

Ep #196: Breaking Free From Self-Sabotage



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Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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You're listening to episode 196 of *The Maisie Hill Experience* and today I'm going to be talking all about self-sabotage. I'm going to do my best not to sing Beastie Boys at you.

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, hello, it is a very cold day here in Margate. And we are heading into winter. We're getting very close up here in the northern hemisphere at least. It will be different if you're down south. But with it being so cold this is the time of year when we go inwards. We retreat inside and that can mean spending more time physically inside like inside buildings and being all wrapped up in blankets, more clothes. And depending on how you respond to this time of year you might retreat within yourself as well. And this happens with the menstrual cycle, the seasons of the year, all the cycles basically.

So, let's get into self-sabotage. Well, let's not do it but let's talk about it. So here are a couple of definitions I found to describe self-sabotage. When you self-sabotage you are behaving in a way that interferes with longstanding goals. It is a self-defeating behaviour that undermines your success despite your wishes, dreams or values. We all self-sabotage, some of us more than others but there's no getting away from it.

And I think it's helpful to accept that there are times when you're going to do it. So, focus on catching it, on noticing it and then rectifying it. And I offer that suggestion because otherwise you can end up in a, there I go again with my self-sabotaging as a mindset and giving yourself this label, that you can get very attached to. So, whilst it's helpful to name things like self-sabotage so that you can bring awareness to it, we always want to be mindful that it doesn't end up becoming a way of describing who you are because that's how it becomes part of your identity.

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And it becomes more entrenched, and you get lost in it which is also a form of self-sabotage. And self-sabotage can be something active that you do, or it can be passive and involve the lack of doing something. It can be something that you're conscious of or subconscious. And some behaviours are very obviously self-sabotage more so than others, but I'm more interested in the sneaky ones, the ones that you might not be aware of but they're very much at play and getting in the way of you creating the results that you want.

For instance, it's pretty obvious that if you spend six hours a day watching Netflix and you do that every day then that will likely come at a cost because there's other things you could use that time for. As an aside, I'm not against watching Netflix. Recently I was coaching someone, and I forget what it was exactly that we were talking about, but it involved them resting and recovering. And they told me their list of how they were going to take care of themselves, and it was a fabulous sounding list. But I was like, "This sounds great, but you haven't mentioned watching Netflix or anything."

And I just want to make sure that you're not approaching this like there's a list of selfcare activities that have to be done in such a way that there's no actual resting happening. Because you can self-sabotage your rest and your recovery by not resting. But the same activity, like watching Netflix can also be a self-sabotaging behaviour. It can be a form of buffering. Buffering is a term that I picked up during my training at The Life Coach School. And buffering is any behaviour we do in an attempt to avoid our emotions and that has a negative outcome.

So, let's say you're feeling lonely or sad and instead of being with those emotions and giving them some space and processing them, because they don't last forever, you just sit with them. Instead of doing that, you drink a bottle of wine, or eat a pack of biscuits or whatever else. Because you could also overexercise. So, it's not that any of these behaviours are bad but the activity of overexercising, or over-drinking, or over-scrolling is done to try and get out of experiencing an emotion and they have a negative effect.

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I was coaching one of my clients recently on this in our community because she had posted her self-coaching and exploration of buffering in the evenings. And we were just discussing it and I was saying, "It's okay to want to switch off and rest your brain. But if you're doing something like scrolling on social media, does it achieve that or does it numb you out? Does it drain you more?" Again, nothing wrong with scrolling but it can be very unintentional a lot of the time and create more urges to scroll.

And then instead of experiencing connection, it causes disconnection to yourself, to the world around you and there's a lack of awareness there. And my client was suggesting that instead of Netflixing and scrolling, that they self-coach and journal and things like that. And I was like, "Okay, cool, but are you still avoiding your emotions? Because it sounds great on paper, I'm all for it but are you trying to get out of experiencing certain emotions by journaling?" So, you can even buffer with self-coaching and journaling.

So, when we're resting, we just want to be intentional about resting. Resting isn't self-sabotage, it can be, but how I think about resting at least is it's really important. So that's a more obvious form of self-sabotage. But let's get into the sneaky ones. I found seven key ways that you could be sabotaging yourself. There's loads more, this list could have been 21, but I've found the most common ones.

And the first way and this is a really big one, is counting yourself out. There are multiple ways that people do this. I want to give you some examples. So, Recalibrate and Activate is coming up and the workshops start every day at 3:00pm UK time. And some people use that as a reason not to sign up. Now, if you have no interest in coming, that's one thing but if you want to work with me for free this is another opportunity to do so. And I know that it's not a great time for everyone and I know it won't suit everyone's schedule, but there is no one time that suits everyone.

And some people will use the time of the calls as a reason not to get the benefit from the experience. And I actually had someone recently on the other call that I did, come when it was 4:00am their time. So, shout out to them, very impressive. And there are going to be recordings of the calls,

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but I can guarantee that there will be at least one person who will have thoughts and feelings about them being at 3:00pm, that's their choice, nothing to do with me.

But being able to attend the life calls in The Flow Collective is another way that I see some of you self-sabotaging. So, we vary the call times and days to account for different time zones and schedules as best we can. So last week I did a call at 9:00am, today's one is at 1.00pm. Amy's doing one at 8:00pm this week. And next week Mars is coaching at 6.00pm. So, we vary them. The calls are also all recorded and available on the membership portal. And we even have a private podcast feed so that you can very easily listen to the calls. We make them as accessible as we can.

But I frequently get messages from people who want to join but are worried about not being able to attend the calls live. And I know that it's amazing to come to a call and take part live. I also know that some people love to listen back to them as they walk their dog. So, there's no right way to take part. But I want to put this in a different context for you.

So, imagine you love Taylor Swift's music. You're a fan and you see that she's going on tour. And I know this happened recently, tickets were on sale in America, and I had some friends over there who were trying to get tickets. So, I was kind of following the saga on Facebook. And you had to get a ticket, to queue online to get a ticket to the actual show. So, the odds that you don't get a ticket are, they're pretty high.

So, let's imagine that you don't get one, you don't get to see Taylor Swift live, does that mean that you wouldn't want to watch the live performance if they had it streaming as a Netflix special or even that you stop listening to her music altogether? Of course not. You wouldn't do that. It makes no sense to do it. But I want you to see that if you're using the times of the calls as a reason not to join The Flow Collective, then this is what you're doing. You're literally shooting yourself in the foot and self-sabotaging yourself.

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And this happens in so many places. We put conditions around things so that we have a way out, so that we have an excuse. And listen, if you don't want to do something or you're feeling nervous then be honest with yourself and own that. Can you imagine if instead of saying, "I really don't know about joining because the call times are this and that." You just said, "I'm nervous. I haven't done something like this before." Or a very common one is, I don't usually do something like this for myself and I'm worried about what other people will say.

Imagine if you acknowledge the truth about what you're thinking and feeling. It's so much more powerful than making it about the call times because when there's an hour of coaching that will transform your life available to you, why would you make attending live a reason not to access that goodness? And I encourage you to find the reasons because they are there. They're most likely to do with fear of failure or fear of success. And another way that you might count yourself out is if you're thinking that you are different. I've done this in the past, probably still do it occasionally.

But it's so interesting to watch other people and then to go back and watch myself in the past doing this. Because some of my clients have health issues, chronic health conditions, certain things going on in their life that add what I would describe as layers of nuance to their lives. Now, those things are very real. There's no getting away from that. And many of my clients use them as reasons to work with me, but I know that some people use them as reasons not to work with me. They think that they are reasons why what I do isn't for them.

And listen, I know that what I do isn't for everybody, I don't expect or want it to be. And I'm good with people not wanting to. But if you actually want to, deep down you want to work with me then it's my job to fight for you, and to coach you, and help you whether it's through the podcast, The Flow Collective, anything else. If you have no interest, then I've got no interest in helping you to be able to work with me and I'm not going to be over-responsible for you.

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But part of my job is to help those of you who want to work with me be able to work with me and that involves addressing the things that come up in your head. So, imagine if instead of deciding that something won't work for you because of such and such a reason, you decided that that's probably a reason to get involved with whatever it is. Thinking that there's a better time is another form of self-sabotage. How often do you delay the result that you want because you think there's a better time to do it? My thought is that the best time to get help is when I really need it.

I'm busy is another whopper. I've sabotaged myself so many times doing this in my past. Now I've just trained my brain to respond in a radically different way. Again, not to argue with the need to rest and relax, definitely do that. But I think we all know how easy it is for a quick scroll to turn into an hour of just consuming social media. Nothing wrong with social media but without being intentional it sabotages your rest.

My point being that when people tell me they're busy, I'm always curious to know what their screen time usage is. And what's really preventing them from being intentional with resting or being intentional with spending time focusing on creating the life that they want. Again, it's likely fear of getting it wrong, fear of it working and the success that comes with that, trying to get out of feeling some emotions or worrying about what others think, which leads me onto my second point, that was just the first one.

So, the first way you can self-sabotage is by counting yourself out before you've even begun, just be honest with yourself.

The second way is by making other people responsible for your life which is exactly what you do when you worry about what others think. You're handing over responsibility for your life to them. And really, it's because you have that judgemental thought about yourself because if you didn't then you wouldn't give any credence to what they think which most of the time isn't factual anyway, it's just what your brain has come up with. But as humans we are primed to care about what others think.

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Blaming others also falls into this category, and blaming yourself too, so does waiting for other people. Are you waiting around for other people to provide something to you instead of making it happen yourself?

The third way you might self-sabotage is in thinking that you have to really think about it, or you have to explore things, or be more ready, or more prepared. I'm all for exploring things, bringing awareness, understanding and compassion but not at the cost of what you want. So, do you want this or not? Just decide, let it be that easy. All the things you're trying to decide about, just make a decision, let it be easy.

Okay, the fourth way is thinking crappy thoughts, and thinking crappy thoughts that aren't even true. They feel factual, they feel so real, so believable but they're not. But the thing is, when you think those thoughts, your brain goes to work on finding all the evidence of how they're true. I could think about how disorganised I am, I've done this in the past. And my brain will find a ton of evidence that supports that belief. And it's, first of all, it's very unkind.

It's also unhelpful because it doesn't cause me to be organised or focus on tasks because I'm just busy criticising and blaming myself. So instead, I can go to, well, where are the places that I'm organised, let's tell that story instead because that's what propels me into momentum and doing things.

Okay, the fifth way is using adversity, and messiness as reasons to give up and quit on yourself, and to quit on your dreams. Now, this is different to intentionally taking care of yourself and becoming resourced, to have the resources in order to get back in the arena. Things not going as you wanted or as expected is usually pretty uncomfortable but it's part of life. That's why I teach my clients how to experience these emotions so that their presence doesn't stop you in your tracks.

So, there are times when I feel doubt, when I feel unsure, times when I dread things, but I just keep going anyway because I know they're just emotions and I can experience and process emotions, they're not facts. And feeling doubt doesn't mean anything other than I'm human. My

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nervous system is trying to keep me safe, doesn't mean it's actually doing that, it's just its response. And I'm also thinking thoughts that makes me feel unsure.

And a bit of messiness isn't a reason to quit. That's why I'm such a fan of big messy, imperfect action. Some of my clients in The Flow Collective have been asking for a podcast about this. And yes, I will be doing one soon.

The sixth six way is not taking care of what needs to be taken care of, which includes you by the way. But the more able you are to make decisions, process your emotions, regulate your nervous system, the better able you are to respond swiftly and appropriately to issues that come up because things will come up. But if you feel stuck and overwhelmed then time goes by and there's a whole load of mental chatter that's really not very nice. And then they just become even bigger issues and very often it's just in your mind but there will also likely be some kind of external consequences too.

Okay, the seventh one is a big one, and it's not having a vision for your life. And it's just like you're out at sea on a boat bobbing around. There's no rudder, no sail. So instead of sailing towards a destination with clarity and purpose you're just bobbing around, and the wind and the current are in charge of what happens. This is what happens when we make the circumstances of our life, what's going on around us responsible for our experience here on the planet.

I was talking to my coach, Bev, I'm laughing because so many metaphors that I come up with, are they metaphors or analogies? I always get confused. Anyway, so many of mine are to do with boats and I get very seasick, and I have no interest in boats. But I didn't know, maybe it's because I live by the sea, who knows? But there's some boat themed stuff coming up that I'm going to be teaching in The Flow Collective. But when you're bobbing around on the seat without a rudder, or a sail, or an engine, or whatever, there's a lack of direction.

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I'm really big on this, having purpose is so fundamental to my own life. When I didn't feel a sense of purpose, I found it very challenging. Caveat to this is that I do think there's value in being in the murkiness and the not knowing. We're not meant to know all the time. And being in the unknown is also part of the human experience. It's one of the attributes of the winter season. We're going to be talking about this during Recalibrate and Activate, and also in the winter workshop in The Flow Collective that's coming up.

So, we're not meant to be in the knowing all the time. But if you're lacking direction and purpose for long stretches of time, I don't think that's beneficial. I am also very big on setting goals. Those of you in The Flow collective know that the way I talk about goals is very different. I'll be sharing more about that at Recalibrate and Activate. It's a very powerful practice when done right.

And my bet would be that if you don't think goals are powerful and useful, or you try to avoid them, then you've been doing them wrong, is what I would say. And that's no surprise given the dominant conversation around goals.

And by the way, even a cycle of behaviour that's productive and appears successful can involve a self-sabotage, that I could spend most of my day responding to requests, responding to emails, crossing things off my list, things that are good to do and that are helpful. They could even lead to me achieving some goals, but is spending time doing those tasks coming at the cost of the most important goals that I have set, and I'm committed to, the things that are actually going to make a difference? Because we all have our hiding place. We all have the place that we like to hide.

Now, I would love for you to think about the ways in which you sabotage yourself. You don't have to beat yourself up for it and judge and shame yourself. You're just bringing awareness to these patterns of behaviour so that you can notice them when they're happening and course correct because you don't have to self-sabotage yourself, it's optional but it requires awareness and self-compassion.

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Okay my loves that is it for this week. I'll catch you next time.

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