

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

This is episode 164, 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back. This is my guide to help you in those moments when your confidence has had a bit of a knock and you're trying to claw your way back to feeling confident, feeling good again. So I hope you find it 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*.

Hi, folks and welcome. I am a confident person. I have a lot of self-confidence, a lot of self-trust. I'm willing to give most things a go. I'm not afraid of putting myself out there and giving things a go. But last year I had a knock to my confidence in an area of my life and it's really unusual for me to not feel confident. So it was an interesting place for me to be in. And over the last three and a half months I've been working my way through this lack of confidence and also the ripple effects of feeling that way.

And I've been taking notes along the way because I knew that I would want to share it with you as a resource for when you lose your confidence and want to get it back. So I'm going to share my story of what happened and how I got my confidence back. And as I go through my story, I'm going to pull out all the lessons along the way and suggest steps that you can take.

So if you've been listening to the podcast for a while, you'll know that I started having horse riding lessons in April last year. Things escalated pretty quickly, I got really into it. And there was a lot to learn. I really enjoyed figuring it all out. And I came off a horse four times in the first six months but none of those incidents were a big deal. I just got a slightly bruised bum a couple of times, but nothing major happened and I just got back on. There was no issue.

There was also a load of times where I could have come off, but I didn't, I stayed on. And that helped to build my confidence. And at one point my instructor was saying, "I swear you've got nine lives", because of all the

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

times when I almost came off and hit the deck, but I didn't. I somehow managed to stay on. So at this point I was also riding the trickier horses to ride, feeling really confident in how I was riding them. So throughout my six months of horse riding, my confidence had been on an upwards trajectory, even in the struggles, the frustrations, the times that I came off, my confidence was growing.

There were things that I was hesitant about within that, moments of feeling unsure or nervous, but it was all adding up and resulting in the cumulative effect of an increase in confidence. I'd already decided that at some point I'd end up buying a horse, but I wasn't in a rush to get one. So it was really about, well, if a horse came up that was worth considering, then I would check it out. And so around this time, the riding school had a horse for sale, and they thought it would be a good fit for me. I was unsure because this wasn't a riding school horse.

I'd never ridden a non-riding school horse before. This one was quite young and also huge. And I was worried that he was too much horse for me, but I was encouraged to try riding him, so I did. Now, here is your first lesson. Trust yourself. If someone tells you their opinion and there's a part of you inside going, I don't know about that, and it doesn't sit right with you. Trust yourself because I didn't listen to that inner voice. So I rode this horse once and all things considered, it went pretty well, but I was still unsure about him being the horse for me.

I was still thinking, he was just too much. So I rode him again and we were just trotting along without any issue when he squealed, jumped and bucked and he was 18.1, that's big for horses. If you don't know horses, it's big. So it was a long way down. And I basically had enough time as I was falling to realise that I had come off, whereas on all the other occasions you just kind of come off and you land on the floor and that's it, you kind of realise once you're on the floor. So I got concussion. I had temporary memory loss. My vision was affected.

It all came back within a few hours, but my neck was really sore for two weeks, but more than that, my confidence took a knock. Usually when you

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

come off a horse, you're encouraged to get straight back on. And there's a lot of wisdom in that. But clearly I was in no state to do that because I had the concussion. Then it was half term, we were in London. Then I went to Arizona for a workshop. So there was a couple of weeks where I didn't ride. And then when I did start riding again, I felt nervous. But it was all manageable. It was all understandable. I was working my way through it.

Then a few lessons into this process, I was in a group lesson and the horse I was on was getting quite fast. And one way you can slow a horse down is by doing circles and riding deep into the corners of the arena that you're riding in. But I was nervous about using the corners and I hadn't realised this at the time, but a few days before the lesson I'd been grooming a horse on the yard and I'd heard a horse cantering too quickly, really fast. So I looked up in time to see a teenager whizzing around, and as they got to a corner, she came off and flew into the fence.

And it was only after the lesson that I made that connection. So basically I had seen this and made this connection, don't go fast and don't ride into the corners. So when my horse sped up, I avoided the corner, which meant we went zooming across the middle of the school where everyone else was on their horses, and we almost crashed into my friend on their horse. And I don't like to go really fast on horses or in cars or in any way, shape or form, really.

So this was now an additional fear, the moving fast and in a way where you feel out of control. It's not the right kind of movement and speed that you want. But I kept at it. And my thought was, I just need to keep showing up.

So this is lesson number two for you, keep showing up. There is a huge tendency, it's very understandable when your confidence has had a knock to avoid. And I think there's times where that is protective and that is useful, but we can go too far in that direction. So keep showing up in whatever way you can. Don't judge yourself for the level in which you are able to show up and how you show up. Taking action does make a difference. That persistence makes a difference.

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

When you show up, things will shift simply because you'll be demonstrating to yourself that you are someone who can do things when it's uncomfortable for you. Think about how your self-concept, your view of yourself will evolve when you do that, but that doesn't mean that it's going to feel great.

So lesson three is, commit to it sucking. Be willing for it to suck and for it to feel uncomfortable. We're just going to create some space for that. It doesn't mean that is how it's going to be or how it's going to be all the time, but there's the reality of that. And that's useful because we like to avoid discomfort at all costs, but that discomfort is a growth opportunity. So rather than it be something for you to avoid, how about you see discomfort as a valuable resource?

So the whole time that I was experiencing this, I was thinking about how valuable it is for me to go through this experience, how valuable it is for me to have a hard time. Because I know that these challenges are the making of me. They are always the making of me, doesn't mean they always end up fantastically and smoothly and exactly as you wanted, but those challenges are the making of me. They probably are for you too. And I always know that whatever I learn is going to end up helping my clients and everyone who listens to the podcast and read my books.

So there's value and discomfort in numerous ways. So when discomfort shows up for you, how about seeing it as a signal that you're pushing the boundaries of your current capabilities and your beliefs and think of that discomfort as the stretch in a muscle, just like when you're exercising. So just as muscles need to stretch and be worked to grow stronger. We can use that experience of discomfort to expand and to discover new aspects of ourselves and to build resilience.

So the goal here wasn't to eliminate discomfort or get rid of fear, but to be able to experience it and navigate my way through it. And I'm pretty equipped to do that because I have a whole toolkit for managing discomfort, from using cognitive strategies to coach myself. feeling my emotions, understanding and knowing my stress responses. And of course

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

you know how my cycle impacts how I feel. And all these strategies are exactly what I teach you inside the membership. That's part of the course that you get access to when you join.

So I'm very used to using these tools and using them to serve me in those times of discomfort and throughout this whole challenge for me. So just as I was feeling like I was starting to come out the other side of this experience and get my confidence back, I had a lesson with a horse that I love to ride. But he is a horse that has things to say, and you do need to ride him in a certain way. And the first time I rode him, I was terrified, but he quickly became the horse I wanted to ride because I felt like we had a really great partnership and there was mutual respect, and we could just have a great time together.

I just really felt like I could sense him and who he was and how he was feeling. It was wonderful. So when I saw that I had him in a lesson for the first time after these incidents, I was a bit surprised because I was still nervous, and I almost said, "I don't want to ride him." It was also a really windy day that day, but for whatever reason I didn't say it. And it was actually an amazing lesson. I was having such a great time with him and was really grateful to him because this horse makes me a better rider. He doesn't hand it to you on a plate.

And he was the perfect horse to be partnered with to move through the nerves that I was experiencing. But we were having a lovely canter, it was all going well. I'm thinking, this is amazing. And I don't know what happened, maybe the wind blew against the roof or something, I don't know. But we were having what felt like one of the best canters I have ever done on a horse. And it looked like it too, because my instructor had videoed me.

And then as we went round a corner, he sped off out of it. And remember that speed is already kind of now a bit alarming to me. And I tensed up and as I tried to get him to stop, he bucked and I came off and busted my knee up. And I managed to get back on him and do a bit of a walk and trot and that was important to do for me and for him. And it didn't hurt my knee to do

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

that, but it was sore for me to walk because basically any lifting of my leg hurt. When I would get into the car I had to use my hands to lift my leg into the car, but driving was fine.

It also hurt a lot at night, so I've just been sleeping with a pillow between my legs for three months. So that was the physical side of it, which is important. And I think the physical aspect of something like an injury or an illness can have an impact on your confidence. But also what happened is, the nervous apprehension that I had been feeling a bit on the drive up to the riding school, turned into fear and absolutely shitting it. Now, this was disconcerting for me because horse riding has changed my life.

So, feeling scared about riding was also scary for me because I didn't want to lose this amazing thing. So again, I just committed to feeling scared, not because I wanted to keep feeling that way, but because I knew it was necessary to experience it in order to move through it and move beyond it. And during this timeframe I had also started to look for a horse to buy because now of this idea of, what about this horse had kind of got me thinking about that more and more.

But most of the horse people I know said to me, "Are you sure about looking for a horse when your confidence is low? Maybe you should wait six months, something like that." And they said that to me because they care. They were worried about me, and they wanted to support me. But I was so confused by their suggestion, because I don't see a lack of confidence as a reason not to do something. So I was just baffled when they were saying this to me. I was like, "What do you mean?"

Because lots of my friends are coaches and I'm used to conversations about feeling certain emotions and just doing something anyway. So it was really interesting for me to be going through something like this and talking to my horse mates who aren't coaches because it's a very different conversation than talking with my non-horsey coach mates about horses. And it's not that one's better than the other, they're just different. So my thought was the complete opposite.

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

My thought is, this is the perfect time to look for a horse because I would rather find a horse that feels great when my confidence is low than buy a horse when my confidence is high. I don't want a horse that's strong or fast or the type that needs a confident rider. I want a horse that's steady, that's going to help me out. I want a horse that I enjoy spending time with. So for me, this was the perfect time to go and try horses when I wasn't at my best in terms of confidence, when I was struggling physically. So for me, that was a great opportunity to find a horse that's a really great match for me.

But of course, not every horse is my version of that. What's steady and sensible for one person could be strong for me. And as much as you read the description of the horse and talk on the phone, you don't know until you get on the horse. So I needed to go and visit these horses. They were all two to five hours away. So I had these three incidents and two injuries, but here I was driving, getting on non-riding school horses, very different than what I'm used to, much more forward going.

I was getting on big horses. I got on young ones that were three and four years old. I rode in the frost when it was minus one. And I rode in the pissing rain and the wind, and all of these things stretched me. They were all challenging for me to do. I was coaching myself all the way through it, using all the tools that I know. My knee was busted up. I could get on the horse without issue, but it was hard for me to get my foot in the stirrups and to get my leg over the horse to get off again.

And I have to give myself huge props here because it was a really big deal for me to go to all these places to meet strangers, to get on their horses and ride, to be in these different environments. Especially as an autistic person, that's a lot for me to get used to quickly. And that would have been true even if these events hadn't have happened. So the lesson in this is don't assume because your confidence is low that you should avoid things that stretch you.

And interestingly, it was actually easier for me to get on the horses that I didn't know, in unfamiliar places with people that I didn't know than it was for me to go into the riding school. So I was trying these horses and then I

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

had a lesson at the riding school. And I was so scared and tense and understandably, my instructor expressed concern about me going off and riding these other horses. But what she was seeing in the lesson was different to how I was in these other settings.

And that's when I clocked that it was harder for me to ride there, even though it was the environment that I know with instructors that I know and horses that I know. There was such a strong association with stressful riding experiences and getting injured. And I can totally see why my instructors were so worried about me going and trying these horses because they were seeing me fall apart and cry my way through lessons.

So I realised that I needed to break the negative associations and have some lessons elsewhere. And changing my environment really shifted things. By going to a new riding school, new horses, new instructors. I was able to create a fresh slate for my confidence to rebuild. And it wasn't just about a change of scenery, it was about removing myself from a context filled with memories of fear and injury, pain and going into an environment where those associations didn't exist.

And so for anyone who's listening, facing a similar loss of confidence, consider how changing your environment, even temporarily, can offer a new perspective and a break from the cycle of negative associations whilst you work on improving the associations that you do want. It's just giving yourself the opportunity to experience success and rebuild confidence in a new setting. You're really just thinking about how can you set yourself up for success?

So lesson five is, break those associations. Identify a negative association you have. Think about what you can do in order to diminish the association and form new ones. So that can be thinking about things differently, changing your environment. They all add up and I would suggest doing it in as many ways as you can and just figuring out what works, just experimenting. So if there's an area of your life where you've lost confidence, change your environment related to this area.

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

It's as simple as altering your routine, being in a new place, doing it with different people, even changing what you're seeing around you, even if you're not in a different actual location, just your setup, just switching things in subtle ways.

And lesson six is, listen to your body. Physical tension and discomfort aren't bad. They're actually fantastic because it's these reactions that keep us alive, by alerting us to potential threats and things that need to change. So the presence of fear and tension isn't a bad thing, but they can reflect and amplify emotional states, including what's going on with your confidence. So my body was tensing up and rounding forwards when I was riding, which meant I was already out of balance because I was tipping forwards.

And then when I was asking horses to canter, well, what you do when you're asking a horse to canter is you sit into the saddle and the leg that's on the outside moves backwards a bit. That's the aid for the horse that now knows it needs to canter. So imagine if you're already kind of tipping forwards and out of balance and then you've got to move your leg backwards, that's only going to make you fall forwards even more, which was what was happening.

And my instructor told me, "Your mind wants to canter, but your body doesn't. That fear is overriding everything." So I worked on softening my physical body instead of tensing up and just rewiring my body, recognising those physical signs of tension. Learning to actively soften and relax my body changed my experience, not in terms of just preventing falls and being out of balance. But it was also about communicating how I was feeling to myself and to the horse.

So this goes way beyond horse riding. In any situation where fear and tension arise, become aware of your physical state and consciously choose to soften. That can shift your experience from one of panic to power. And it's just a matter of retraining yourself. That's all it is. Do not overcomplicate this process. You're just retraining yourself.

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

I taught this in the membership recently, so it's lesson seven, soften. Next time you're faced with a situation that makes you tense and uncomfortable, consciously focus on softening your body somehow, just a little bit. What can you soften? Can you wiggle your fingers or your toes and just soften them? Can you soften your jaw? Can you take a breath? Can you soften your hips? Just find a way to soften. And also just softening your approach and just notice how this changes the experience without needing anything external to shift. This is all internal work. It's so powerful.

And lesson eight is co-regulation helps. I recently did a whole episode about co-regulation so you can hear all about it in that. But how I applied it here was I had a semi-private lesson with someone else. Hi, Millie, if you're listening to this. Millie and I had a lesson together. And I was absolutely bricking it because I was on another horse that tends to buck and my knee was improving, but it certainly wasn't better. The doctor had said, "You're fine to ride, the only issue is if you come off again."

But doing a lesson with Millie was so helpful. I cried my way through that whole lesson. And I was just saying, "I can't do it." I was just stopping on the horse and crying and just saying all the things that my brain was offering me and saying them out loud and sobbing and wiping snot off my face with Millie there on her horse and my instructor. And there was something really powerful about having them hold space for me whilst I was going through that.

I needed to do that because fear is fuel, that's lesson nine. Accessing my fear, using it as fuel was, I think, one of the most transformative realisations for me. So instead of allowing fear to paralyse me. I was able to see it as a sign that I was expanding and stretching into something bigger. And that fear just indicated that I was in the process of growth. Feel free to steal all these thoughts about fear and use them yourself, by the way. So by accepting that fear and not seeing it as an enemy, but seeing fear as my companion, I was able to use it to propel me forward.

I didn't make it my enemy. That doesn't mean that the fear disappeared, but it was more like I learned to move with it, to let it inform me, but not control

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

me. So this, whether you're facing a physical challenge like horse riding or any other fear inducing situation in life, how can you be willing to experience that fear in a way that serves you? Because by being willing to feel that fear, I could use it as fuel. Who I was, how I felt was totally different in the first half of that lesson to the second half. And that was the turning point in getting my confidence back.

It was literally the moment where I felt at my worst, panicking, feeling so scared, so fearful that I wasn't going to be able to continue to ride. Thinking that there's no way that I was ever going to get my confidence back. That was the exact moment where it came back. You have to remember this, please, please, please remember this because when you are in the thick of it, when it sucks the most, that's when you think it's never going to change, and you'll never get through it.

If in that moment you can commit to feeling the fear and yes, doing it anyway, that is the moment of transformation. And it didn't mean that all the fear magically went away, but my posture changed. I was more committed to seeing it through. My posture shifted. How I rode changed. This is where the power of incremental progress all comes in. Each ride, each decision to face my fear contributed to my recovery. So we've got to celebrate all along the way. Progress comes in increments, it's not always the leaps that we think it's going to be.

So lesson 10 is, celebrate the stretch. I celebrated every single step along this journey, showing up to a lesson, feeling scared on my drive to the riding school, feeling nervous to ask the horse to do things. Feeling alarm and panic in my body every time the horse moved a bit unusually or they were just a bit more forward and just kind of carrying themselves forward more. I celebrated, sitting more upright, not tensing up, not gripping with my thighs. I celebrated asking for canter, and I didn't care how long I cantered for.

So I lowered my expectation of myself whilst also being generous in how I praised and celebrated myself. It is brave and courageous to show up. And at the end of each lesson, I would literally say, "I didn't come off." Because

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

it was important for me to say that out loud, for me to hear myself saying it out loud, to rewire my brain's narrative that I was going to come off. Celebrating every stretch, every step forward was the cornerstone of regaining my confidence.

Each acknowledgement of progress, no matter how minor it seemed, was a reaffirmation of my growth. And celebrating the stretch meant recognising the effort it took to show up and it took effort to face my fears and to take even the smallest step forward. And these things aren't even small. I really don't like describing them that way and I don't want you to either. But for the purposes of the podcast, I'm hoping you understand my meaning when I refer to them in that way.

And this practice of celebrating, not just the achievements, but the effort is what I encourage everyone listening to adopt. We have a celebrate hard approach in the membership because it's a really powerful way to build resilience and confidence. And every part of that process deserves recognition.

So it's now been three months or so since I injured my knee, and since then I've had lessons on the horse that I injured my knee coming off. We've been repairing our relationship. But a couple of weeks ago I had a lesson on him in the indoor arena, where I came off, when he bucked me off, with the same instructor. And in that lesson I was feeling more nervous than I had been with riding for a while because of those associations, place, person, horse, were all there.

And it helped me to realise that I had a subconscious thought running in the background of my mind that I hadn't noticed was there. And that thought was, I should be over this by now. This shouldn't be happening. I shouldn't be feeling this way. And I know this happens for all of you because I coach my clients on it all the time, this idea, this shouldn't be happening. I've put the work in, this shouldn't be happening anymore, but of course it is. So then I've got to work on releasing my expectation of that too.

Ep #164: 10 Steps to Get Your Confidence Back

And interestingly, my knee is about 90% better and there's a really strong correlation, surprise, surprise, between how much better my knee is and where my confidence is at. That's not a coincidence. I have a bonus. I know I said it was 10. I've got a bonus.

I've lost my confidence is a thought. Be careful how often you say that. Be careful that you don't indulge that thought because the more you think it, the more you hear yourself say it in your head and out loud, the more you will believe it to be a fact. The more it will deepen that neural pathway. So find alternative ways to describe how you're feeling and what's going on in a way that is true but that also creates space for things to shift.

So I would love for you to reflect on areas in your life where you've maybe lost some confidence. What are your, I should be over this by now, thoughts? And how can you apply the lessons I've shared today with you to navigate through these challenges? Alright, folks, it's been lovely to share this all with you. There's been a big build up for this one. I'll be back next week. I shall see you then.

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.