

Ep #212: Consistency Is Holding You Back



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With Your Host

Maisie

The Maisie Experience with Maisie

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This is episode 212, Consistency Is Holding You Back. Yes, really it is. Today we are getting into a topic that every single one of us grapples with, including me, and that's the expectation that we should be the same all the time. High achievers, this one is especially for you and even if you don't think you're a high achiever, do stick with me because you might just recognize yourself in what I'm about to share. I'm going to start with a story from my own life and then connect it to the patterns that we all face. So let's get into it.

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. First of all, I have some very exciting news to share with you. You may have seen already on my Instagram stories. We have finally got some chickens. I have been trying to convince Paul that we should get some hens for a long time. A really long time. I didn't give up hope and now we have four hens.

So friends of ours are moving. They're leaving Margate and where they're moving to, they can't take their hens. So we bought their coop and their hens. They moved in, it must be almost a month ago I think now, and a lot of us told us don't name them, but there was no stopping Nelson and to be honest, I was up for it too. We'll see if my thoughts change once one of them dies. I'm not sure they will though. I kind of feel solid about naming them.

So their names are Adele, Solange, Sade and Gala, all named after female singers. Adele and Solange are kind of... Adele's like, kind of the lairiest one, and was the first to eat out of our hands and kind of give things a go. But Solange is quite a fierce leader, I think, even though she might not appear that way. You have to kind of watch her quite closely to see that.

Nelson is very happy, as am I. Before school, we've been eating our scrambled eggs made from the eggs that they've laid out in the garden,

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whilst the hens are out of their run and just free ranging around the garden. It was just amazing. He has the biggest grin on his face when we're doing it. Bear in mind, it's been cold.

This has been happening throughout January and we've had minus 1, minus 3 temperatures and it's been icy, but he and I have still been out in our dressing gowns and our coats, sat down with the hens every morning. So I'm very happy. I'm certainly learning from the chickens that they, like us, have their own rhythms. They put themselves to bed at night. I had no idea that's what they did, but once the sun is going down, they just automatically take themselves into their run and into their coop and settle down for the night. So I just love having them. It's just really cool to have them. I'm just so happy about it.

Now I have to tell you a bit of a story and then we get into this idea of consistency, which is something that so many people, clients, friends, strangers on the internet, I just see people berating themselves with that stick. So I want to free you up from that. And I find it really useful to tell you stories from my own life. I know many of you always comment and say, "Oh, it's such a relief to hear that this affects you." And I'm like, of course it does. Be weird if it didn't.

So here's what happened. Last week I was, was it last week? Maybe the week before. Last week I was coaching in the membership and I noticed that it was taking some effort for me to coach. And what I mean by that is that it was taking me effort to find the words to use, which for me happens fairly frequently because I'm autistic and one of the ways that impacts me is I can lose my words.

So it's something that can occur at any point, particularly if I'm having issues with capacity or I'm in some form of an autistic shutdown. It's just a clear sign that I just need to be on my own and just do things that nourish me and just focus on that. But it's the kind of thing that can also happen when my bleed, my period is due to start. Because as I go into my inner winter, so winter is the inner season that coincides with the time your period is starting, like the time of your period and around your period, I would say.

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When I go into my inner winter, I typically move into this expansive place that has qualities to it that's very different to other points in my cycle. I've been working with my cycle for almost 25 years, so I'm no stranger to how I shift at different points. Of course, that has shifted with age and just different things going on in my life.

But at the start of my period, I move into a very different place. I slow down, how I think and feel become much more expansive, and I notice really fascinating things and patterns and put connections together. Things that I've probably missed during other phases when I'm moving quicker or doing things, there's just a very different vibe going on in my winter, especially at the beginning of it. So just before, the day or two before, and then day one and day two. I think day three, I'm kind of in a different version of my inner winter.

So, you know, I would miss out on this at other phases, but trying to hone these expansive thoughts into coherent sentences, that is actually quite tricky for me. That does require effort. So, I try not to time membership calls that I'm going to be coaching on for when my period is due.

Now that is a bit harder to plan for these days because now that I'm 44, just checking, yeah, 44, my cycle is shorter than it used to be and it can vary in length as well. So on average it's 24 days now but it can be less than that and once in a while it can be longer so it's a bit tricky to plan these things out in advance.

And I always want to ensure that my clients receive the experience that I want them to have. And sometimes, prioritising that means asking someone else to coach, even if I really want to. Thankfully, everyone always gets excited when Mars Lord coaches them, because she's such an amazing coach. So I know that they're in great hands. I know it's good for them to experience coaching from other people. Everyone's happy. And it's also good for me because it means I'm not expecting myself to be different to how I am.

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Okay. I just want you to think about how often do you do that? How often do you expect yourself to be different from how you are?

Also, this expansive place is only available to me in this way as my bleed is starting. If I am busy and skip past it, I miss the wisdom. I miss what becomes available at that point. So, I want to be able to go into the depths of that. I don't want to be having a conversation with Paul about practical household stuff or parenting or adulty things. I don't want to be doing busy work that means I don't get to really soak up the experience that comes as my period is starting.

I want to explore this place and have the space to do so. To be able to listen to the nudges and the insights that come up at that time. It's often when I come up with loads of ideas and notes for the podcast or for inside the membership, but it's only me who can do those things. Other people can coach the members. So of course it makes sense for me to go with that and to really benefit from that opportunity.

But I wasn't expecting my period to start when it did. So when I did the coaching call and the membership, it was a great call, but it was just requiring way more of me than it usually does. I was kind of like, oh, this is interesting. What's going on with this? Because I was just kind of getting pulled into that expansive place whilst trying to say coherent sentences to people.

So it's a bit like when you're tired and you're going to bed and you're drifting off and you've tucked yourself up and you're all cosy, but then you realise that there's something important that you need to get up and do or talk to your partner about. So you kind of have to come back out of that cosy, tucked up, drifting off place in order to do something or communicate with someone. It's not that you can't do it, but it requires some effort and probably rather not. You'd probably just like to stay in that place.

That's what it feels like to me. But maybe you're someone who feels that way when you wake up, right? And someone wants to chat to you first thing in the morning, but you're just not ready yet. That's how I feel in the

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mornings. That's actually the point in the day where I can be in a place that's quite similar to that feeling of inner winter and I want to be in it.

I enjoy just watching my brain do its thing without interruption. Anyway, then my period started and I was like, oh yeah, that's what it was. That's what it was about. It all makes sense. So I did that coaching call, but then I asked Mars to do the call that was happening day one of my cycle, so that I could just focus on me and be in this expansive place.

But what struck me was how even after all these years of honoring my cycle, tracking it, working with it, there's still a thread of belief in me that expects that I should be able to show up and coach as my period is starting with the same clarity and energy and all the qualities that I have going on for me in the run up to ovulation. When estrogen is on my side, boosting my verbal skills and cognitive function, well actually, I would describe it as the type of cognitive function that is valued by society, as in thinking quickly and responding succinctly.

I've also probably got some testosterone happening in the run-up to ovulation, making me a bit more sassy and quick. That's really great for coaching. It's amazing, right? But I'm not going to be that way all the time and the other phases of my cycle are also great for coaching. It's just a different vibe.

So I've also noticed how this experience really highlights the value of working with, rather than against, these natural shifts that ebb and flow. So as I was looking back over that particular cycle, I noticed that on days 15 to 19 of my cycle, I was so hyper-focused and got so much work done, like deep, focused tasks that required sustained attention. I was in beast mode with it.

I was leaving the house at 20 to 8 in the morning, getting to the cafe I like to work in in the mornings, but when they opened, I was doing five hour stretches of deep work, then walking home, taking a break for lunch, and then going back into another two or even three hours of deep focus. That is a lot of deep focused work, but it came easily to me because of where I

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was in my cycle. I had safeguarded that time in advance knowing that I would be able to do that and I coached the shit out of myself in order to do that work. But then I moved from that part of my autumn, like the premenstrual time, where I really thrive on deep work, into what I would describe as the second phase of my inner autumn, which is like the pottering phase.

So, in the pottering phase, it requires a lot more effort to focus, and I just naturally gravitate towards bitty stuff, right? Or jobs and tasks that take just a few minutes or just don't require much concentration. They might take a while, but there's an ease to them. And guess what? That is also valuable, right? It's the perfect time for me to tackle those small lingering tasks that still need doing, but don't require intense focus, or jobs around the house that might take a while, but they're just like organizing and sorting things out.

And when I honor this shift, I get more done overall because I'm not fighting myself. It would make no sense to do those bitty little tasks when the deep focus was so available to me the previous week in my cycle. It would be unreasonable to expect myself to do the same deep focus from that week in that pottering phase, because it's just not where I'm at.

And of course we can use coaching and things to do things at times that are less opportune, but also let's not try and override what's true for us. And in doing so, I think we can risk undervaluing the power that's available to us in each phase of the cycle.

So, when I'm in my inner winter with my period, that for me is the power to see patterns, to think deeply, to approach things from a reflective place, to see things really broadly. So there's a depth to it, but it's like just so expansive and broad as well. So this is an opportunity for me and how many more of them am I gonna have? Right, who knows when my periods are gonna stop. I want to love on this phase whilst it's accessible to me.

And there's not many things that I would describe as universal among my clients, but the expectation to always operate at the same level, I reckon

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that is universal in some form or another. Even if on a cognitive level you know that it makes zero sense to expect yourself to always be the same. Right? The habitual patterns and socialized beliefs you have mean that there is still this default mode that you go into.

And this is particularly true for high achievers. And a lot of my clients are high achievers, even if they tell themselves that they're not. And you might be thinking that you're not a high achiever. So I'm just going to define what I mean here. Okay.

So when I think about the high achievers that I know and love, they often have like a natural ability or a gift in certain areas, and it's something that others see as impressive, but they themselves probably dismiss and shrug off. Or maybe on a good day, they can acknowledge that they're really good at things, but they're probably also busy telling themselves that they're not good enough.

They often have a strong work ethic, they're often tenacious and focused, and sometimes that can be really enjoyable for them, but other times it can be something that you use against yourself. As is the case when you expect yourself to be the same all the time.

You can have a tendency towards perfectionism and this fear of being found out to be not as good as people think. There's also a real tendency to struggle to switch off and rest is pushed back all the time until basically your body essentially forces you to stop. That can include experiences of burnout and sometimes that is a recurring theme.

Does that sound like you? Even if you don't check all of those boxes, many of us have internalised the belief that we should operate at full capacity all the time.

So, this brings us round to expecting ourselves to be the same and how consistency holds you back. Because consistency is always positioned as the holy grail. We tell ourselves that we should always be able to deliver at the same level no matter what even when our circumstances, our energy or like mental state change.

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This obsession with consistency isn't accidental, it is baked into how society views success. We are told that to be reliable, professional or valuable, we have to perform the same way day in and day out. So of course we need to question that.

Is forcing consistency really the best way to show up? Or is learning how to adapt and how to shift gears when needed, actually a better measure of capability. As I've just described with my experience of my cycle. Because expecting sameness isn't just unrealistic, it is a recipe for self-doubt.

When we can't do things to the same degree, or even if we can, but we'd just rather not, then the inner critic kicks in. Why aren't you doing more? Why aren't you better? What's wrong with you? Other people can do this. You're the problem here." So it really is a recipe for self-doubt.

This is why self-coaching is so good, because you can spot all these thoughts and interrupt them, because you have to interrupt this pattern of thinking and to think differently and then use that different mindset in a way that means you can use your energy wisely.

When I was hyper-focused that week, I really leaned into it. I got deep strategic work done, important work. And then after that, I was in that pottering phase of just doing odds and ends, fantastic. And then after that, as I moved into my period, then I was in that more expansive place where I have that really broad perspective. Neither is better or worse, they're just different ways of being. By leaning into what's naturally available, I get way more meaningful work done than if I was trying to be the same day in, day out.

We are cyclical beings. Whether you have a menstrual cycle, whether you follow the seasons of the year, astrology, or you just simply notice how your energy ebbs and flows throughout a 24 hour period. We all move through phases, and when you ignore these shifts, you're not just fighting reality, you're also draining yourself completely unnecessarily. It's like trying to sprint uphill all the time, always sprinting uphill when walking could get you

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there just as effectively and with less strain. You know what? There's also opportunities to pause and check the view out.

When you force yourself into constant productivity and output, it's just like you're expecting yourself to sprint all the time and that's the only option. And you're not being very nice to yourself. And you're also missing out on the unique benefits of each phase.

So what insights are you overlooking because you're too busy just trying to power through? What are you bypassing in doing that? What creative ideas are slipping past because you're too focused on sticking to the plan and being consistent, because that's what's important.

So doing your best doesn't mean always being able to do the same things to the same standard all the time. A full capacity doesn't mean the same capacity.

It means doing your best with what you have available to you. Sometimes my job as your coach involves helping you to see that you have more capacity than you realize and at other times it's helping you to recognize that your capacity has limits. Okay. Both are important.

For instance, on that day where I chose not to coach and Mars coached instead, and I was in that expansive place. On that day, I prepared the notes for this episode, but I wasn't expecting myself to do anything beyond that, like record it. I didn't coach anyone, but I did go to a coaching call where I was the client. I also cancelled my yoga class that day. Sometimes I feel up for yoga on day one of my period, but that day I didn't. So I was working with what was available to me and honouring that phase.

I guess I could have pushed through, right? That was an option. Not a great one, but it was an option. I could have expected myself to coach in the same way that I would, with estrogen-fuelled cognitive and verbal ability. But then I'd be missing out on the unique value that that phase of the cycle offers me. The slower pace, the expansive thinking, the noticing patterns, coming up with ideas. These are all so powerful.

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When we expect ourselves to always operate in one mode, we're not just setting ourselves up for failure, we're neglecting to access the full range of our abilities. We want you to really think about that. When you try and power through and be the same all the time, you are neglecting yourself in multiple ways.

High achievers often struggle with this because they've been rewarded for their hard work and consistency. But that external validation can make it harder to then step back and say, well, right now I'm working differently, and that's okay. That's valuable too. This whole question of what's valuable as well and that being a thing, I mean, that's a whole other topic.

It's also valuable to do nothing where you can and when you can. There are still things that must be done, but where can you create some spaciousness to rest, to think, to simply be, rather than waiting for how you feel to force you to stop? I'm talking about illness, overwhelm, burnout, even an accident that happens because rushing and tiredness and not thinking straight was a contributing factor.

When it comes to consistency, we have been sold a definition that I just don't think holds up. Consistency doesn't have to mean doing something every single day or showing up exactly the same way all the time. If you do something once a year, that is consistent. We consistently have friends over on Christmas Eve. I consistently potter around the house when my period is due.

The idea that consistency means endless repetition comes from outdated industrial thinking, where the focus is on predictability and efficiency at the expense of individuality and health. And you're not a machine. So I'm going to say that real consistency is about finding what's sustainable and effective for you, not some rigid standard that's based on nonsense.

So here's what I want you to take from this episode. I want you to pay attention to your own rhythms and cycles, whether that's your menstrual cycle or a cycle of another kind. Where are you expecting yourself to be the same all the time? And what phase are you in right now? What's available

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to you in that phase? How does it feel? How can you lean into its strength instead of fighting it?

When we ignore our natural shifts, we are not just fighting against ourselves, but also missing out on the gifts that each phase can bring. And as I've said time and time and time again, every phase has its power. And the key is learning to value each one and adjust your expectations of yourself accordingly.

Okay, folks, that is it for this week. I'd love to hear what came up for you as you were listening to this. Share your reflections on Instagram, comment on this episode's post, tag me, send me a DM, let me know and I will catch you next week.

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