

Ep #216: The Three Phases That Lead to Success: Lessons from Horse Riding



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With Your Host

Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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This is episode 216. Today I'm breaking down the three phases that lead to success. Preparation, jumping and riding away. Most people have a phase where they get stuck or hesitate or just kind of collapse at the finish line or just before it. So I'm going to help you to diagnose where you're struggling, understand why it's happening and give you some practical ways to get unstuck.

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*.

All right, folks, it is great to have you back. Since I recorded the last episode about spring emerging, it's been bloody freezing. It has been around 2 degrees where I am in the UK, but with the wind chill, they've been saying it's been feeling like minus 5. So it's been cold and not particularly pleasant weather wise, but the light keeps trickling in day by day. And today is the first day that we have had four eggs from the hen, so all four are now laying, which is very exciting.

Today, we are talking about something that applies to work and business, to aspects of your personal life, just life in general really, and that's how to prepare, commit, go for it and then ease off and wind down afterwards because each phase is equally important and you are going to favour a particular phase for sure. You'll feel at home in it, you'll like to spend the most time in it. You'll crave it, you'll enjoy it, but there will be at least one phase that you neglect, that you ignore or skip over entirely. And as you listen to this, I want you to be assessing and diagnosing where you struggle in this process. And I'm going to give you ways for you to improve those areas and just give them some TLC.

So this is a concept that I have shared with my private clients and they have found it really helpful. So now it's time for me to share it with all of you. I'm excited because I get to bring in horse riding. I want you to think about a horse going over a jump, coming up to a jump or sometimes we

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call it a fence. It doesn't matter if you have any experience of horses or jumping one or even seeing one, okay? Because I trust that you can grasp the idea that jumping is not just about getting over the obstacle, it's about what comes before and what happens after.

This is just a really useful way for you to be able to frame everything in your life that you are approaching that requires something of you. Depending on your habits, your mindset, your particular patterns and tendencies, you might be getting stuck in one or more of these areas. So here they are.

The first one is preparation. That's what sets you up for success. The second is the jump, actually committing and executing. And the third one is landing and riding away from the jump. So this is like what happens after you execute in terms of self-care, celebrating, integrating what you've learned, you know, continuing the momentum and success that you've achieved.

When you bring all of these phases together, you create a sustainable rhythm. It's not about getting stuck in one phase or certainly not forcing yourself to move through them faster. It's just about knowing how to cycle through them again and again in a way that works for you. It also means stepping away too, and not always jumping.

Whether you ride horses or not, you're probably already seeing how perfectly this applies to the way we approach our goals, our projects, anything that you're working on. And also why so many of us get stuck, maybe before we even leave the ground.

So I want you to understand how to move through each phase, and part of that comes from understanding why you're in it in the first place. You might already have some indication of why it happens, because I want you to be able to finally like follow through on the things that matter most to you and to be in that sustainable cycle.

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So let's start with phase one preparation. This is where you set yourself up for success. In horse riding, what's happening is you are seeing the line that you need to take to the jump, which is like you being clear about where you're going, your vision, and being able to see the path that you are going on. Okay, getting clear on your approach.

You also need to be balanced in yourself and on the horse and straight. In December, I saw this riding training demonstration, and the trainer that was teaching the riders said that you have to get the horse straight and balanced. Otherwise, doing the jump is like trying to do a push-up with your hands off to one side. Outside of riding, this is about you doing what you said you were going to do and being committed to taking that direction.

How I see the absence of this showing up in a lot of my clients is them saying they want one thing or making a decision to do something. It's like they're facing forwards, right? They're straight. Well, one part of them is at least. They're facing forwards, they're saying, yes, this is the path I'm taking, this is the jump that I'm going to be doing. But their feet are going off in another direction, okay? So their chest might be facing forwards, they might be looking forwards, but their feet are going off in another direction because they haven't actually committed to the decision. They're in two minds.

You also get distracted by external noise, right? So instead of focusing on the jump, you're looking elsewhere. Listen, trust me when I say I know the reality of this. I get it, believe me I do. Often the coaching I do around this is about training. I mean, communicating with those around you that when you are in the arena, you really don't want them to be on the sidelines going on about the dark charge that needs to be paid or whatever totally not important right now thing that the lovely humans in your life are prone to asking you when you're focused on something very important.

Because for some reason they think it's important that you know this at that moment in time and that you should be available to chat to them about it as

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you are approaching a jump. This literally just came up with one of my clients. We were having a good giggle about it as well as addressing it.

So this can be in the form of the classic, what do we have for dinner tonight? Or let's talk about doing that project that's totally optional and so not important right now whilst you've got this massive thing happening in your life, this massive jump that's coming up that you're trying to prepare for. Have you emailed so and so? Have you organised this? Hello, mental load and unpaid labour. We all know about that.

But there also needs to be enough forward momentum and rhythm to get the horse there, to get it to the jump so that it can then do its job and leave the ground and take the jump. But it would be ridiculous to ask a horse to jump from a stationary position. But that is what some of you are expecting of yourselves, to go from doing nothing to doing everything in one step.

And sure, you can do that. You might be able to do that, just as a horse might be able to, right? Especially if there was a predator behind them and they suddenly needed to leap out of the way. But when you do that, are you setting yourself up for success? No. It's actually likely to cause damage and it's certainly not sustainable. Just imagine a horse on a show jumping course being asked to jump from a stationary position or even walk. The idea of it is ridiculous.

But check in on if and where you are expecting this of yourself. Other ways to recognise struggling with preparation include winging it and just hoping for the best. And listen, I do sometimes wing it, but although I describe it that way, it's not actually winging it because I know that I can do these things because the foundation is there. And I know that because I don't feel unprepared when it's time to take action. I can just step into taking action.

Other ways this can show up is procrastination. Convincing yourself that you will figure it out as you go. And whilst I do believe in doing things messy as a way to counteract perfectionist tendencies, which often come alongside procrastination. There's a difference between doing it messy and

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feeling centered or a bit apprehensive slash excited. There's a difference between that and the kind of figuring it out last minute panic and it feeling really stressful and you feel scattered and overwhelmed or rushed. There's a lot of pressure that is not useful there. Some types of pressure are useful, this type generally isn't.

And you know, I say that as someone who thrives with the pressure of deadlines. Okay. I am not the person who gets things done months and months in advance. Okay. So this is all with the caveat of be who you are and do things your way and set yourself up for success.

So, I want you to think about how you are in this phase of things. Do you skimp on preparation? Do you tend to hang out in it for too long and overemphasize this phase to the point where you neglect to actually jump because you're so convinced that you need to prepare more? Does it just feel more neutral, like you do prepare, you do set yourself up for success, but you also move on and take the jump? Once you have your answer, just ask yourself why.

No matter what your answer was, not in a judgmental, "why do I do this to myself" kind of way, just in a curious, "oh what's that about" way. Some possible answers include, you're trying to do too many things at once. Like you're trying to jump two jumps at the same time, or maybe even five. I do think that one jump after another when it's on the same line is possible and a great use of momentum, but that's not what I'm talking about here. I mean you have your sights set on two jumps or five jumps in different directions. You're traveling towards one, but you're looking at a different jump.

Okay. This happens all the time. The same goes for distractions and just, you know, it's just trying to do too many things at once, so we have to unlearn doing that, which is what I love helping clients with inside the membership. It's so much fun to see the difference this makes.

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You might also underestimate how much work is actually required and you run out of runway. Okay, so that jump comes up on you pretty quickly, especially if you're feeling unbalanced or like you're fighting to get your horse straight. So you might not have a sense of where you're going as well, or what it takes to get there.

And you know, sometimes that is the case, right? I had no idea what was actually involved in getting a horse to a jump until I gave it a go. So, sometimes we really need that experience in order to understand what is required but you have to make sure that you're learning from it and adapting your approach.

If you're prone to hanging out in this phase for a long time in the preparation phase, that is typically going to indicate perfectionism, procrastination, as well as enjoying learning and planning for things. Although learning and planning are great, those of us who enjoy them, I raise my hand, we can hide out in them because they're comfortable for us. They're enjoyable and they don't involve any kind of emotional risk.

The other aspect of this is that our brains love to circle around and around. And this is when we might lie to ourselves and say that overthinking, or have a sense that overthinking things and over-preparing is productive. Okay, and so, it's not that. It's not productive.

And I think if you're honest with yourself, you will know when you've crossed that line, but it just might feel safer to stay in the approach phase. Tweaking the plan, researching more, waiting to feel ready. The problem with that is that readiness doesn't come from thinking, it comes from doing.

I see this all the time with my clients and honestly, me too. It's easy to mistake preparation for progress, but you can't build confidence by circling the approach. You build it by taking off.

So you can improve this phase by actually having a plan in the first place, having a strong vision, making clear decisions and committing to them fully.

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You can check if your focus is actually where it needs to be or if you drifted off and you're thinking you need to be jumping several jumps at the same time. That's like an impossible standard for yourself, right?

You also can focus on ensuring that you have enough momentum, right? Don't expect to go from stillness to full execution in one step and just set yourself up for success. Not perfection, but some structure and intention. Have a plan.

Okay, that's phase one. What about phase two? This is takeoff, doing the jump. This is the moment of action. It's when you commit, go for it and make your move. Some people overthink, they hesitate or avoid this phase, which means they never actually get going. They don't leave the ground.

When you're on horseback, this is where you get refusals. That's where the horse just stops at the jump. Or run outs, where it just swerves to the side and goes around it. Fair play. Why jump when you can just go around? Path of least resistance and all that. It makes sense. But some horses love to jump. Some riders love to jump. So some people just really enjoy this phase.

Struggling with the jumping phase can come from the over-preparing that I've mentioned. Some people hesitate at the last second where they just overthink it or let self-doubt take over, which means they never actually leave the ground. But if you hesitate, you lose that momentum and you grind to a halt or swerve to the side and either way you become unbalanced, you fall off or you go over the horse's head.

Okay, so it's actually not safer to hold back from doing the jump. So this happens when you don't trust that the jump is gonna happen. And that means that in some way, shape or form, you slam on the brakes at the moment where you really need to make the most of that forward momentum and the lift to carry you over.

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So that is related to worrying that you've made the wrong decision. Oh, why am I doing this? Oh, I should be doing that other jump instead. Or people are watching me. Okay, what happens? You know, you're just in that way of thinking. So that means self-doubt, not trusting yourself. All of that is related to the fear of failure and or the fear of success.

And you see this in riders who look down at the jump instead of what's ahead. So as you are taking that jump on the horse, your chin needs to be up rather than tucked. Okay, because that actually changes the balance of the horse when your head is kind of tilted down rather than upright. Your eyes should be looking ahead in front of you or if you're on a course of jumps, as you're taking one jump, you're also looking to the next jump that you're going to take, the next line that you're going to take so that the horse lands in the best position for that jump.

So although you're focused on the jump that you're on, you also have your eye on the future. So what issues with the jumping phase can look like are things like self-sabotage, avoidance, or just constantly delaying action. Self-doubt taking over, not trusting yourself. You might be letting opportunities pass by because you convince yourself it's not the right time. Oh, I'll just do the next jump instead. Right, there'll be another one. But then you don't do that one either. So you constantly like reroute instead of committing.

You find ways to avoid making the leap and the discomfort that comes with doing so. But of course it's going to be uncomfortable. There's risk involved, but it's also exhilarating and fun too. There's, I think, far more risk in not taking the jump. But every time that you avoid the jump and go around it or circle back instead. You're just training yourself not to take action. Very unhelpful.

But if you're on the line that you're meant to be on, as in this is the line you've decided and you are on it and you and the horse are balanced and straight and you're committed, then you've done everything you need to take your horse to the jump and to go for it. And I'll be honest, that worry

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and fear of failure show up way before you're actually at the jump. They're present in that preparation phase because the lack of commitment is very obvious. And if you're honest with yourself, you'll know if you're committed or not.

But the great thing is it is never too late to recommit. So the takeoff is the performance. It's where you show up and you execute, you do your thing. It's your presentation. It's the important conversation that you've been putting off. It's the thing you do for your job. It's the opportunities that you create and leverage. It is your go time.

The takeoff phase feels risky. It's kind of meant to. Okay, but it is more risky to not go for it. And this is why I have been busy making some changes behind the scenes because I want it to be easier for you to move from like circling around and rerouting to committing and doing things in your life and taking action. I will share more about that soon, but for now, know that the hardest part isn't landing the jump, it is deciding to take off in the first place.

So, are you committed to going for it and trusting that you will do it, or are you nervously looking down and slamming on the brakes inside yourself? The horse is going to feel that. The horse is like, "Oh, she's not convinced we're going to make it over this jump. Maybe she's right. I should just not do the jump." Okay. They pick up on all of that.

It's interesting how with jumping, when you're on horseback, that there's that aspect of release and letting the horse do what it can do whilst also having enough contact with the horse that you don't remove all guidance and support. So you can improve your execution by trusting your preparation and more importantly trusting yourself. Okay, commit to the jump. That action itself is going to create confidence and commitment. That is a skill that you can practice, I promise you. Keep your focus ahead. Okay? Don't be looking down at the jump, wondering what's going on. Look past it to where you are going. Have that sense of direction and purpose.

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And then we move on to the final stage, stage 3, landing and riding away. This one gets neglected a lot. A lot of people prepare in some way, they take the leap, but then they collapse with relief afterwards. But the landing and the riding away matters just as much as the jump itself, because that's all about stabilizing, integrating your success and continuing to move forward rather than stopping completely.

And my lovely instructor, Julia, always points out how I forget to ride away from a jump. I haven't done a lot of jumping and neither has Buttons, so there's a lot of preparation that goes into jumping and doing the jump for both of us. So when we make it over the jump, I'm always so relieved to have made it over. And because like so much has been involved in doing it, that I just collapse in a heap afterwards. And he and I both need to learn that we don't stop after a jump. We have to ride away from it, especially when there's another jump coming up.

And this will be the case for you too. Your life is a series of jumps. Sometimes there will be a series of jumps that come up on you very quickly, which is a bit like a bounce grid, which is where you have several jumps on the same line. So a straight line with several jumps. It's one jump after another, but there's no change of direction and you just bounce your way through. It's a fantastic use of momentum.

This is what I was offering to one of my clients recently, who she's got a series of several big things coming up. I was like, oh, you're on a bounce grid. You're going to use that forward momentum to keep going and really clear those jumps. It was just such a fabulous mindset switch.

If you're in that position yourself, what if you're just on a bounce grid and you're using all that preparation and forward momentum to achieve several things in quick succession? Okay. Then you can ride away from it. Then you can wind down.

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And when I offered that to my client, then we were able to look at, well, if that's the case, then what has to happen and be set up to ensure that that bounce grid is doable?

But even if you're not on a bounce grid like that, but maybe you've got several jumps coming up. As you ride away from one jump, you will simultaneously be preparing for the next one. So you have to focus on the landing. Okay? So what is your tendency? After you've done something mega, if you've done a jump of some kind, how do you tend to land? Do you collapse in a heap like I do when I'm riding? Do you land with intention? Do you land well?

And that could look like rest and relaxation, having some fun, closing off the project in some way, integrating what you've learnt. It could be celebrating your success. All of those things are what is involved in the landing and riding away. Okay, and then that turns into also preparation for the next jump, whether it's coming up in a while or whether it's kind of pretty soon. And even if you have no other jump coming up, it still makes sense to land and continue forward and wind down with intention. That means finishing with presence and awareness.

This can be literally as simple as at the end of your day, the way that you finish work, how you close your laptop, like signing out of things, looking at the sky, just switching context, ending work before you go home or go out for the evening. Most people really focus on preparation and the jump, but then collapse afterwards. They don't integrate what they've learned, they don't celebrate, end up starting from scratch next time because of that. So instead of celebrating and building on the success, they burn out, disengage or stall completely. This will be especially true if you've been rushing your way through the whole thing.

And by the way, horses can rush their way around a show jumping course as well. Either from excitement and over enthusiasm, nervousness, lack of confidence or being unbalanced. But that rushing isn't good. First of all, it

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feels horrible because it's uncontrolled. So think about how that applies to your tendencies.

So here's how you can recognize if you're struggling with the landing and the riding away. You finish something big and then you just completely stop. You just slam on the brakes, collapse in a heap. And it might really feel like that's what you need to do, believe me, I get it. But this is what I mean about all the phases are important.

And if we're paying enough attention in the first two, then really the landing and the riding away should be much smoother and more balanced. So you lose momentum rather than leveraging what you've just built and achieved. You don't integrate your wins. So you just jump land, but you don't absorb what you've learned. You don't take that on.

This is why I'm such a fan of evaluating things. We do that a lot in the membership. We really encourage the clients in there to do it because you are going to have some absolute gems when you assess things and then you can really integrate them. It's always worth doing. Your brain will always want to skip doing it because it's effort, but it is worth it.

So you also don't make the next jump easier because of all of this. Okay. And you all know how big I am on celebrating. I go on about it all the time. This is why when you don't take the time to celebrate, to process or reflect, you miss out on key insights. And this happens when you are used to criticizing yourself and you don't know how to evaluate without judging yourself. But this is why I teach specific ways of doing it inside the membership.

It can also show up if you're assuming that once you've landed, the work is done. But in doing so, you don't set yourself up for what's next. So that might mean that you don't have built-in systems or habits that sustain your efforts long-term where they just become what you do. A bit more practiced, a bit more automatic.

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And inevitably, this results in feeling exhausted after big efforts because you go all in and then you burn out and that constant cycle of all in and then all out, that takes its toll. And you're also just, you're not teaching yourself to do it differently. And it reinforces fear because if every jump feels like an exhausting near miss, of course you are going to start resisting taking big leaps at all.

And sometimes, the way to support that is to lower the size of the jumps for a bit, okay? To lower your expectations so that you can have what we call a clear round in show jumping where you don't knock any poles over and you do the whole course without any refusals or run outs etc.

So you get to do that and maybe like it's more sustainable and there isn't that exhaustion afterwards and you get to enjoy it and have fun. So sometimes lowering the jumps is a great idea. It could even just be poles on the ground. It still requires everything that I have spoken about. But if you're a high achiever, you might really resist that idea, especially if your identity is tied to the big push. And you know, this is what society values too. It's the moment, you know, the moment of the jump that we all want to see.

When you go and see show jumping, most people aren't going, oh, did you see how he rode away from that jump? No! I mean, of course I notice this as someone who rides. No, really, we're too captivated by the jumps themselves. I do want to offer that this is completely natural and understandable. We just need to bring some focus to the landing and the riding away.

What if your success wasn't just about the takeoff and the jump, and it was also about what happens afterwards, including self-care, switching off, having some fun. If you don't do this, it will feel like you just keep crashing and starting over. So you build, you push, and then you stall and have to slam on the brakes to recover. And every time you go through this cycle, it will feel like you're losing ground instead of gaining it.

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So my suggestion to you is that you shift that cycle, you break it, you train yourself to do something different, which you can do. Also, some of you are expecting that you should be able to jump ridiculous heights all of the time.

There's an event called the puissance in horse riding, which is basically the high jump competition for horse riding. So the competition starts with fences at a minimum height that's already really high, but the main jump is a wall that's made of these soft bricks, and the height of the jumps and the wall are raised before each round starts. If you knock bricks off the wall or your horse refuses it, then you don't progress to the next round. And the winner is, you know, the one that wins the high jump. But this is really important. The jumps are removed as the rounds continue. So you might start off with, I don't know, five jumps and then the wall of the soft bricks.

By the time the wall is really high, and this is like, I don't know, 2 meters, 10 centimeters or something like that, there's usually only one other jump out. The riders aren't expected to jump multiple high walls in quick succession. They clear out the small jumps out of the way so that all their energy goes into that one jump that is preparation for then the big wall, okay? The massive efforts. And some of you are expecting yourselves to jump ridiculously high all the time whilst also juggling everything else. That is not how it works. If you have a big jump ahead, you need to clear space for it.

Okay, please take that lesson from this episode. If you have a big jump coming up, go ahead, look at your calendar. If you know you've got something coming up, what do you need to clear out the way so that you can do that? How can you remove some of the other jumps so that you've just got one left that is preparing you for the really high wall that's coming up? Or are you just going to keep expecting yourself to do a whole series of big jumps and then a fuck off massive one.

So when it comes to landing and riding away from a jump, here are my tips. You have to plan beyond the jump. Don't just plan for how you're going to execute or prepare. Plan for what happens next. How are you going to protect yourself after the jump? And keep going in whatever way is

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appropriate for you to. I don't mean just like keep going and keep going. I mean like integrate things, wind down, whatever that might be.

You also need to regain balance quickly. So in riding, when you land, you're reorganizing yourself and rebalancing. So after a big effort, instead of crashing, give yourself a structure to recalibrate. Have a plan and commit to it as much as you do in the preparation for the jump. Use that momentum that's there. Okay. Don't wait until everything feels hard again. Ride that wave that you have already created and shift your identity. If your identity is based solely on doing massive jumps, you might want to change that.

I'm not saying that you have to dismantle your identity as someone who can succeed at doing massive things. Let's keep that part, but can we add to it so that you land and ride away?

Can you see yourself as someone who lands well and takes care of themselves and takes time to rebalance and reorganize? So see that success as the full cycle, which by the way, also includes exiting the arena and having time outside of it. That is a big part of it too and everything that goes on outside of it.

All right, folks, this has been such a fun episode to record. Now that you know the three phases, where do you see yourself getting stuck? Hey, do you skip preparation and dive straight in and then feel unprepared? Do you prepare endlessly but struggle to commit when it's time to jump? Do you make the jump? Do you avoid it at the last minute? Are you expecting yourself to be in the arena all the time? Do you land and ride away?

Please come and tell me all the things over on Instagram. I want you to really think about where you're stopping too soon in your own life. Where are you slamming on the brakes? Where are you putting in all the effort to prepare and jump, but not riding away? Where might you be missing opportunities to build on what you've already done and what would change

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if you saw all of these phases as equally important and not just afterthoughts.

Okay, folks, if today's episode hit home for you, stay tuned. Got lots of exciting things coming up. Make sure you are subscribed to the podcast and my emails because you're not going to want to miss what is coming up next.

Thank you for listening. It is great to have you here. So much fun to share my thoughts with you. I will catch you next week.

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