

## Ep #154: Taking Care of Yourself When You're Sick



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With Your Host

**Maisie Hill**

**The Maisie Hill Experience** with Maisie Hill

## Ep #154: Taking Care of Yourself When You're Sick

This is episode 154 and it's for when you're not feeling great. I have had a not-so-great time over the last six weeks. And I want to talk to you about it and share my favourite ways of taking care of myself when my physical health dips.

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, folks, how are you doing? I am okay, not the best but not the worst. I have had a bunch of things happen recently and I want to share them with you and hopefully the things that have helped me will help you too when you're in similar situations. So, I got the idea for this episode a few days ago on a day where I woke up at 3:00am feeling congested and restless because I'd caught a cold from my son, Nelson. The two nights before he'd been in bed with me with a fever, so I was already tired and feeling run down and then I got ill.

And this was a day where I was due to coach in *The Flow Collective*, my membership, and it was a coaching call that I really wanted to do that day. It was all about fixing what's broken and no longer serving you. And I had been looking forward to doing that call all month. And I had that classic mental wrestling scenario going on of wanting to do something and arguing with the reality of not being well enough to actually do it.

And I'd actually coached a few members on this recently in our community, just on how physical illness can really impact things kind of beyond the actual being ill. So, I thought it would be good, given all of this, to spend some time on it here on the podcast because it comes up a lot for all of us. So, I'm going to start by filling you in on what the last six weeks have been like for me.

So, the first week of October, I was premenstrual and that's not typically much of an issue for me these days, but I had an important deadline, and it was kind of challenging for me to access the physical and mental energy

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required for it, but I did it, I got through it. And then there was a couple of weeks where I had two colds pretty much back-to-back, one of which was a week that I had cleared in order to batch prepare and record podcasts. I should really stop planning to do this because without fail, any time I plan on a week like this, something happens that means I can't actually do it.

But the plus side of that is that I don't have much else scheduled in, so it's kind of easier to be off work. Then, after finally being well enough to teach the workshops that I'd had to postpone, etc, I went horse riding on a horse that I don't think I actually had any business even getting on. But he squealed, he jumped and bucked, and I came off and I got concussion and a sore hip.

And then kind of a few days later my neck muscles really began to ache, but thankfully I was well enough to fly because I went to Arizona for a leadership workshop. But the entire time I was there, my neck was so sore. So that was kind of affecting my ability to sleep and move and all of those things. Then I got back, and I wanted to get back on the horse in a very literal sense, not that same horse, mind.

But I was feeling apprehensive and a bit nervous about riding again and I wanted to move through that. So, I had a few rides and they felt weird to me because between being ill, being away, etc, I hadn't actually ridden that much. Plus, I had the nervousness about riding after coming off. So, I was getting on with things and things were going well. My confidence was beginning to come back, and I was feeling really proud of myself for kind of doing that from that vulnerable place.

And then I was paired with a horse that can be a bit tricky and I do love riding him. I like our partnership. So, I thought, okay, let's do it. And my lesson was going so well. We were having a lovely calm canter and then we came around this corner and he just sped off and bucked me off. And I have no idea what happened, but I hurt my knee and it's still hurting. And then a few days later, Nelson got this cold, fever. He slept with me, so obviously I then caught it, etc, etc. So, I've had a bit of a run of it.

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Over the course of six weeks, I've been ill three times and injured twice. And my riding confidence dipped, and I was feeling apprehensive and then nervous and then scared. And that brought up a lot of emotions for me because of the impact that riding has had on my life this year. And because of everything I've mentioned, I haven't been riding that much and riding is now a major way for me to regulate myself. And that means without it as a regulating resource, it's had a direct impact on my sensory sensitivities and ability to communicate with people in my life, personally and professionally.

So, it's been challenging, let's just say that. But thank goodness for all the other tools that I know and that I use in my life all the time and that I teach all my clients. Because without them, I think all of that would have escalated into a lot more in terms of talking to myself negatively and poor mental health as well as physical health. Because I've scrapped plans. I've cancelled meetings. I've not been able to do things. I haven't replied to emails.

I haven't been able to coach. Thankfully, Mars Lord, the amazing Mars Lord, has been able to step in for me. And if you're looking for a coach to work with one-on-one, then please go and hire her. She's amazing. I postponed workshops in the membership that were planned ages ago. So, I just want to give you some guidance on how to treat yourself when you're feeling like crap so that you can contain the experience. So, this is the mental equivalent of wrapping yourself up in a duvet.

So, the first step is to acknowledge how you are feeling and then accept your reality. Those two things are different. You can know that you're ill or unwell or tired and acknowledge that but still spend time in denial of it. So, the sooner you stop arguing with the reality of your situation, the better. So, on Monday I woke up feeling exhausted from interrupted sleep and being ill. But you know how sometimes colds can feel the worst in the morning or in the evening.

So, you can kind of wake up and feel awful, but a couple of hours later, it's not that big of a deal. And because I had these calls that I really wanted to do, I was very attached to doing them, I thought it would be good if I could

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do them. But I wanted to account for the possibility I may or may not be able to do them. So, I'd sent Mars a message asking if she was available to coach. Could she be on standby, which she was able to do.

And then after two hours of sniffing and sneezing and lots of holding my head in my hands. I really recognised that I was in no state to be coaching anyone and that I just needed to be ill. Now, for those two hours I was arguing with reality. It took me that amount of time to fully accept how I was feeling and recognise that I'd be no good to anybody. And in fact, that it would be detrimental to my own health to push forwards. Two hours isn't that bad in the grand scheme of things because I could have spent six hours umming and ahing about what to do.

And then my time being ill also has all the mental turmoil of trying to figure out what I should be doing added to it. So that's what we're talking about reducing here. And this is what comes up for all of us. I don't know anyone who doesn't have this to some degree. I am really, I would say, fantastic at taking care of myself, giving myself time off for whatever reason, but it still comes up.

Thoughts about our commitments and our responsibilities and the plans that we have and what are they going to think if I cancel? Well, it must mean that I'm flaky. I'm unprofessional. I'm a bad friend. I never follow through on things. I always cancel. See how quickly the brain likes to offer up sentences that start with I always and I never. It's very black and white thinking. And notice how none of those sentences have anything to do with being ill. They're completely separate. But when we're ill, our ability to be productive is lessened.

And we are socialised to associate productivity with self-worth. So, when you're unable to be productive especially when you are ill, it's no surprise that your brain will offer up negative thoughts that continue to lower your self-worth. And the difficulty of letting go and accepting things isn't just about cancelling a meeting or calling in sick or whatever the case may be.

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It's in confronting that inner voice that says you need to keep going because we live in a world that's seemingly always moving and the pressure to keep up, can really get in the way of just letting ourselves be ill. Because subconsciously we often equate being busy with being important and successful with doing things. And the notion of constant productivity is an illusion, a race with no finish line. Real productivity isn't about how much you can push yourself. It's also about how well you can balance activity with rest and taking care of yourself when you need to.

When we ignore our need for rest, we're setting ourselves up for a harder fall. And your worth is not measured by your productivity. Being unwell doesn't make you less capable or valuable. It just means that you're human and like all of us, you need some time to be ill and time to get better. Those two things are also separate.

I always remember one of my professors when I was studying Chinese medicine. And he would say that if you're ill for two days then you also need another two days for your chi and your blood to recover. And I just found that such valuable advice, yeah, there's the time you're ill. And then there's the time that you need to recover from that illness. So, when you are needing to move from acknowledgement to acceptance, just get in touch with how you're feeling.

And instead of jumping to what can I still get done today? Ask yourself, what does my body need right now and go with that. Whether it's more sleep, a warm drink, sitting quietly, just listen to your body and the guidance that it's giving you, the request that it is making to you. And let's face it, when we are forced to slow down due to illness, it can be like opening a floodgate of unhelpful and harsh thoughts, all of which create feelings of guilt and inadequacy, etc.

So, when you are unwell or you're sleep deprived or you're stressed or all of those things, your thoughts will go to shit. And we just need to recognise that pattern. When you're unwell your mind will just become a breeding ground for thoughts like I'm not doing enough. I'm letting people down. I'm such a crap person, etc, etc. And these thoughts are obviously not

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productive, but they can also exacerbate your stress and slow down your recovery.

So, imagine this scenario, imagine a friend of yours is sick in bed and you see someone standing over them pointing a finger and just berating them for not being active and getting up and getting dressed and getting on with it. I don't think you would let that happen to your friend. But when it comes to ourselves, we often let our inner critic do just that. And this self-criticism can be more damaging and long lasting than any physical ailment that is going on. So, what can you do instead?

Give yourself grace, soften, be kind to yourself, think about how you want to be treated. I just want to get in my PJs, my woolly socks, lie down on the sofa, have someone bring me a duvet and a hot water bottle, a nice warm drink. So, are you treating yourself in that way? Are you offering yourself that level of softness? Or are you insisting that you get up, get dressed, get on with life when you actually don't have the capacity to?

So, one way you can give yourself grace is by finding ways to soften. The other is by directly responding to your low quality judgemental, critical thoughts. I use this technique any time I'm not feeling great. And it's simply by saying, "Of course I'm thinking this way, I don't feel well right now." So, any crappy thoughts that you have, the follow-up thought needs to be, of course I'm thinking like that. I'm just exhausted, of course, that's where my brain is going. Yeah, of course I'm thinking those judgmental thoughts about myself.

I'm unwell, I'm really not feeling great. That's where my brain is going. And that's just an acknowledgement that acts like a warm blanket around those cold thoughts, preventing them from spiralling into something bigger and way more substantial and harmful. And often our reluctance to let ourselves be ill and have time off to take care of ourselves in some way and hopefully be taken care of by other people as well is our fears around what other people are going to think of us. And that's what our thoughts are offering us.

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So, our reluctance to take a break is rooted in fear, fear of judgement, fear of appearing weak, fear of letting others down. You just might be worrying, what are other people going to think if I cancel these plans? But you have to come back to the fact that taking care of yourself isn't a sign of weakness. It is a sign of self-respect. And the reality is that people will judge you.

I was coaching someone on this in the membership just the other day. They posted kind of their experience of this, and we were talking about that fear of being judged. And I was saying to them, "Well, people are going to judge you. Some will judge you negatively, but some will judge you favourably." Some people will admire you for doing this, for taking care of yourself. That's what you are modelling to them and you're modelling to yourself that that's an okay thing to do.

And I guarantee that anyone judging you for being ill also judges themselves very harshly when they're ill. So maybe they need that to be modelled to them. But the real question underneath all of this is, what are you making it mean about you? Because any time we're thinking, so and so might think I'm this or I'm that. Really that's your thoughts about yourself coming through.

So, are you making it mean that you're unreliable or weak or are you making it mean that you're someone who listens to their body, who respects their physical limits, someone who's able to take exquisite care of themselves? So just be on the lookout for these not so nice thoughts that usually come along when we're already not feeling great physically. Notice when your brain offers sentences that start with, I always or I never because they're signs of black and white thinking and they're rarely true.

But when you aren't feeling great, you probably won't have the capacity, the mental capacity to fully challenge those thoughts. And that's where the beauty of, of course, I'm thinking this way when I feel crap comes in. Because it's just an immediate way of counteracting those critical judgemental thoughts without having to kind of do the full-on thought work strategy. And it also gets much easier to do this when you are used to



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managing your mind which is what I teach you how to do inside my membership, *The Flow Collective*.

And it gets easier to do this when you know how to respond to your inner critic and when you have a relationship with yourself that is already compassionate and respectful. And that is just a matter of building that skill. These are skills that we can all build. And I would love to help you, there's tons on the podcast. You can also sign up for my emails or you can join *The Flow Collective* next time it opens, because this is what it's all about. I want you to have an amazing relationship with yourself, not just when life is going good and you feel great.

I want you to have an amazing relationship with yourself, even when you feel absolutely awful. Alright, my loves, I hope you have found this useful. Make sure you save this episode, bookmark it for future use next time you are feeling under the weather or just not quite like yourself. And I hope you find it useful during those times. Alright, I'll catch you next week.

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