you can get Ubers there because I always do that, partly because, well, I knew I wasn't going to be renting a car and I struggle to make phone calls. That's one of the ways that being autistic impacts me on a kind of day-to-day basis. So, if I'm going somewhere and I'm going to need a taxi, my preference is using an app to order something or a messaging system. And if that's not available then I will often send a text to other people in my life like Paul or Mars to call the taxi company for me and book it.

And there are times when I'm able to do it, but I much prefer booking through an app or texting. So, I like to know that I can do that through Uber. But Uber also gives you a sense of how rural somewhere is. We don't have Uber where I live and it's a town of, I don't know, 70,000 people, something like that. So, it's not even rural. But when I booked the Airbnb, I saw that it was three miles from the workshop venue. And to me, that's no big deal. That's an hour's walk. So even if there are no taxis, it'll be fine.

But when I put the location into Uber, options came up. And I just kind of forgot that just because options come up doesn't mean you're actually going to be able to make the booking, that it will be accepted. So, I was

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mistakenly lured into thinking that I would just be able to get taxis and Ubers.

So, I landed in Tucson, stayed there for one night, and then this lovely chap, Steve, who was recommended to me by my Airbnb host, picked me up in Tucson, drove me to the Airbnb and on the way he said, “Well, do you want to stop off and get any groceries and things and snacks along the way?” And I was like, “Yeah, sure.” Because who doesn’t want snacks? So, I go do a bit of shopping, get some bits and pieces, nothing substantial but I get snacks. So, then we carry on driving and then it’s at this point that I start to realise why he asked me if I wanted to stop off and get things.

So, it was more remote than I was imagining, not remote if you have a car. If you have a car, it’s easy. You can just drive to places. You can get food. You can go to the stores because there were places like that around. But if you don’t have a car then it’s not going to happen. And I had been calling this place a town that I was going to, but it’s not actually classified as a town. It’s a census designated area.

And in the last census, 295 people lived there. I don’t imagine that number has changed much. But the area was stunning, way more green than I’d imagined. Surrounded by mountains and blue sky, it was warm, it was 27/29 degrees, but it was this clean, dry heat so it didn’t feel oppressive. And thankfully the temperature had dropped the week before we got there because it was 40 degrees the week before.

But I had such a transformative four days. And I know that I have some new listeners because some of the other participants listened to my podcast after I told them about it during the workshop. So, hello to all of you, and thank you for being so amazing. I had such a great time with you. It was just life changing, completely life changing. It was like one day of the workshop was the equivalent of doing two years of coaching or therapy. But I just had such huge shifts as a result of that. So, signing up for that workshop is an example of a fantastic decision that I made.

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But today I want to talk to you about what to do when you make a decision, and it doesn't work out in the way that you expected or wanted it to. So, this is coming up now for me because I recently coached one of my long-term clients in my membership, *The Flow Collective* and so many people on the call and afterwards found the coaching beneficial.

So, I thought it would be a really interesting topic for us to talk about here because the specific coaching that I offered this person is something that I use in my life all the time. So much so that it has just become my natural way of doing things, my way of thinking and approaching everything in my personal life and my professional life. And because it's just so normal to me, I don't really give it much thought.

It's only when I say it out loud to someone else and they're just blown away by it that I remember that other people might not know how to do this. And this will free you up so much and help you to make decisions which I know is an issue for you. I've heard that sometimes you find it hard to make a decision. And I'm not going to share the exact details of the call, but my client had made a decision basically a few years ago and invested resources into that decision, time, money, hiring, other people etc. And they were very committed to the plan that they had come up with, so, all good.

But as is often the case, life changes and in this case, not her life specifically, but more in a general, worldwide way, as I'm sure most of you have experienced. So, lots of changes in the world over the last few years and they continue to. And that meant that the plan she had committed to would require way more investment than initially thought. And she was trying to decide what to do. I'm sure you've been in this situation too.

And the options are basically, continue with the plan, even if it takes longer and requires more than you'd planned for and that can be in all sorts of ways, time, energy, money, other resources. Option two, abandon the plan altogether or three, modify the plan somehow. So, it might not be exactly what you wanted to happen. There's a compromise on your grand plan or your vision, but you still do something.

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Now, sometimes deciding what to do is going to be really straightforward and obvious. You might have some thoughts and feelings to sit with and to figure out until you can get to a place of acceptance and be able to move forward with whatever it is that you decide. But at the same time, it could be very clear what you need to do, but if you feel stuck and torn, then you won't have the clarity to make that decision in the first place.

So, one factor that can cause someone to get stuck in this place is the trap of Sunken Cost Fallacy. So, this is a concept in economics and psychology where a person continues a behaviour or an endeavour because of previously invested resources even if the current costs of pursuing it outweigh the benefits. And this comes up, I think, fairly often on our coaching calls in *The Flow Collective*, especially when someone is feeling unfulfilled professionally and they're considering changing their career.

So, they may have spent years studying for a degree in a specific field, they graduate, they start working, they accumulate experience. But as the years go by they realise that it's not actually for them. Maybe they're deeply unsatisfied and unfulfilled by their work or the working environment doesn't suit them somehow or allow them to thrive. Or there's just this other thing that's been burning inside them that that's what they actually want to pursue and maybe have always wanted to pursue.

However, they resist considering a career change like that because they might be feeling that leaving a profession would mean they're going to waste their degree and the years they have spent building their career, their reputation, all the experience gained. So, this is a classic case of the Sunken Cost Fallacy, where they're prioritising their past investment in education and time spent in the field over their current happiness and wellbeing as well as their future job satisfaction.

So, they're reluctant to pursue a career that might bring them more fulfilment in all sorts of ways because they are focused on the resources already spent rather than on the potential future satisfaction that would come from that new career path. So, this is how people end up trapped in

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careers and relationships that no longer serve their interests or their aspirations, it's just because of the past investments they've made.

And this can happen in friendships, romantic relationships too, someone can stay in an unfulfilling relationship because of everything they've already invested in it. And they justify staying because of the time and the emotional energy that they've already invested, even though the relationship is no longer the one that they want to actually have. So, in life and in business, the Sunken Cost Fallacy can keep us clinging to plans and projects or relationships that no longer serve us, that we don't actually want any more just because we've invested a lot in them already.

So, it's like that phrase, throwing good money after bad. So, the key here is to recognise when you're falling into this trap and to evaluate your decisions based on current and future benefits, not past losses. And this is what was going on for my client. So, when you make a decision that leads to an undesired outcome of some kind, what's most important is that you give yourself grace.

It's crucial to remember that every decision you've made has been based on the best information you had at the time of making that decision. That includes all kinds of data, whether it's facts and figures or your gut instincts, your intuitions, which are also data that are valid and important. And I want you to understand something fundamental here, berating yourself for a decision that didn't pan out as you hoped is punishing yourself for not having a crystal ball. It's unfair and it's counterproductive.

When you beat yourself up over past decisions, you're essentially telling yourself a story that you're incapable of making good decisions. That's a narrative that doesn't serve you and it doesn't reflect reality either. So, every decision that you make is a stepping stone, even the ones that don't lead you where you expected. They're just part of your experience, part of your journey and each one is going to contribute somehow to your growth and understanding.

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When a decision doesn't work out, it's not a reflection of your overall ability to make decisions. It's just an outcome, one outcome in a sea of many. So instead of spiralling into self-criticism, practice self-compassion. Give yourself grace. Acknowledge that you did the best you could with what you knew and felt at that moment. You acted with the best intentions, aiming for an intended outcome. That's commendable, not condemnable, but you might be over there just condemning yourself for it.

And here's the thing about self-compassion. It's not this fluffy way to feel better, although I am very up for some tenderness and some fluffiness and some softness, I'm all for that. Self-compassion is a very practical tool because when you approach your past decisions with understanding and kindness, you create a space for learning and growth. You start to see the lessons and the insights, not just the disappointments.

When you're stressed out and berating yourself and just beating yourself up, you can't get into that space. That's just not how our stress responses work. And when you can be in this place of self-compassion and look at things through that lens, that's going to help you to build resilience and capacity and have the confidence to make future decisions with a clearer, more informed mindset. And remember that the goal here with decisions isn't to never make a 'bad decision'. That is impossible for any human.

The goal is to learn, to grow and to continue moving forward with a compassionate, open heart. You're not just making decisions. You're shaping your experience and every step you take, every choice you make is a part of that. So, the next time that you find yourself ruminating over a decision that didn't go as planned, pause, take a breath, doesn't have to be any kind of special breath, just pause, take a breath. Remind yourself that you acted with the best of your knowledge and instincts at that time.

And offer yourself the same kindness and understanding that I'm sure you would offer to a close friend in a similar situation. Because talking crap about yourself only leads to you believing that you are incapable of making good decisions and that nothing ever works out, which it's just not useful

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and it's not true. So, we've covered the importance of Sunken Cost Fallacy and also of giving yourself grace.

But there's one other technique that I use all the time and it flips the whole Sunken Cost Fallacy on its head, which I really love. I find it really useful, and this is what I shared with my client. So, this is how I approach all so-called failed investments and unplanned negative outcomes, situations where things don't work out as planned or as I hoped, which does happen by the way.

Don't be sitting there or walking your dog whilst you're listening to me and thinking that everything goes perfectly for me, that every investment I make produces amazing results. Because part of being an entrepreneur and having a business is that some of the stuff you invest in will not work out, that's just part and parcel. So, no matter what happens, one of my favourite thoughts to use is I always come out on top. This mindset doesn't ignore the reality of the situation at all, but it shifts the focus from loss and failure to growth and learning. Because I do always come out on top, I deeply believe that.

My business could collapse overnight, and I would still come out on top. Can you hear how much I believe that? Because it's true, in all seriousness, I could lose all my clients, all the revenue in my business and still come out on top. How is that possible? Well, think about everything I've learned from doing this. All the experience I've gained, the decisions that I could now make, given everything I know, whether that would be starting over and doing the same thing or doing something completely different, even in another field.

Even just knowing that something isn't for me is valuable. And that's what this exercise is all about. It's about finding all the value gained from an experience. And I do that by asking myself, well, how have I grown as a result of doing this? How has my self-concept shifted as a result of doing this? What have I learned? Who have I become? And that way even if a project fails, especially if a project fails, the experience will have taught you

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invaluable lessons, given you new insights or helped you to develop skills that you wouldn't have otherwise gained had you not experienced failure.

I also ask myself, well, this might have cost me something, but what has it saved me from? Because sometimes what seems like a failure can actually be a blessing in disguise. Maybe it saved you from a bigger loss down the road or it freed you up for another opportunity. Who knows? We don't know. But by doing this, you reframe your narrative and that helps with creating and maintaining a forward focus.

Dwelling on your past decisions doesn't change them. What matters is what you do next, how you adapt and how you apply what you've learned. And that all starts with how you are thinking about past decisions and where you are at now. Alright, that is it for this week, folks. Keep moving forward and trust that you're always coming out on top because you are.

Hey, if you love listening to this podcast then come and check out my membership, *The Flow Collective*, where you get my best resources and all the coaching you need to transform your inner and outer life. Sign up to the waitlist at theflowcollective.co/join, and I'll see you in the community.