

Ep #169: The Power of Community in Getting Your Needs Met



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With Your Host

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The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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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 and welcome to the podcast. Today we're circling back to a topic that's always relevant, getting your needs met, it's a conversation that never gets old and it's really central to everything we do and how we interact with others. But this time around, I want to layer in some additional insights particularly around the impact and influence of community and the environments that we are in or the lack of that community. And our tendency to also sideline our own needs often because we're too caught up in looking out for others.

So the presence or the absence of a supportive community can make a huge difference in how we navigate our needs. So for many of us, finding a group where we're understood and supported can transform the way we approach our own needs but what happens when that community isn't there? It can make the already challenging task of getting our needs met even harder as we grapple with isolation on top of everything else.

And when you have a community where behaviours are modelled to you, such as being clear about what you want and making requests of others, then that provides a pathway because you see other people doing it and you learn from what you see. Whereas if you're in environments where nobody talks about these things or they do but they're in the habit of making demands and maybe there are huge fallouts and big emotions or even aggression around this, then of course that's going to impact how you do things as well.

As I mentioned, there's also the habit many of us have of pushing our own needs aside, especially in moments when we're thinking about someone else's needs. And maybe that's more important, whether that's a conscious thought or it's a subconscious one because it is something that we do almost automatically. I've done a lot of work on this myself and had huge

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progress, but it actually came up for me just in the last week. And it was really fascinating to observe and to reflect on. Because in this moment I just completely dismissed my own needs.

There was a simple request that I thought about making and I just dismissed my own needs. This is a huge, huge part of why our needs don't get met. Because we don't even acknowledge them fully ourselves. And there's all sorts of reasons for that. This happened to me in a group setting and there was this chain reaction of all of us caring for the other people. And there's nothing wrong with caring, but how often do you do that in a way where you are overriding or dismissing your own needs? Because this habit isn't a helpful one.

So as we dive back into the discussion on getting your needs met, I want you to think about these additional points. Reflect on the role, community plays in your life, how the communities you are a part of influence your ability to know, express and fulfil your needs. And we also just want to get really real with ourselves about those times where we've ignored what we need because we're too busy attending to someone else. So think about a recent occasion where you did this. What could you have done differently in that situation so that you tended to your own needs?

So we're going to unpack these topics, building on our previous conversation all about how to navigate your needs in a world that often tells us to keep quiet and carry on and focus on what everyone else needs and wants. Alright, let's get into it.

Okay, today's topic is an interesting one because it's all about getting your needs met. And this is one of those topics that I coach my clients on very regularly. It comes up in all sorts of ways all the time. And I want you to consider when it comes up for you. Is there a point in your cycle, or perhaps in certain environments, or when you're with certain people, have you got a friend who rarely meets your needs, or a partner, or a family member who is just flat out ignoring your needs?

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Okay, have you got someone in mind? It's helpful if you do, because it means that you're going to get to be coached as we go through this. But if you don't, that's okay too, you'll still get a lot out of it. Now, let's start with how you might be feeling when this is what's going on. You might be annoyed, angry, defensive. You could be feeling indignant, or even a sense of injustice, especially if you would do something differently for someone else or maybe even an entire organisation.

You could be very busy thinking about all the things that you do for them and being very bothered that they're not treating you the same way. And because of that you're probably going to go on to create a whole story about how they don't respect you, or care about you, or love you. And that they don't think that you're deserving or worthy. And I know this because I have done this. So there's no judgement from me if that's what's going on for you.

As an aside, I highly recommend looking at if it's possible that you're being a martyr, and I say that with love. And this is another example of something that I have also done. I grew up watching my mum do this, being a martyr. So it makes sense that that's there for me too. And all we're doing here when I'm suggesting this is bringing that into focus, just developing awareness of what's there. You don't need to judge it, just notice it.

So sometimes you will be aware of your thoughts around this, and you'll realise that you're thinking that your needs aren't being met because it is a thought. It's not something factual that we can say is happening or not. When you're thinking that your needs aren't being met, it is exactly that, it's a thought. And if it's anything like mine, when that voice is happening in your head it will be very loud. It will be like, "Hey, they're not doing what I need them to do. What the fuck?" Just going to be bothered.

Or you might notice that you're feeling a certain way, that a certain range of emotions is coming up for you. Maybe defensive, aggrieved, disrespected, unloved, maybe even livid. What a great range of emotions we humans get to experience. Isn't that amazing?

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So, when you want your needs met, there are two things that can happen. Well, there is actually an alternative that's going to be so much better but let me stick with the two things that I see and then we'll get onto the alternative. So the first is that you expect someone else to be able to recognise what your needs are even when you may not know what it is you actually want. Think about it. You expect someone else to be able to recognise what your needs are without you having to say anything to them. And you yourself may not even know what it is that you want from them.

The second is that you demand something of them. You might express this verbally, but you might not. When I think about the times when I have done this, of which there have been many, let me assure you. There's something in common with all the times I've demanded something of someone else. And that's that I never clearly let them know what it is that I'd like them to do. I probably didn't even say anything out loud, it was just all an internal conversation and I just assumed that they would know or that they should know.

That awareness would just somehow permeate their being and they would know what I wanted from them. And that they really should be able to do that and that if they couldn't then that meant all sorts of things. So whatever's going on, the underlying story here is well, I don't know what I want or need. But you, you should know what it is that I want you to do without me even telling you. And you should be willing to do this anytime I want you to so that I can feel better. And that's just what our relationship should be like.

Some of you might be feeling very seen right now. I'm feeling a bit feisty today. But imagine being told that by your mate, or your partner, or your colleague. It's ludicrous, but this is literally what's going on in your brain underneath all the other stuff. And this will feel significant in your body, your nervous system will be activated. And for me there are two directions that my nervous system will take me in, in a scenario like this when this kind of thing was unfolding for me.

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And the first was just to collapse, to feel disappointment, or despair because I needed the other person to behave a particular way. Usually we are very particular about these things. And because I was feeling disappointed and hurt because of how I was thinking, nothing to do with the other person. I'm feeling disappointment and hurt because of how I'm thinking. And essentially that the other person should behave a certain way. And if they didn't then it meant that they didn't care about me, or love me, or see me as worthy. It was very dramatic.

So when I was in this place I would cry, I would lie down, probably even fall to the ground at some point, so let's be real, or at least on a bed. Very literally collapse and bawl about how awful my situation was and how the other person was making it even worse. And why can't they just do exactly as I want them to? I'm being dramatic here and I hope it's enjoyable and funny to you. But also when I was like this I was being very dramatic in the moment. But I couldn't see that because I was so focused on how the other people had let me down.

Which by the way, is also just a thought. They let me down is a thought. It's not factual, and what constitutes being let down is very much open to debate. So I was completely in my own world, no awareness that maybe their mind was on other things. Perhaps they didn't have the awareness that I was having a hard time, and that I was 'in need' because again, I wasn't explicit with them. I didn't tell them. I just expected them to read my mind and get it right, whatever that even means.

They may have realised all of this, may have realised I was having a hard time and in need. But perhaps they didn't have the capacity to meet my needs in that moment. Or maybe they did, but they came to the conclusion that I'm an adult and that they don't need to over-function for me by picking up what's going on and trying to read my mind. There's probably other possibilities too. That's just a few examples of what I wasn't even considering because I was so in need. Again, all very dramatic.

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And the other way that my stress response would unfold is that I get very defensive and fighty, not physically fighty. But there was like a physical response. So there would be some kind of stress response activation. And my core would engage like I'm bracing myself to fight. And my shoulders, my arms, even my fists would just get ready to go. And your body might respond differently. I'm just sharing some ways that the body can respond when you're in a particular stress response and you're busy thinking that someone else needs to meet your needs.

That they should do or not do certain things in order for you to be okay. So when I'm thinking that when I used to think that I would get defensive. And there's also been times where I've genuinely felt livid with someone else and have carried that lividness for a long time. I've been livid that someone can't read my mind. It's hilarious now. I can laugh at myself because I see what was going on back then and oh my goodness, it's just so great to get to a place where I'm in emotional adulthood. I'm taking care of my own needs.

For a start, working through all of this has meant that I no longer replay situations where I've been 'let down' on repeat because when we have a thought that we've been let down, here's what happens. You feel hurt and what ends up happening is that you hurt yourself by replaying these situations over and over again in your mind. The other person might not even be in your life anymore, they might be dead. But your brain is still playing your version of events over and over and you're just hurting yourself continually.

Now, here are three questions that you can use when you're busy thinking that your needs aren't being met. And they're going to give you an alternative way of going about getting your needs met. Are you ready? They will be in the transcript by the way. So if you want to refer to it, it's there, you don't have to take notes.

Okay, here they are. Number one, what is it that you want? Get clear on this, just for yourself because often we have these needs, but they remain

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unnamed. You can't possibly ask someone else to meet your needs when you yourself don't even know. So get clear on what it is that you want.

Okay, the second question is, how can you tend to your own needs? So we look to others rather than take responsibility for ourselves. And there's nothing wrong with asking others, by the way. You don't have to exist in isolation or be entirely self-reliant in what I would describe as a hard or brittle way. But be mindful of when you are outsourcing your emotional wellbeing to others. And you'll know when you're doing this when you expect others to tend to your needs so that you can feel okay.

And you may find that by answering those two questions that you don't even need the final question. But the third question to ask yourself is how can I make a request instead of a demand? So I'm going to give you an example of how I have used this to help bring it to life for you. There was a time when I needed other people to validate me. I needed their praise in order to think and feel certain things about myself. So I was reliant on other people's thoughts about me, which is no wonder given how we're socialised and educated especially when you're female.

And I have to go off on a tangent here for moment. So my son's school had their end of year performance for his year. And they did this very cute, very out of time rendition of Reach for the Stars by S Club 7. And I think they're a pop group from the 90s. And as another aside, when he was practicing the words and dance moves at home I was thinking this sounds familiar, what is this? But he didn't know them all in order. So I couldn't quite get there. And then he got onto the chorus and then I just started singing it with him.

And you should have seen the look on his face, it was hilarious. He just froze and then his jaw dropped. And then he had the biggest smile, it was amazing. And he was just like, "How do you know it?" Anyway, they performed it. And then afterwards the teachers gave each of the kids a certificate. So 60 or so kids in total each got a certificate in acknowledgement of their attributes or their skills.

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And as the ceremony went on and me being me couldn't help but notice how the boys tended to get certificates for being a superstar reader, or a science whiz, or a really fast runner. Whereas the girls, can you guess where this is going? The girls got certificates for having the loveliest smile and for helping others to feel better. So as you can imagine, I was I'd say incredulous. Just sitting there on our picnic blanket just stewing away and pointing all of this out to Paul, trying to look over at my friends to catch their eye and see if they were clocking it too, which of course they were.

So we were pretty pissed because the girls were predominantly being celebrated for how they look and for how they help others. Such bullshit. I was saying to my friend, "Imagine if one of them had got a certificate for how well she took care of herself." Of course that's not the kind of behaviour that we celebrate. That's frowned on. So I was just sat there watching this all unfold thinking this is why my clients and everyone listening to the podcast are facing the issues that they have. Very frustrating. I've forgotten why I'm even telling you this.

Oh yeah, so, it's no bloody wonder that we're reliant on other people's thoughts about us, especially when we're just waiting for certificates. Because from a very early age we have people commenting on how we look and how we behave, and we trust other people's opinions of us more than we trust our own. And we end up being reliant on praise from them.

Years ago there was someone in my life that I wanted praise from. I wanted them to acknowledge all the hard things I was doing, I wanted them to reward me for all the hard work that I had assigned myself, but at the time was blaming on external factors. I wanted to be seen. I wanted them to know that I was struggling. And I wanted them to just make it all better for me. Just wave their wand and make it all okay, which again, going back to how we're socialised, how many fairy-tales involve someone, often a man, coming along and making it all okay for us?

So I was very busy thinking of all the ways in which this person wasn't meeting my needs. And I created this whole story in my head about what

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that meant about them, and about me, and about our friendship. I wasn't recognising my own needs or taking responsibility for them. I was just dumping it all with them and expecting them to deal with it. So I've worked on that. I coached myself. I've been coached on it, got to a very different perspective, a much kinder one, very quickly.

And the relief of dropping that story and then getting to show up to that relationship whilst taking responsibility for my needs is so much better. It's a very adult relationship now.

Listen, other people won't live up to your expectations, that's life, that's being human. Other people won't meet your needs, it's not possible for them to. My suggestion is that you be you, and you let them be them. Not that you have control of them anyway. You may as well just get onboard with that reality. But life is so much better when you can get to the place where you make requests of others instead of demands.

So, here are my top tips for this. Be explicit with your request. You can say, "Look, I'd love a hug right now." I mean it's probably a good thing overall to be doing right now, given we're in a pandemic. Or you might say, "Can you help me figure out what to do in this situation? I'd really love your input." Something that I actually say fairly frequently to my son is, "Hey, I'm right next to you. And I can hear you so well. But when you yell it makes it harder for me to hear you. So can we just turn the volume down a bit, please?"

Again, it's a request. He might choose not to. And actually, it's far more likely that he can't because five year-olds tend not to have that awareness. But I do want to influence him to develop that awareness, so I make those requests. So you can ask things of other people. But don't hang your emotional wellbeing on whether they comply. And remember that you have options. My son's not going to talk quieter, then I'm just going to say, "Hey, it's quite loud in here for me. I'm going to go into this other room and do this instead. I'd rather be here hanging out with you, but that's quite loud for me."

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And I want to give you another example of what it can look like to make a request. So I was wracking my brain for when I have done this recently. And I was in a situation a while back, situation makes it dramatic. It really wasn't. It was just four people having a conversation and I was one of the four people. So there's four of us having a conversation on the pavement. But there were two conversations happening at the same time. And that is just awful for my brain.

My brain does not do well with more than one audio source. If the radio's on and someone's talking, I need to turn the radio down, even if the kettle's on, that will throw me. So two conversations at once is, no, my brain does not like that. So I was explicit in letting them know what was going on. And they just adjusted the conversation. So I was just like, "You know what? I really struggle when there's more than one conversation happening at the same time. Can we just have one conversation going?" And they did, they changed it.

But had they not I would have just moved away or said goodbye. But I wouldn't have been offended or hurt that they weren't accommodating my needs. It wouldn't have meant anything about them or about me because I'm just making a request, and they get to decide how they want to respond. Can you see how this doesn't have to be a big deal? Instead, when I do that I know that I've honoured my needs. That in making the request, I have tended to myself and I'm not putting my emotional wellbeing on whether they comply with me or not. It's so much better.

So I hope you found this a helpful one today, it's a pretty juicy topic and I've enjoyed preparing for it and making it for you. So let me know what you think over on Instagram or please go ahead and leave a review or rate the podcast. Do all the things, basically. Have a good week. I'll catch you later.

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