

Ep #204: Step up Without Stepping Back: How to Master the Fear of Levelling up and Reverting to Your Previous Ways of Doing Things



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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Okay, folks, it is great to have you here today. This is going to be episode 204, Step Up Without Stepping Back: How to Master the Fear of Levelling Up and Reverting to your Previous Ways of Doing Things. Let's do this.

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, folks. Welcome to the podcast. I am in the midst of, how do I want to describe it? We could call it continued upheaval amidst upgrades. I think that feels quite accurate. There has been a bunch of stuff going on for me over the past month. We had the half-term holidays, so that feels like a lifetime ago already. I went on a trip to Arizona by myself. Our bathroom is being renovated at last. So, we've moved out for that and adjusting to life in a different place and a smaller space.

Paul's had COVID. I've had COVID and for about two weeks after, I had this ongoing issue of just having a really sore mouth. All my teeth hurt. My gums have been bleeding. The floor of my mouth was really sore and covered in blisters. It hasn't been pleasant. I've been doing a lot of taking painkillers and just holding my jaw. Talking has been an issue, so I'm really thrilled to be back but amidst the various upheavals, I have really enjoyed the adventures that I've had.

Nelson and I went up to London for three days during the half-term, the week that he's off school. I just love it when we go on mini adventures and we just get to hang out, just he and I. But please don't listen to this thinking that it's all rosy when we do that. I know some of you like to think that I'm this amazing mum who never struggles. And I am an amazing mum, but I am very much in it with you. It is a struggle sometimes and it was great and fun and an absolute delight to walk around chatting with him and just holding hands.

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I love that he's eight now and I just love this age. I really am enjoying it. So, we're just walking around chatting, holding hands. And in fact, there was this guy MCing outside Shepherd's Bush station. And as we were walking by one evening, it was really busy and Nelson and I were just walking through the crowd holding hands and this guy MCing noticed us and he just said into his mic, "Big up all the boys who ain't afraid to be seen with their mums and hold their hands."

And Nelson didn't hear it. He didn't clock it at all, but I did, and it was just this beautiful, shared moment with a stranger who really saw what was going on and recognise it and name it and it was just beautiful. There was all that loveliness and also there are ways that Nelson regulates himself that are actually really dysregulating for me. So, there's the challenge of that and on our final day in London, both of us were in sensory overwhelm at the same time.

Working our way through that together whilst on the tube, there were some intense moments. But then we had some COVID and some other stuff going on and then I got to go back to Arizona. And you may have heard me talking about the previous trip I did to Arizona where I returned to do another workshop with some horses, not riding them, just spending time with the horses and doing more energetic work with them. So, I was about half an hour from the border of Mexico.

I was there a year ago and returned to do another workshop and I forgot how long the journey is. I left my house at 5:00am UK time, transferred in Dallas, arrived in Tucson at 3:00am UK time, so a 22-hour journey. And the weather was so different, it's just dry desert air.

So even though technically it was colder there in terms of Celsius, it was five degrees Celsius, 41 Fahrenheit if that's your measurements, which is colder than the UK, but I was in a t-shirt and feeling nice and warm. It was very weird. But then it would peak at 26 degrees Celsius in the middle of

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the day and then freezing at night. So, yeah, I had to pack a lot of clothes for that because I had no idea what was going to work.

Now today I am diving into what it means to truly own your next level, specifically tackling the discomfort, the uncertainty and the fear that comes with it. So how do you push through when every part of you is screaming to retreat back to safety? This is something that I've worked through time and time again. I'm actually in it now and I've noticed it in some of my clients recently. So, I want to talk you through the most common issues that I see happening when you level up, whether you're facing professional changes or personal evolutions.

I mean they're all combined really, but this is what today's episode is all about. So, we're going to explore the nature of the discomfort that comes with upgrading, how to face the fear of judgement, as well as any questions that might come up about self-worth and deserve-ability. And some strategies for you to stay the course when the going gets tough.

Now let's start off with being really clear. When you are either on the brink of making a significant change or improvement or you've just made a change. It is completely normal to want to revert back to your previous way of doing things, to go back to the most practiced place. Why is that? Well, it's familiar. It's comfortable. Even if it's not good for you, it feels safe because it's what you know and you are used to. It's like an old pair of shoes that hurt your feet and they're really worn through, but they feel so familiar, so we keep wearing them.

So, most of all, I just want to emphasize how utterly common and normal it is to do that. Recently, I have had some clients say things like, "Well, I did this thing, and it was a big deal for me, and I felt really good about it, but now I notice the urge to go back to the old way of doing things." So please hear me when I say that this is just what happens.

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It's like being in a cave and then running out in the open where you're more visible and therefore more vulnerable to prey and your insides are just screaming, no, what are we doing out here? This is the worst idea ever. Get back in the cave. That's a thing that all of us deal with, but it doesn't have to be a big deal that it's a thing, especially if you understand that this happens to absolutely everyone.

And most of the time, this thing that feels like a big deal to you isn't even detectable to the majority of other people. Please let that sink in. Some people will notice the difference for sure, but what feels like a tidal wave internally to you will appear as a ripple to them. So, there's that.

Another way of thinking about this is that it's just like stretching and exercise. So, let's say you're sitting down with your legs out in front of you and you're bending into a forward fold. If you're anything like me, you can't wait for the forward fold to be over and be able to sit up straight again, especially since I started horse riding. So, it's completely normal that when you're experiencing a stretch and the tension that is part of that stretch, that you feel the urge to go back to your most practised form.

But if you can find a way to be in it, to make some space for yourself, then it's not so bad. And if you do it enough and it becomes normal, then the place that was uncomfortable becomes your normal. But when I talk about a forward fold, you're probably very accepting of what I've described, it makes sense. You've probably experienced it in some form, whether it's in a forward fold or some other type of movement or exercise.

But when it comes to a place in your life where you're levelling up, you're going through that evolution and therefore also stretching into something. Are you expecting that you should be able to go to the fullest expression of the stretch and hold yourself there no matter what? And therefore, any slight backing out of it means things about you because this tendency to revert is rooted in our desire for comfort and familiarity. But just as with the physical stretching, that initial discomfort of expanding beyond our current

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edges or limits is just part of the process. So, it's not a problem unless you frame it as a problem so just don't do that.

Another aspect I see coming up a lot is the fear of judgement, and this can show up in all sorts of ways. But the biggest one I want you to be aware of is convincing yourself that you made the wrong decision. And that can sound like, "You know what? Actually, it's fine. I don't need to do that thing that I was really excited about." Or, "Well, I do want to do it but I just don't think this is the best time."

Perhaps the biggest one is, "Well, I'm really grateful and content with how things are. So, I'm not going to actually do that thing. I'm just going to focus on feeling grateful." And you'll position it as if you can either be grateful or want more but both can be true. They can both exist and what a beautiful place to approach things from. This is probably one of the most common ways my clients' self-sabotage, but we have to be careful about how we talk about it because then it becomes self-sabotage.

And it's this big thing that also has to be unpacked, which in itself is a form of self-sabotaging. Maybe all that's happened is you've just reached an edge and you're feeling the pull to return to the form you're most used to being in, just like a rubber band and it can just be that. It doesn't have to be that I'm self-sabotaging and what does that mean about me? And now I have to unpack that.

And then you're kind of, yeah, you're self-sabotaging through all the unpacking and just giving yourself more things to think about rather than existing in this new place and getting used to it and making space for yourself there. You might also say, "Well, actually, I just don't want the additional responsibility." And don't get me wrong, for some people in some situations that can be a really powerful, really incredible place to arrive at. Great decision.

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But in other situations, it can be a disguise and what it's disguising is the fear of judgement. So, if I make this decision, if I do this thing, if I step into this other version of myself, the version of myself that I'm becoming. And there are additional responsibilities that come with that, then there's the fear of judgement of, well, what are people going to think? What are they going to say? What are they going to do? And really, this is a fear about you not being good enough. That's what's underneath it all.

But also, you're not going to do everything brilliantly, hate to break it to you. As wonderful as I know, trust, believe that you are, you're not going to do everything brilliantly, none of us are. And not doing everything brilliantly is completely separate to your worthiness as a human. So don't conflate those things. It just isn't possible for you to be amazing at everything. We all have limitations and weaknesses. That's true of every single one of us, me included but that also means that we all have strengths and things that we really excel at.

And stepping into your next level is about owning that and being willing to let go of stuff that prevents you from really stepping into this evolution. And some of the stuff might feel really good to let go of, it might feel like a relief or feel exciting. And some of it you might grieve and that's okay too. But when you separate your worthiness from the stuff that you're not so good at, you can really own that there is stuff that you suck at or need help with or is best left to other people who are really good at it and love to do it.

Can you see how this will help you to step into the version of you that you're becoming? And actually, that's a little side note for you, if you're trying to become someone else, then that's another reason why things could feel off. Because there's a huge difference between not loving who you are and trying to be someone else who you think is lovable and acceptable and becoming a different version of yourself that's rooted in already loving who you are.

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Okay, two other situations I want you to watch out for when you're going through this levelling up. The first is procrastination where you've made a decision but not taken action because of all the reasons I've already mentioned. And the biggest thing you can do here is just take the first step, do something. It doesn't matter what the thing is. Don't add additional barriers that don't need to be there.

Just take action because the longer you freeze and don't do anything, the more you'll convince yourself that this is the worst idea, and the world is really scary and everyone's out to get you and the situation is hopeless. Why are you bothering in the first place? Not helpful.

The second way is making the decision to do something differently, taking action on it, but then kind of hiding from relevant people and keeping it quiet. Now, there are times when some degree of protection and keeping things to yourself is appropriate and useful and a good thing. Either in the early stages of having an idea and getting going with something or when you're in an environment where someone is genuinely just waiting for you to fail and someone's out to get you.

Or are just engaged in kind of weird power play behaviour and that might be in a malicious way, or they just don't even realise how they're being, and they could actually be doing it in a way where they don't intend any harm. But it's just kind of part of who they are, and they might not just realise that actually this isn't a great way of carrying yourself through the world.

So, there are occasions where it's judicious and prudent to keep things relatively under wraps. But there's way more occasions where we just hide because we're scared because we have invented things in our minds that we think are going to happen. And yeah, some of these things may well have happened to you in the past. There might be threads that you're carrying with you or there might be things that you've seen unfold for other people.

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So, you know that these are real things that can happen, and I think it's good to make peace with that rather than argue with it, yeah, that's the thing that could happen. But the all-important follow up is, yeah, but how likely is it that it will happen? Or, yeah, that's a thing but is it big enough of a concern that I'm prepared to let it stop me? And you can put all that together. So how likely is it to happen?

And given that likelihood, am I prepared to let that stop me? Possibly, but probably not. And even if it is, that's okay too, but can you see the difference between deciding that in an intentional way where you also really own it? One way that you can shift your narrative from self-doubt to self-assurance is by replacing your focus on what if you fail, what if people respond negatively to what if you succeed and everyone loves it? What then? Are you giving equal airtime to each side of the picture? And that's just in the black and white way, there's all the grey area too.

And when you do succeed, because you will, make sure that you actively celebrate every single thing because that's what's going to help you expand into the stretch and take up space there. That is really important. And this is where it's really helpful to be in community with other people who will celebrate with you and where you can gain evidence of it being safe for you to be seen in your success and in your celebrations. This is why celebration is such a key part of our culture inside the membership.

Now, before we finish up, I have an exercise for you. So, I just want you to think about a time when you were about to make a decision or in the process of making a decision that signified a level up for you and stepping into a new way of doing things and the next version of yourself. So, think about that decision and think about what came up for you in terms of this 'slipping back into old habits or thought patterns'. And if you're really honest with yourself, what was that about?

If you can laser in on what was coming up for you, it's going to be really useful information for you to have just as an awareness. And I think broadly

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speaking, we all have our go to places for this of the things that kind of trap us and hold us back from fully accessing this next evolution. When you've looked back, you've got that awareness of what's my tendency here? Again, you don't have to make it a whole thing, but we're just noticing and naming what the tendency is when you go through this process.

And then write down one decision that you're currently hesitating to make because, well, probably for the same reasons that have come up for you in the past. Maybe it's about being worried about people's reactions, increased responsibility, which is probably again about other people's reactions or whatever it is for you.

And then I want you to write down what you would do if you knew that everyone would support your decision and be your biggest fan of whatever it is that you're thinking of doing, what you're wanting to do, and who you'll be because of that. What would you do if everyone was on side? And then finally, I want you to come up with a narrative for you making this decision. So, this is about being intentional about what you're going to make it mean about you. Because this is just so important, I can't tell you, comes up all the time.

If you don't do this, you are more likely to be swayed by other people's narratives about you doing this. And that might be something that someone explicitly says to you. It might be a vibe that you get. It could be something that just your mind is coming up with and may not be completely true. So, this is about being intentional about what you're going to make this decision, and this course of action mean about you.

Because if you don't do that, you're more likely to accept thoughts, again, whether they're yours or other people's that you're selfish, disloyal, you only care about X, Y and Z. You're leaving people behind and that means this and that and you've really changed and all these things that I see so many people being affected by. So instead, you're going to decide in

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advance what you doing this means about you. And then you're going to keep coming back to that.

And that's what's going to help you to exist outside the cave and take advantage of all the opportunities that come to you because you decided to leave the cage. Because you decided to leave that place that's most familiar and see what else is on the horizon for you, which is a fantastic thing to do. Alright, folks, so, so lovely to be back here with you and I look forward to sharing next week's episode with you. I will catch you then.

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