

Ep #162: Essentialism: Protecting the Asset



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With Your Host

Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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This is episode 162 and today I am excited to delve into a concept that has profoundly impacted my life and especially my approach to work. And I think you're all going to find it incredibly useful.

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 my friends. What's happening? How are you? I am in my studio looking out at a blue sky. I'm wearing socks and Birkenstocks today, no winter boots, no winter coat in sight. And I've seen the shoots of some bulbs popping up through the earth, so it really feels like spring is coming. The light is coming back in. Well, it has technically been coming back in for over a month, but it feels more discernible now and I am here for it.

Okay, today I want to talk to you about a concept that has made a really big difference to my life, especially in the last few years. I'm going to share a story about why that's happened, and it's from a book called *Essentialism* by Greg McKeown, and it's all about how we think about our time, our energy and life's priorities.

So essentialism tries to solve the trap that I'm sure is very familiar to all of you, the trap of trying to do everything for everyone, often without much thought. Just kind of being in a constant state of reaction where your day and your life feel like they're being hijacked by everyone else's agendas and demands. And you end up busy but not productive and crucially, not fulfilled.

So essentialism is the antidote to this. You flip the script and instead of an outside-in approach where you're just constantly reacting to external demands and then maybe if there's some time left, focusing on yourself. You start with focusing on you first and he refers to this as protecting the asset. And the asset is you. So it recognises that if you're not taking care of yourself first, you can't effectively contribute to anything else, whether that's work, family or your broader goals.

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So instead you create space, for what truly matters for your deep work, for strategic thinking, for meaningful connection or meaningful contributions that align with your core values and strengths. So I want you to start thinking about how you can protect the asset. What can you put in place in order to take care of yourself? What immediately springs to mind when I say that? Feel free, you can hit pause and come up with three ways that you could protect the asset.

The example that he gives in the book is sleep. So I want to go through that kind of with my own thoughts on it. So sleep isn't just a period of rest, it's very active. There's a lot that happens when we are asleep. It's a critical time for our bodies and our minds to process, to recover and strengthen. It is when our brains process the events of the day and consolidate memories, just make sense of all the information that we've absorbed.

So when we have enough good quality sleep that sets the foundation for clear thinking, decision making, and emotional resilience. So basically, sleep is the ultimate form of self-care and pretty essential for anyone looking to operate at their best level. But sleep is often the first thing that we sacrifice in the name of productivity. And I've been in this situation. I'm sure you've been in the situation where we work later on in the day.

We're maybe getting up earlier in order to get some work done first thing and somehow sleep deprivation can even become a badge of honour. You and I both know that this couldn't be more counterproductive. And sacrificing sleep doesn't lead to more productivity. It leads to diminished capacity and impaired judgement and a whole host of negative health effects.

And I can think back to when I was doing my acupuncture degree, and I was working in the student clinic, and we would often have clients coming in with a long list of health issues who were taking multiple forms of medication. And sometimes you'd look at their case history and think, where the hell do I start? And it was up to us to develop a treatment plan and present it to our clinic supervisor and get feedback and then treat them.

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And one day I had a really complex case and my teacher just said, “Look, when you have a long list of issues like this. If sleep is one of the issues, focus on supporting sleep because sleep is the one thing that will improve every other issue. And if sleep doesn’t improve, you’ll get limited results with everything else that you’re doing. So with sleep being as essential as it is and protecting the asset, means recognising that getting enough quality sleep is non-negotiable.

I know that everything, my creativity, my patience, my problem-solving abilities, all of those things improve when I’m well rested. And it’s not just about the hours spent asleep, it’s the quality of those hours too and how they contribute to my overall well being and effectiveness. Now, we all know this, none of that will have come as a surprise to you, I’m sure you know it on some level. The issue arises when it comes to implementing. So let’s roll with this example of sleep so we can tease this apart.

So if you decided to prioritise getting enough good quality sleep, what would need to happen? What could you do in order to support your sleep? And what would you need to stop doing? And for whatever you came up with in terms of your examples of how you could protect the asset, you can go through this process as well, use these same questions. So what would you need to do in order to support sleep and what would you need to stop doing?

So a few examples that I’ve come up with is, you could reduce exposure to blue light in the evenings. For example, not using devices or using blue light blocking glasses of some kind. Not using your phone after a certain time at night. For most of us, realistically that is going to mean being able to experience the urge to pick your phone up and scroll. That’s probably going to mean having to experience your thoughts and feelings.

Because if you take away the distraction of social media and the external distraction that comes from all of that, then that leaves space for you to experience your inner world. That might feel delightful. That might feel confronting. But it is a skill that you can build. Working on improving your sleep, especially if you have difficulties with it, might mean seeking out

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professional help. Seeing an acupuncturist or a herbalist or a doctor or being prescribed HRT. And there might be challenges for you to overcome in setting up an appointment and getting that help.

You might need to also set firmer boundaries around your work hours. You might need to have conversations with the people that you work with or the people that you live with. So my other half, he loves to stay up later than me. I like to go to bed early and read. Well, that's not really true, I mean, I do love to stay up and watch TV together. And sometimes it is me saying, "Come on, let's watch one more episode." But I love reading, so being able to read a few chapters before going to bed is delightful, and it is good for my sleep.

So for me, if I'm prioritising sleep, it means being willing to say no to Paul's invitation to watch something together. And in our relationship, that's not a big deal. But I have had clients for whom this brought up stuff in themselves and in their relationship. And that's just a few examples of what might come up when you decide to protect the asset, just in terms of getting enough sleep.

Those of you who are in my membership, when you're coming up with ways that you can protect the asset and your mind is offering you all these buts and what ifs and I can't because blah blah blah. Make sure you bring these things to get coached on because knowing what needs to be done in order for you to protect the asset is great. But we want to help you with the implementing side of things. So the process here is to think about how you could protect the asset.

I recommend three things as a starting point that you could start doing or stop doing, or it might even be something that you're already doing, but that you could be more intentional about to ensure that it continues. Then you're going to explore what else would need to happen in order for you to prioritise doing these things, just like the examples I gave with sleep. And then notice any thoughts and feelings that come up when you think about implementing them.

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So in practice, protecting the asset is about making intentional choices that prioritise your wellbeing and capacity to contribute. For instance, it could be as simple as ensuring you take a lunch break every day or restructuring your schedule and protecting your schedule to allow for deep creative work at the time of the day that suits you. So for me, that's the mornings. I love to do deep work in the mornings. So it's rare for me to sacrifice that time unless it's for something else that is high quality. And by that I mean I'm not going to do admin or calls that aren't essential.

I will have my weekly meeting with Beck, my Director of Operations, because communicating with her is a key way that I protect the asset. But even then, there are times when I'm in writing mode and I will bump our meeting. If she's listening she'll be like, "Yeah, that does happen." So it's about setting boundaries that enable you to operate at your highest level.

This all came up for me a couple of years ago during master coach training, which is basically an advanced coaching programme and as part of that we were all tasked with creating our own unique projects to work on. And each project that we came up with and that was approved by our instructors was distinctively challenging for each individual and it was really designed to stretch us.

So some people had goals of writing books or creating a certain amount of money in their business or getting to know their emotions more. And to begin with, I was like, "Oh, God, what on Earth am I going to pick?" Because it just felt like at that point there was a lot of things that I had already done, and I was trying to figure out what would stretch me. Now, in the first month of master coach training, I was experiencing autistic burnout. And I didn't do the required work for that first month.

I missed calls because I wasn't able to be on camera and I was struggling to talk. So they called a meeting with me, and I was basically crapping it. I was convinced they were going to chuck me out because this programme is known for being rigorous. It's known for really testing people. And because I was experiencing burnout and perceiving things as threats, I just leapt to, I'm in trouble, they're going to kick me out. And they were just like,

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“Hey, what’s going on? We’ve noticed that you’re not showing up. And we wanted to talk about that.” No threat whatsoever, just support.

And after that, I was able to start taking part because I’d stopped shaming myself for struggling. I was already having a hard time but on top of that, I was then beating myself up for struggling. This is why I’m so insistent on reducing the shame and the judgement and criticism that is so often layered on top of things because I know how much that sucks. And I was basically judging myself for not being able to do ‘simple, easy things’, that are actually not so easy for me. And very much related to how being autistic impacts my ability to do certain things.

So there are things that other people find really challenging, but they’re no big deal to me. Writing a book, easy. Speaking on stage to thousands of people, no problem whatsoever. But ask me to go to the post office, to make a phone call or send an email, and I will have a hard time doing those things. Anything to do with communication is my personal mountain to ascend. And I’m able to do that somewhat because of all the tools that I have.

I can coach myself. I can regulate myself, but that doesn’t stop these things from being objectively challenging for me. And there’s a limit to how much of that I can do. And I’ve just remembered, there’s this meme that I love seeing, shared on autistic pages because it resonates so much. And it’s just a screenshot of someone’s calendar. And there’s a call booked in for 1:00pm and the whole morning is blocked out as preparing for the call. And the afternoon is blocked out as recovering from the call. And that is me down to a tee.

Someone, a friend of mine recently apologised for not replying to my text within a few days of me messaging them. And I just sent them a screenshot of how many unread texts I have on my phone and was like, “Listen, you never need to apologise for that. I have zero expectations when it comes to communication.” And I usually attempt to tackle these things in the run up to ovulation, when my hormones are helping me and it’s a big cause for celebration if I post something.

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Although I have to say that all the parcel services now, especially Evri, makes it so much easier for me to send things because I don't have to interact with humans. I can just deal with a machine which is great for me. So communication is generally a challenge for me, and when I experience stress, which is often because of communication, that then means that communication is also the thing that is impacted. So it's a bit of a vicious cycle. And any increase in communication can cause issues for me.

And I hadn't realised this at the time, when I was starting master coach training, I just kind of hadn't fully realised the impact of communication on me. And in the months running up to the start of the training, there was a huge increase in communication within my business and with all the various contractors as well as my team.

Thank God for Kronda Adair from *Karvel Digital*. If you have a business that involves email marketing, then go and hire her. She and her team are amazing. I love them to bits, but thank goodness that Kronda was willing to have a conversation with me and say, "Hey, this is what I see happening, why is this happening? What do you not have in your business that means this is the situation you are in? You need to hire someone to do all this for you." Because I hadn't realised that all the communication I was doing was basically someone else's job.

Someone would usually be hired to do all of those things, but I was trying to do all of those things on top of my job. And I was certainly not protecting the asset. So that's where I was when I started the training. And when it was time to come up with my project, I knew mine needed to be about embracing the growth in my business and team. And looking at the communication side of things because I have always thrived on working solo and being independent, diving into tasks, all those things have served me really well. I am very resourceful. I love problem solving.

I love learning things, figuring them out, which are all great traits when you are an entrepreneur and you're setting your business up. But as my business expanded that became the problem. That kind of approach isn't sustainable, and it was actually holding me back and it was limiting the

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amount of people I could help, the impact I could have. So my knack for figuring all of these things out was helpful in the past, but it had become a limitation. And there's just a cap to what one person can achieve.

And sometimes, even if I can handle a task, it doesn't mean that I should be doing it because it's not the best use of my skills. I need to be doing the stuff that only I can do. And so basically I was in this situation where I was expecting myself to be able to communicate with all of these people. I was doing tasks that I had no business doing and that I'd actually hired other people to do as part of their role. So I was inadvertently stepping on my team's toes and preventing them from doing their jobs effectively.

And to be very clear, this wasn't about anyone's inability to do things. It was solely about me and the struggles that I was facing. So this realisation led me to my project idea, which was to redefine my role, write my job description and then only do my job. And this was in consideration of what was going on at the time, but also the future direction of my work and the membership and how I can best serve my clients. So this project was so good.

It got approved right away because it meant tackling areas that I had struggled with, delegating and communicating with my team in a way that worked for me. And I tend to live in my head and my tendency to hyper focus can lead to communication gaps, which although I would say has never been disastrous. It can certainly slow things down and create hiccups along the way, both in my personal life and in my work life.

So my task, my project was, write my job description, only do my job, document the entire process and all the thought work and self-coaching I did in order to make it happen. And then teach all of that as a webinar. And initially I thought I'd have 90 days to implement this because it was a 90-day project. But I was given three days, four days, something like that to set it up. And then the rest of the time would just be focused on maintaining it. So I totally freaked out. I went through all the, oh, my God, what are they doing to me? This isn't possible. How am I going to do this?

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All the stories that my brain came up with. But then within those few days I went through this rapid transformation that really shifted my sense of what's possible. This is why I'm so able to coach everyone else on all their thoughts about, no, I can't do that in that timeframe. I'm like, "Well, let's just test that out, shall we."

And at the top of my job description it says, protect the asset. That is my number one job is to protect the asset. This meant acknowledging that my wellbeing and energy are crucial for the success and longevity of my business and the quality of service I provide to my clients. It meant acknowledging my strengths and my limitations, acknowledging my autism and protecting the asset, not just while I'm working, but the rest of the time too.

It means not overtaxing myself with social situations, not expecting myself to be able to hang out in environments that are actually awful for me sensory wise. It means saying no to a hell of a lot of things in my personal and professional life. It means doing puzzles, hanging out with horses, wearing sensory friendly clothes. These are all ways that I protect the asset and these aren't luxuries.

They are essential practices that enable me to show up as my best self for my family, my team, my clients. But really, I think there's a huge tendency when we've been socialised as females to think, well, but if I do this, then I can take care of everyone else. So I also want to say that this is something that I had to do for me, regardless of showing up for anyone else. So this shift wasn't just about delegating tasks or managing time better or communicating better. It was much deeper than that.

It meant accepting myself. And when you protect the asset, that's what you will do too. So in what ways have you not been protecting the asset? What would need to change in order for you to protect the asset? What can you do today that would make a difference? And what would be different about your life if you were protecting the asset in both day-to-day situations and in terms of the big picture, the vision that you have for your life?

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I would love for you to answer these questions for yourself. If you're on my email list, we will include them in the podcast email that we send out every week. Thank you all so much for listening today. It's been great to share this with you and share my story of learning to protect the asset. I'll catch you next week.

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.