

Ep #170: When You Feel Stretched



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With Your Host

Maisie Hill

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This is episode 170, and this episode is for when it feels like you're carrying a lot and things are feeling heavy and you just need something to change. But before we get into today's episode, I have to tell you that I recently received a package that I wasn't expecting and inside it were some printed copies of my new book, *Powerful*. Not a proof, not the kind of advanced ones, but the actual book that is coming out May 9th.

And they look so good. The cover is stunning. We went with this beautiful coral red and it's the same font, the same style as *Period Power* and *Perimenopause Power*, so the trilogy is complete.

And even better, yesterday I heard from my publishers that I can offer you all £5 off the book when you order it through Waterstones. How amazing is that? We're going to put the link for you so that you can order it and get the £5 pounds off in the show notes, it'll be on my emails and my social media too. How exciting is that?

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.

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, folks. I have had a really intense and great couple of weeks. I've been doing a bunch of really cool stuff, but I have to say that I am enjoying things settling down again and I'm actually going to be heading off to Scotland because it's the Easter holiday, so we're taking a two-week trip up to Scotland. I'm going to be doing a light amount of work whilst I'm there, but for the most part I'm going to be off and I can't wait.

So I had to tell you about some of the things that have been going on. The first big thing was that I was in London for a photo shoot, which was incredible to do. But I always forget just how much preparation is involved, and this shoot was way more involved than previous ones I've done.

There was some last minute stress because the day before the shoot, some of the clothes that I was going to be wearing for it still hadn't arrived.

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So there was last minute shopping the evening before the shoot, a bunch of running around.

But let me tell you about the joy of doing it. First of all, I love doing photo shoots because they really provide an opportunity to recognize yourself and to be yourself and to step further into who you are and who you're becoming. It's very cool the impact that doing a photo shoot has.

Secondly, one of my favourite things about being an entrepreneur is getting to work with amazing women. When I find women that I want to work with, I might hire them immediately or it might be a year or several years until we actually work together. And it's so pleasing to me when it finally happens. And that's what happened with this shoot.

So Olivia, the photographer, is based in New York. I've been following her on Instagram for several years and trying to figure out how and when we could do a shoot. And at one point she was in Paris and I was going to go over there, but her trip was smack bang in the middle of a concentrated two-week period that I had put aside to write the book. So I decided not to go.

And then for this shoot, I was actually going to go to New York, but the timing wasn't great because I'm in quite an intense period of work right now. So in the end, she came here, which was so cool.

And then Tahira – Hi Tahira – I know she listens to the podcast. Tahira did my hair and makeup and I have been following her for years as well. I think I found her on Instagram at the start of the pandemic. And at one point we were actually sitting next to each other because she was in Margate when they were filming Killing Eve because she was working on it. And I messaged her after and I was like, um, I think I was just sat next to you.

And I'd asked her to do my hair and makeup on other shoots, but she's amazing and she is in demand. So the timing never worked out. I will link to both of their profiles so that you can see their work because they're amazing.

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But it finally all came together and I got to spend the day with the two of them. And I just saw the photos today, oh my goodness, I can't wait to share them with you all. They are epic. But what I will say is that I was shattered by the end of it.

Photoshoots can be quite draining anyway, but with the amount of prep there was for this one, travelling up to London, last minute outfit stress, like I was really feeling it. And then two days later it was Nelson's birthday party and we had 14 boys come over for that.

Then I got to take a breath. I had a few regular work days before heading off to do a four-day course in equine facilitated learning. So I now have a certificate in facilitating that work with clients alongside horses. So the horses are also the facilitators in the sessions and the client gets to work on something in their life. It could be an issue that they have, a goal, something they want to improve on.

And basically you do an exercise with the horse or with several horses. And then we use that experience of the exercise to bring awareness and understanding to the situation and to your life and to make changes. So basically you learn things in the session that you can then apply to your life. It's very cool. I love it. And I love getting to be a client. I love facilitating these sessions, they're so transformative.

And I had some huge personal and professional realisations during the training when I was getting to be the client. So I'm sure all that will unfold sooner or later, but basically there's been plenty going on and there's been a couple of occasions where I've run out of spoons essentially. And if you haven't heard that phrase before, I did a whole episode about it. So if you want to hear more, check out episode 80.

The brief explanation is that spoons represent what you have available to you. You could think about that in terms of energy or it can be like what you're able to do before your pain level increases or your capacity for thinking, making decisions, taking action.

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So basically you start off the day with a certain number of spoons available to you. And as you go through the day, you use up spoons. It's this metaphor that's used a lot in neurodiverse and chronic illness communities.

And when I run out of spoons, my verbal skills are greatly affected and I struggle to talk. I find it hard to communicate in all sorts of ways and it gets harder for me to make decisions. My body also feels very different. Like everything can permeate it. And this is what I experienced after the week of the photo shoot and after Nelson's party.

And I share this with you because it's important for you all to know that these things happen to successful people, okay? We have this idea that once certain things happen in life, you stop experiencing other things. And that just isn't true. And these things do happen to me, but thankfully I have all sorts of ways of supporting myself through those experiences, as well as being supported by others.

The other reason I share this is because I've noticed a significant number of my clients have been coming up against issues similar to this recently. And neurodiverse or not doesn't really matter, I just notice this has been coming up in all sorts of ways. And it's essentially related to how much you all feel you are carrying right now.

And so I wanted to do an episode where I talk about how to lighten that load. And there are lots of different loads that you can carry, okay? Some of them might be similar to mine and I'll be familiar with them and share the experience of carrying these things with you. Even though our experiences are different, there are some commonalities.

And then there are things that I don't have any direct experience of at all. They'll be unknown to me. And there will be some that I don't have experience of, but I've tried to learn and have some understanding of.

I've tried to put this podcast together in a way that's going to help you wherever you are, but I also just want to acknowledge there's some stuff that I'm just not even aware of. But my hope is that you'll get to use what I'm about to share with you, no matter the circumstance, because in every

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case when you're juggling responsibilities, tasks, expectations, pressures, trying to keep everything in the air, there comes a moment for us when the weight that we're carrying becomes too much.

It either feels like you're close to dropping it all or maybe you already have. It's this pivotal point where you realise that something has got to give because we all have our limits and there's always moments in life where our to-do lists become too much. We've said yes to too many things; opportunities, requests, meetings, get-togethers, tasks, projects, promises.

And when you get caught up in all the pressing things, you can lose sight of where you wanted to be in the first place, you forget the destination that you were heading to. And all you can see is the mass of projects or even ideas, like even something really positive like ideas. People can end up feeling a heaviness with those.

It can also be about things that you need to do, obligations, like whatever it is and whether it's physical, financial, emotional, spiritual. Having too much on your plate can lead to an existence where even the things that you really wanted at some point are a burden rather than a blessing.

And this is why so many of my clients who are contemplating leadership roles or new job opportunities or making some kind of change in their life, they come up against this question of, well, do I really want this? Do I want more on my plate? Because they're already feeling stretched. And then the thought of more responsibility is daunting, especially if you experience burnout. Just a side note, stretching can be a great thing, okay?

And these questions, they're really good to ask yourself as long as you are actually answering the question honestly, and then questioning your answers. Don't just believe your brain. Don't just go along with everything your brain offers you or what other people's brains offer you as well.

Now, I want to offer some context around this because when you're feeling some degree of stress, you're more likely to perceive things as emergencies because there's already a baseline level of, well, there's a threat we need to deal with, there's an emergency. So you could find

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yourself caught up in urgency and in responding to situations and people, rather than creating and being goal-focused.

When I say creating, I don't mean doing some pottery or writing poems. It can be that, but I mean doing work or something in your personal life where you are using your brain to create something. That could be a meal. It could be a document. It could be a process or a system, something tangible that you've made, okay?

But being curious and interested, coming up with ideas to create all of these things, that's available to us when the thinking brain is online. When we're experiencing stress, those things aren't important. Survival becomes the most important thing.

And I'm sure you've had the experience of feeling stressed and under pressure and finding it harder to come up with solutions. But then when you're feeling all right and not under stress, those things become clear to you, much clearer.

And when you're feeling stressed, you can just end up responding to things rather than creating. So that busy work that you can find yourself or feel trapped in can even be a deceptive comfort because it feels productive, but it's just distracting you from the stuff that actually matters. So it comes with a cost and it can end up reducing your capacity for the important stuff, the important decisions, projects and tasks.

The other thing that can happen is that if you're feeling stressed, you might hide from those important things and just focus on organising your inbox instead, or whatever the thing is that you tend to do so that you can tell yourself you're working, but you're really not. So if you notice yourself doing that, how about you actually tend to yourself and what you need in that moment? That would be far more useful.

All right, so there is some context around just the impact of stress and how that can influence this situation. Now, let's get into what you can do about those things that you're carrying, the stuff that feels heavy and how you can change them.

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So the opposite of stress is space. So how can you create space? How can you free up some mental real estate? How can you create space in your day? How can you create space in your environment? And by that, I mean your external environment, like what's around you, and your internal environment, right?

That can mean decluttering your desk. It can mean decluttering your room, decluttering your thoughts, adjusting your posture, softening yourself in the places that you're holding tension. There's so many ways into this. So how can you create some space for yourself?

This is very much about external adjustments and internal shifts too, and each supports the other. But what's the point in taking time away from work if the whole time you're taking that time away, you're berating yourself for doing so, or because you're worrying about what your colleagues, your boss, or your partner thinks of you.

See what I mean? We've got to look at both. So what can you change within you? What can you change outside of you? Look at how you perceive your roles and responsibilities and the tangible, practical steps you can take to change your experience of them, inside and out.

It might be time to remove some things from your list, okay? Or do them, but do them differently so that they don't require as much effort. You can also cancel your plans. Did you know you can do that? That might feel spacious and right to you. It might feel easy, or you might come up against thoughts about what that means about you if you cancel your plans.

But you get to decide, are you a flake or are you someone who takes great care of themselves? And you know, I don't think anybody really wants to cancel plans. Like we do and we don't, okay? And you don't have to cancel them. You can do it, but change your thoughts about what you're doing so that they create the emotions and the energy that's going to motivate you to do it.

But I think the ideal is that we just stop making plans that we know are really a no for us because what if flakiness, which everyone goes on about,

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what if that's just a symptom of doing too much and expecting too much of ourselves and others and lying to ourselves about what we want and don't want?

The other thing we can do is change the context of our plans so that they suit us better. Paul was teasing me the other day because there was this gig that he wanted to go to on a Saturday night. And I said, well, don't forget I'm going out for dinner with Chloe and Esme, which is by the way, very unusual for me to go out at night.

And he looked a bit disappointed about the gig, but then I was like, well, our table is booked for 5pm, so I'm probably going to be home by seven. So of course you can go to the gig. He thought it was hilarious. But I am way more likely to flake, if that's what we're going to call it, on a dinner that's at 9pm than one at 5pm. So for the most part, I just don't make those plans in the first place. See how we can set things up in a way that really works for us?

But when I talk about doing things like creating space in your day and in your diary, don't go thinking that means you need to clear an hour here and three hours there and take a whole day off. Don't get me wrong, it is wonderful and great if you can.

But when we set up these perfectionist ideals, it can get in the way of what's actually feasible in the moment. And then you'll just end up rubbing up against thoughts about how this kind of thing isn't possible for you. And it's fine for you, Maisie, but I can't do it, which is unhelpful and untrue.

So make sure you start with what's possible to you so that you can then do it and create some evidence that you can do this. And also that it's okay for you to do this because even if you can and no one else has a problem with it, even if they give you explicit permission, like, yes, please do that, that would be fantastic. Please take some time off.

What can get in the way of that is the idea that you shouldn't need to and that if you do, then it means things about you. Like that you're selfish or that other people don't seem to need to do this, so the fact that you do

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means you're less than or that you're a failure, which again is unhelpful and untrue, but more than that, it's unkind.

This is why we do the work here on the podcast and in the membership to strengthen your relationship with yourself and to detangle your self-worth from your productivity and your ability to do X, Y, and Z. Self-worth is so often bound up in our accomplishments. And I think it's understandable that there is a link between self-worth and what we accomplish, and that can be useful.

But when self-worth relies upon you achieving things, we get into murky territory and perpetual cycles of needing to achieve and attempting to feel good about yourself. But that feeling is always going to be just out of reach, okay?

So just a reminder, you are not the sum of your achievements, and your worth is certainly not determined by a fully crossed off list or whatever else you think it might be. And nothing you do is going to be enough when you're operating from that place of not enoughness within you. If you accept that you are enough and do things from that perspective, one of sufficiency, you'll have a very different experience.

Okay, I have some more questions for you. I know there's been a bunch, just remember you get the transcript on my website. If you just go to the podcast section for this episode or use the link in the show notes, it will take you there, there's a transcript with all the questions.

Okay, here we go. These are questions that you can use when it feels like you're carrying a lot.

What feels heavy for you to carry and actually is? This question is important because it allows us to make space for the stuff that is heavy and doesn't feel good and to acknowledge how you're feeling. But do follow up with the second part of the question, okay? Is it actually heavy? Is it true that it's heavy? It might be, it might not be.

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Do you need to carry it? Has anyone asked you to carry it? Did you intentionally decide that you wanted to? Do you need to? And why are you carrying it in the first place? Such good questions. If you don't need to or you don't want to, how can you let that go? If you do want to carry it, then how can you carry it lightly? How can you carry it well?

Next question, what feels heavy but doesn't need to be? So much of the stuff we carry feels massive and like it's consuming your energy and mental bandwidth and taking up all your time. But this is where we want to really examine that and take ownership for the ways in which we are shaping our own experience of reality through how we're thinking about things and how we're perceiving things and to find the places where we are doing that.

This is important because this is how you change things. As long as you're thinking that everyone and everything has to change in order for you to feel "better" somehow, you're setting yourself up for failure, okay?

Would it be great if your company changed their policies and procedures and deadlines and if everyone behaved in the way that you want them to? Yes, I'm sure it would. But is that going to happen? No, so don't hang around waiting for that to happen.

Now, what about the things that you've taken on responsibility for that nobody has asked you to do? This comes up so much on my coaching calls. I've experienced it a lot in my own life as well. But so many of my clients are doing things that they don't even need to be doing. Nobody has asked them to. It's not within their job description. Their families haven't asked them to do these things. Even complete strangers have not made a request. But they're doing stuff for all these people.

And when we're focused on what we're doing for everyone else and for the causes that we care about, which are important, but it can get to the point where we end up neglecting our own needs. And then when we're spread thinly, it's harder to have the kind of impact that we want to have.

And it's okay and fantastic to want to be able to do all these things, but what do you want to prioritise and where do you want to focus your efforts?

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It's also very useful to ask why. Why are you doing them? And there are so many answers to that, one of which could be that you actually want to.

I was literally coaching someone on this the other day. They were talking about how they've somehow been nominated as the person in their family to do this particular thing. And I was like, well, okay, but do you want to do it? And they were like, well, yeah.

So that kind of answer is different from a lot of all the other stuff, but that's why we want to take away the other stuff and just ask the question, well, do you want to do this? And if you do, great. If you don't, great. We work with whatever your answer is.

So do you want to do them and are they necessary? We can forget to ask this question. It's a big one. Is it necessary for you to do this thing, for you to carry this thing, whatever it is? Is there something else that could be done that either removes the need for it or makes it easier?

When it comes to lightening the load, look at what you can change within you and outside of you. And what shifts can you make both in how you perceive your roles and responsibilities and in the tangible practical steps that you can take to manage them? What can you change within you? What can you change outside of you?

And finally, remember that where you are is a place that at some point you probably wanted. You are living in the future that at some point you wanted. It might be different to what you imagined it would be. You might be shocked to discover that some things haven't changed at all. But you are living in the future that you probably dreamt of at some point, okay? A useful reminder.

Okay, folks, that is it for this week. I am off to Scotland. I'll catch you next week. Have a good one.

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

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