

Ep #220: Turning Chronic Pain Into Purpose with Miriam Wilson



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Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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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*.

Maisie: Okay, welcome to the podcast everyone. I'm just feeling so good today. It's like a sunny blue sky day here in Margate and I have got Miriam with me here today to chat about, well, I have some ideas of things that I want to speak about, but I'm very curious to see what you want to touch on because Miriam's in the membership and has been for a while now. So Miriam, why don't you introduce yourself, let us know your pronouns, where you are, all the things.

Miriam: Great, thank you so much. Yeah, so my name is Miriam Wilson. My pronouns are she, her. I am currently in Ottawa, Canada. It's a beautiful blue sky day here as well, unceded Anishinaabe Algonquin territory. And I come here from England. I actually have a funny story for you Maisie.

Maisie: Do you want to just get into it? Tell us.

Miriam: Because I know this is for you specifically because I know that you said you used to work in a rock bar and that you'd met Dave Grohl. I think he said that. Well, I met my now husband, who is Canadian, on a fan forum for the band Nirvana when we were teenagers.

Maisie: No way!

Miriam: Yeah, and so I share that just to say that's the reason why I ended up in Canada, because my husband's Canadian. Yeah, and I just thought that was a funny story.

Maisie: Very cool. Okay, so you're in Canada, you're from England and you've been in the membership for what, two years?

Miriam: Just over two years, nearly a half but I think it's been two and a half years since I read your book, actually. It's a very like...

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Maisie: That was your reason?

Miriam: Yeah, it was *Period Power* and it was like such a defining moment. You know, I remember the time in my life very vividly when I read *Period Power* and started listening to the podcast. And then, you know, I was so excited to join the membership as soon as it opened. And just, yeah, the journey that it's taken me on, it's just been, I'm so excited to share about it all.

Maisie: Yeah. Well, I mean, where do you want to start?

Miriam: Well, I can maybe say a little bit more about me and what I do, because I think that kind of sets things up as well. Like I, for most of my life, even since childhood, I've been really passionate about climate activism and the environment. And that really has been kind of like the thing that I've wanted to do in my life. And you know, when I was younger, I thought I want to work for an environmental campaigning organization and do all these radical things. And that's actually kind of what I went on to do.

I worked for an environmental campaigning organization for a non-profit and that's what I've done for the past 10 years, well more actually, since I was a student campaigning in university. But along the way, through my 20s and into my early 30s, I started experiencing more and more migraines and more and more stress with my work. And I would now, through what I've learned through your work, I'd say it was my unmanaged mind. My mind just going wild. That's what led me in search of anything that could help.

It's what led me to your book because hormones and I was like, maybe if I can understand more about my menstrual cycle, that that could help with the migraines. So essentially now I've gone through the experience of figuring out and understanding what's going on with my migraines, what's going on with my nervous system, my mind. And over the past couple of years, I've got certifications and become a chronic migraine recovery

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coach, which is cool, because it also kind of doesn't really exist. Like I just made it a thing.

Maisie: I'm so glad you've like gone straight to this, because I was like, we have to talk about your journey into doing this. So I would love for you to just share a bit more because I know, because we always hear from people on the podcast who like want to make a change in their lives and that might be their profession, their job. It might be something like not to do with their work, but there's a change that they feel called to do, but maybe they don't have examples of anyone doing that or people that they know personally doing that. And so I think it would be really useful to just explore how that happened or how you went about it. How would you describe it?

Miriam: Well what's really interesting, it's like where to even begin, I feel like maybe I'll start with just like what my life was kind of like before the Flow Collective because I think it kind of puts a little bit into perspective just the change that's happened since, if that makes sense.

Maisie: Yeah, go for it.

Miriam: Just before I found your book and joined the membership, I was at the point of like, for a few years, around eight to 14 days of the month, I was experiencing migraines and...

Maisie: That's why I'd forgotten that they were that severe. Now you're saying it, I'm like, oh yeah, I remember you talking about this and celebrating when things started to change. Okay, now I'm even more excited to hear. Okay, I will try not to interrupt the story. Go for it.

Miriam: Oh no, I love it. I, yeah, and it was getting really dire. I was frequently running out of the medications that helped take the edge off and having some of these really dark experiences of just finding myself in pain, not understanding why, not having the kind of tools to manage it and searching for a cause, an underlying reason. I've always been very holistic in my approach to healthcare and take over-the-counter medications and

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prescribed medications, but I'm also interested in diet and exercise and supplements and just holistic stuff. So I was trying everything to try and figure out these really debilitating migraines.

And I also remember vowing to myself at the time that when I figured it out, I was going to share what I learned because I just knew it didn't make any sense. I was like, why are so many people in this pain that just it doesn't make sense why we're experiencing this? Even just understanding it in like the human evolution, like why would we be in pain all the time? How does this help anything? You know?

But alongside that, experiencing these frequent migraines, I was also, I would have what my husband described as couch funks, where I would just get stuck on the sofa after watching a TV show or a film or something and it would be like the stress and the fear of just life and work and everything would overtake me.

And the Nina Simone song, Please Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood, there's that line, sometimes I find myself alone regretting some little foolish thing that I've done. And that was me all the time, just like playing over a comment that I made five years before to a colleague and what did they think of me. I had my rotating cast of memories that I would pull out and I would cringe over and I would berate myself almost over. And again, just before I found your book, I also went through the process of applying for a job that took three months.

And I was in a stress response essentially for the entire three months that I was going through that job application process. I just, there's nothing else that I was thinking about. And so I say all of this to say when I say my mind was completely unmanaged, it was like I was just in a permanent stress response and had no way of really like no tools to manage my mind is how it felt.

Maisie: And I think sometimes it's I think even when someone has the tools when you're in that place you often need support from someone else to

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help you co-regulate or find your way out of it. It just can be a very paralyzing place to be and it sucks. It feels like shit because the emotions that come with that place as well.

So I think it's when we're in a place like that, of stress and overwhelm and it's quite prolonged, I think we can use that against ourselves as well. I should be able to, and this is even with the skills, which I know you're going to get onto, even when you have them, we have that judgment of, I should know better. I should be able to work my way out of this. And it's great that you have them and you might just need someone there to help you figure it out and to help bring you out of this. It's a chunky place to be.

Miriam: Yeah. Yeah. And actually looking back now, like the amount of resources I have to do that co-regulation and do that coaching of one another is so different now. And that support system as well makes such a big difference. But yeah, it was very interesting timing because when I joined the Flow Collective, it was around the same time that I discovered a thing called pain reprocessing therapy, which helped me to make sense of migraine and what was happening there.

And so when I joined the membership, I set this, what I was really encouraged by you, the idea of setting audacious goals or impossible goals. But I set this goal, I'm gonna cure myself of migraine, which that was an audacious goal. But what I really meant by that was not so much that I would never experience migraine again but just that it wouldn't be the defining thing of my life. It wouldn't determine what I did and how I lived my life. It would just fall more into the background.

And then another thing that I learned from you was that you can achieve goals really quickly and in a much faster timeline. When I set that goal, I was like, I'm going to work on this for a year, two years, however long it takes. And things just shifted for me so quickly with all of the tools that I was learning through the membership, which I'll talk about how much alignment there was with pain reprocessing therapy, but then also just with the new tools I was learning and making sense of my brain and the

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migraine brain and how it functions and learning all of that, applying the tools, I just, I personally saw such a difference really quickly. And it took me from, okay, I'm going to figure this out to, okay, I think I figured it out quite quickly.

And then, and it's like, what now? So within the space of joining the first year in the membership, by the end of that first year, I had completed a certification in pain reprocessing therapy, had signed up to a coaching holistic wellness coaching training program and had started taking on my own practice clients. And that wasn't even in the realm of like my goals at the beginning of joining. It was like just figure out my own situation. But that happened really quickly.

Maisie: Isn't that so fun and wild? I've actually just recorded an episode. I don't know if it's going to come out before or after this conversation airs, but about goals can happen quickly and goals can also take time. Just talking about the difference. And so I love that you've brought this up as an example of, yeah, goals can happen quickly.

And from my point of view as your coach, seeing this unfold in the membership and seeing you show up for coaching, taking the coaching, coming back and celebrating, setting a new goal. It was just so fun to watch you blowing your own mind.

Miriam: Yeah, that's what I felt was happening constantly for that first year. I was just like, wow. Just expanding the realm of what was possible for me which was so cool for me.

Maisie: I have a question for you because I think this sometimes come up like for people who are like considering joining or that they're thinking I'd like to do all this stuff but I have a chronic health condition, I have a chronic pain issue of some kind. What would you say to those people?

Miriam: My experience of being in the Flow Collective has been just how adaptable it is. And what's really interesting is I feel like I did jump in, all in,

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I was all in, but I've only ever been coached by you live on one call. And I've only joined a handful of live calls really in two and a half years in the membership. Everything I've done has mostly been through watching replays, being very active in the Facebook group.

I really took you at face... Like when you said it's like a buffet and you get to pick, I was like, okay, I'll pick my things and I'll do those things. And I really took that on board because the membership is also a great training ground for training your brain because there's so many ways you can overwhelm yourself with it. I'll be perfectionistic about it. I have to join every call and I have to respond to every post in the group and I have to like whatever it is.

Maisie: That's really great to hear because I say it so many times, don't join expecting yourself to do all of the things that are in here. Sample them, see what works for you. But I always say to people, this isn't a part-time job. We're here to support you so that you can live your life. Your life isn't meant to be inside the membership.

This is just the training ground that helps you in your life. But I love that you use that word adaptable because I guess it's like sometimes it's just a misconception that people have if they're not in and they don't know how things go, especially when I'm talking about goals. And I'm talking about like setting goals and doing that on a semi-regular basis. But someone just might be thinking, oh, but I have migraines, therefore, I can't set a goal or do the things that other people might be doing, therefore it's not for me.

Miriam: Yeah, I hear this a lot with my clients. One of the biggest struggles, I think, for people living with chronic illness is feeling like you can't plan for anything. You don't feel reliable because you can't say yes I can show up at this time because you don't know how you're going to feel.

Maisie: That resonates with me being autistic for sure.

Miriam: Yeah, exactly. Just, I don't know how I'm going to feel on Tuesday. I think that's one great thing about the membership is that whether if you

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prefer reading or listening or watching or engaging live, you can engage at any level that feels comfortable for you. And the other thing that's really cool too, I remember one thing that you said, I think you said that you joined a membership and didn't do anything in it and just decided that it was going to help you? And maybe that's not exactly what you said.

Maisie: Yeah, because I love, people who have memberships tend to love memberships, right? It's like we just really believe in that way of doing things. So I am always in memberships for various things, but there was one membership that I joined and I literally, I didn't watch any videos like of the content that was there. I didn't go to any coaching calls and didn't watch any coaching calls. I was just in the community.

That was the reason that I joined, was to be a part of that community. And I still, I work with contractors now who I found through being part of that community. But imagine if the whole time I was there, I was like, oh, I should be attending all these things and I'm not getting my money's worth by only hanging out in the community. But that was the whole point of me joining was to be in a group of professional women and to be finding people that I might want to work with or collaborate with in some way. Yeah, I think it really is important to do what works for you.

Miriam: Yeah, that was a concept again that blew my mind, the idea that you could just decide that you were going to get a benefit from something and that's it. That's all it takes. You can decide it and...

Maisie: It's life-changing. I really want, if you're listening to this and you switched off for a moment, rewind and listen to that again. You can just decide how things are going to be.

Miriam: Yeah, it's really wild because it's not like I don't have those thoughts come up for me in the membership. Oh, I haven't attended the call. Oh, am I doing enough? That comes up, but all the tools are there to work through those thoughts as well and be, just keep working on it. That's

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one thing in terms of just like crucial things that I learned through joining the membership.

One was decision making. Actually, it was the first podcast episode of yours that I listened to. It was right towards the end of when I was applying for that job. That process lasted three months. I was in a constant stress response and I listened to your podcast episode on decision-making.

It was like, what? I think you asked the question, maybe not on that, I'm not sure where, but you asked the question, what if all the things that are causing you grief in your life are just a decision waiting to be made? And I was like, what? I could just decide.

Maisie: I don't know. I'm trying to think, was that a podcast or was it a webinar inside the membership? I don't know.

Miriam: I think it was a webinar because that decision-making webinar from the membership, again, one of the just pivotal things in my life.

Maisie: I know exactly what you mean. It is that webinar and I think it was one of the first slides, and I could literally, even though everyone was muted, apart from me, it's like watching everyone's faces react, I could feel the collective gasp of, what is she talking about?

Miriam: What? Yeah, exactly. And there I was, going through this, essentially had spent three months applying for a job that I didn't really want just because someone had asked me to apply.

Maisie: Oh, that's interesting. Yeah.

Miriam: In doing that, I just handed over my power to an external person who didn't even know me, but they just invited me. They'd offered me an invitation and rather than seeing that as a decision, I saw it as like an obligation that I needed to follow through on. So when you said this problem that you're facing is a decision waiting to be made, I was like,

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what? I could just decide that I don't want this job and that could be the end of it. What?

Maisie: What was it like for you to realize that?

Miriam: It was like a seed got planted in that moment. And at that point, I knew I didn't want the job. And then I didn't get the job. And I was so happy in that moment. I was so relieved.

I was so overjoyed. And it was, that was like the kind of cement that kind of proved it for me of, okay, that was the decision that I could have made a long time ago. And so moving forward, I could be a bit more discerning about decision-making and decision-making became really important for me because I realized how much pain I was causing myself by just unmade decisions that were like a lane open as question marks when that was one of the biggest changes was just you can just decide. So that was huge.

Maisie: Game changer. Always is.

Miriam: Yeah.

Maisie: Yeah. I actually had a recorded with Lucy recently as well. Yeah. Because you're friends.

Miriam: Yeah. Yeah. Did you know each other before the membership?

Miriam: No. Again, another amazing gift of the membership has been one goal that I set because I became obsessed with cycle tracking and just the levels of like mind blown, like my mind being blown. The fact that I lived the first 20 years of my menstrual cycle life, not understanding where I was in my menstrual cycle, what was going on in my body, just learning to cycle track, learning to live more attuned with my menstrual cycle. I just wanted to talk about it with everyone and I bought the book for all the women in my family and I joined the membership. I was like, I want to make a friend.

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I want to make a friend with someone who I can talk about this stuff with and again, talk about the simple, small goals. I've made some of the deepest, closest friendship connections through the membership that have supported me through lots of stuff in the past few years. And so yeah, the connection with Lucy came about through the membership as well. Yeah.

Maisie: Oh, I've got all the warm and fuzzies over here and to the point where I can't actually remember why I brought Lucy up. There was something that you said and now it's gone.

Miriam: Oh it was about decision making in your conversation with her last week.

Maisie: Yeah I think she was just saying a similar thing about how, oh you can just make decisions. And this is just like a revelation because we do just spend so much time in indecision and we all have that tendency, right? It's not like we're anything special for that occurring to us, but it's just such a great area to spend time coaching on.

Miriam: Yeah, yeah. So learning how to make decisions was a really big transformation point and in learning to say no when someone invited me to do something that didn't align, saved me a lot of grief over the past few years. Another kind of pivotal thing that I learned early on was the self-responsibility piece. The podcast series that you did on being under-responsible, over-responsible, and self-responsible, that was like, okay, wow. Because what I hadn't realized was just how under responsible I was being in my whole life.

Everything was someone else's problem, a victim of like circumstance. I couldn't do anything or fix anything because of external factors is how it felt all the time. And I was really like placing blame unfairly and it was impacting my relationships. Another thing, the list is so long, but learning, learning what you call the Model, which is the kind of self-coaching model that we use. I had a really big revelation through learning, just understanding that we can choose our thoughts. That was, again...

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Maisie: It's so important and I literally, I coached someone a few days ago about this and I've been coaching this person for almost five years, like private coaching. She was telling me about something in her life and we went through the whole situation and coached on it and I was like, these are all just thoughts. And she was like, oh, yeah. And I have those moments too with my coach. That's just a thought, right?

You're so convinced that is a fact, but it is just a thought. And so I love that you've mentioned this because I just feel like it's the most reassuring and mind-blowing thing to hear on a very regular basis is that it's just a thought.

Miriam: Yeah, and understanding things can be presented as facts and people offer us thoughts all the time but they present them as facts and they're actually just thoughts. Again, just understanding the difference between a fact and a thought, wow, that'll change your whole life.

And I realized that through working with the Model, there are some times where you just have this like revolutionary model that kind of explains a lot that's going on in your life. And one really big one for me was I had this ongoing thought that I'm missing out because I live in Canada and my family and friends are back in the UK. And I was again handing over a lot of my power and agency even though I decided to move here myself. I'd made that decision but it's like I'm a victim to this long distance relationship.

Maisie: Yeah often we want to argue with the reality we've created. At one point, that was the result you wanted to create in your life was like living with your husband in Canada. Right? But now you're there living in that result, taking issue with being there.

Miriam: Yeah. And it's not my fault at all. It's all everything else in the external world. Never mind that I chose it. So I had this thought I'm missing out and I was constantly, the action I was taking was constantly wanting to like call my family back home, stay in touch, like travel back, just constantly reaching out and trying to catch up.

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And the result I was creating was that I was missing out on my own life here. And that was like, whoa, as soon as I realized that it just lifted. And the interesting thing is I feel more deeply connected to my family back home now. They reach out to me. That just happens now. Whereas before it was always, I was really graspy and like trying to stay in touch, but felt more disconnected. So that was a really big model for me.

Maisie: That's amazing. And I think that's the thing, because sometimes we're like self-coaching or someone else will be coaching us and literally you just realise something and you're like, oh my God. And it's just, it's like there's been this puzzle in front of you and then suddenly, I don't know, it just all comes together very quickly. Often they're quite simple things, but we just haven't realised how it's all, the contributing reasons and how it's all playing out and the impact that it has. I think you being willing to explore the ways you were being under responsible is what then allowed you to do that self-coaching model and actually see what was going on.

It's probably a bit bi-directional, but one or the other. Was that self-coaching that you did?

Miriam: Yeah, I think so.

Maisie: So I think you must have been willing to feel the discomfort or the notice where you weren't being 100% self-responsible, or you would have avoided coming up with that self-coaching model, because you would have been like avoiding the truth of it.

Miriam: Yeah, but actually it was almost like the difference between what hurts and what hurts worse. The pain that I was putting myself through with that level of under-responsibility was so much worse than just recognizing my own role in it and just like owning it. Because then that's a pathway out. That's freedom to own the role that I was playing. And then basically it's bringing back my power instead of handing it over to someone who, you know, or something, it's not theirs.

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Maisie: Yeah, I completely agree. And I think it's so much easier to do that when you're able to do it without blaming and shaming yourself and you can just do it in quite a neutral way of just looking at it of oh that's what's going on.

Miriam: Yeah, yeah.

Maisie: Is that so, I'm the problem it's me. Like from that place of curiosity, not judgment of just like being willing to see the truth of it is so powerful, like you said.

Miriam: Yeah, yeah. And I think another thing that's really important in your kind of the teaching that you do is also understanding the role that socialization plays in all of this as well, and that it's not all coming from us. We're also taught to behave in certain ways and we're taught to hand over our power.

Being taught how to take it back was really cool. And yeah, so there were so many kind of critical learnings that I had in that first six months to a year in the membership, a big one was for me was also all or nothing or black and white thinking and that was a really important stepping stone into me doing the coaching work that I'm doing because I specifically wrote to Ask A Coach, which is the written coaching part of the membership, about wanting to become a coach. And I had all my reasons why I didn't want to become a coach. Not why I didn't want to, but all my reasons not to do it.

Maisie: Why I shouldn't do it. I remember that now. Okay but tell us about the ask a coach thing first.

Miriam: The ask a coach was that I had this thought that I needed to leave my current job in order to do another thing.

Maisie: Oh the black and white thinking. Yeah, black and white thinking which the idea that I could do both was like, it hadn't really occurred to me. Even the idea that I would eventually have to leave my job, like my day job, in order to do coaching, there was a belief that eventually that would have

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to happen as well. Whereas now I've reached this point where it's like I can actually do both things right now and I'm happy doing both and I get to fill these two now. Like now instead of having this one passion around climate, it's I have two things and it's climate and women's health and they're like...

Maisie: Yeah, why not have both? Yeah, why not? Both restrict your wonderful self.

Miriam: Yeah, and they're so interconnected as well.

Maisie: I can imagine, yeah.

Miriam: And my two roles pull out different parts of my personality and they meet different needs that I have as well. But it took a while to get to that point of realising that I could do both and accepting it and then finally embracing it and being like, wow, this is really cool.

Maisie: It sounds like just reflecting on what you've shared so far and also like my memory of coaching you on that call and then in the community is just your, I really think just your coachability, like your willingness to receive the coaching and being receptive to being challenged. The way we coach is always with love, but it can come in different ways. Sometimes the coaching is very tender, sometimes it's very direct. There's all sorts of ways that love is expressed through the coaching and there's a lot of nuance to it.

But there's been quite a few things that you've had something pointed out to you, either in your self-coaching or from the coaches. It doesn't sound like you've spent time arguing with us. You've been more willing, like you said, to explore, well, this could be a route out. Because we're never saying you have to agree with everything we're saying. We're just saying, can you explore what we're asking? Could you consider this and then run it through your own internal checks and you come to your own understanding or decision? And if you want to reject what we're saying, fair enough.

Miriam: Yeah. Yeah.

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Maisie: What are your thoughts on that?

Miriam: One thing that I think has really helped with that is it's not like I don't get feelings of defensiveness if I get coached on something. It's just that if I get defensive then I get really curious about it because it's like, okay, why is that pissing you off so much? Like, why are you getting all like, rawr?

Maisie: Whenever I feel that in myself, I'm like, okay, time to disarm the defensiveness and get to what this is about. Because this is massive transformation territory, as far as I'm concerned. Yeah.

Miriam: Yeah, because usually that's where the good stuff is. The stuff that you're really defensive about or have barriers up around is once you are willing to explore them a little bit and get to the root of what's really going on there, that's when the big kind of transformations happen. And once you've had a little glimpse of what can happen, it's worth it.

Maisie: Tell me the things that get me defensive, I want to know!

Miriam: Yeah, exactly. So it's not easy by any means, but it can be really fun too. And that's one thing that's really comes out through the membership is just how fun it is to get curious, to explore your thoughts, to just play around with things, play around with possibilities as well. And just it's very expansive to just suddenly realise, oh, I get to decide.

Maisie: And yeah, yeah. And I just I can remember, I think we'll put something up in the membership and direct people to the coaching that we did on the call because I can remember at the time, just remember the feeling in my body of everyone needs to hear this coaching. Do you remember what it was about?

Miriam: The coaching that we did on a call?

Maisie: I can jog your memory but I only want to, you get to say what you remember.

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Miriam: I remember the coaching, I had very strong, like, it was about right or wrong thinking. That was what I brought. Is that what you remember?

Maisie: Yeah, it was about there being a right way to do things. And we just explored things in a few different ways. And it just felt like between us, we just dismantled this whole idea that there's a right way. And I just felt like everyone in the membership needs this coaching, which is so cool because that's what it's like when you watch the replays, right? You get to benefit from that coaching. But I just, yeah, that I was like, oh yeah, everyone needs this.

Miriam: Yeah, because that was a really, I think for me that still is a kind of a core thought that I have is this what's the right thing to do when I don't want to do the wrong thing. Again, it's a form of kind of black and white thinking and just breaking that down just opens up. It's like you can almost breathe just being like, okay, there are multiple ways of doing this and just recognizing the fear in me around doing it wrong, like getting something wrong.

I think a lot of what was coming up for me with those like couch funks and going in like replaying situations over and over in my head was torturing myself over I did the wrong thing. And I was just reinforcing it for myself over and over again. You did the wrong thing, you did the wrong thing. And almost punishing myself for it. Whereas, yeah, it's hard to say how it shifted because it's more like I recognise when it comes up now and I'm also engaging with the fear around doing it wrong.

Maisie: And it's just totally different to avoiding it or thinking it's a reason to stop.

Miriam: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Because also the thing that I learned is you don't want to necessarily throw out that thought completely either because it can become a problem, but it can also guide you as well. For example, with coaching, the thought comes up for me often that it can be a self-sabotaging thought of I shouldn't be doing this, who am I to be a coach,

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who am I to work with people with chronic migraine? But I recognize it as a fear thought so I don't want to give it too much credence, but also know that it is an attempt to not think that I can do everything or become a medical doctor or something that I'm not qualified for.

Maisie: Yeah, that's the thing. I think there's some people in the world that could do with some of those limiting thoughts to actually stay within their professional limits and what they're legally allowed to do and not cause harm to people. I think, like you said, it's how you work with that thought and how you recognise the ways that it could actually be beneficial and supportive, and the places where it's really not. It's really pulling apart your self-esteem and your ability to do the thing that you're actually perfectly placed to be able to do.

Miriam: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Maisie: So what happened with, because, so you got coached on this, you were very focused on taking care of yourself, improving your health, reducing the migraines. And then there was this, then like moving over into doing this professionally and starting to get your own clients. Are there any things that you want to celebrate with us on that front or anything else that you want to celebrate or parts of that journey?

Miriam: Yeah, I think maybe what I want to share is around just a little bit more about the connections that I found between what we do in the Flow Collective and what pain reprocessing therapy is. Because we talk a lot in the Flow Collective about neural pathways and retraining our brain. And what's really interesting is with pain reprocessing therapy, it's based on pain science and the idea that all pain originates within the brain.

If you touch your hand on a hot stove, in order for you to feel pain from the burn, you have to have sensory receptors in your hand send a message to your brain. Your brain needs to then interpret that signal as dangerous and then produce the sensation of pain that you will feel in your hand.

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So what can happen with chronic pain or what I learned is that the brain can create sensations of pain or other things like nausea or other symptoms of migraine, even in the absence of a structural injury or damage.

And the brain can get stuck on pain mode. And because the brain is neuroplastic, it's possible for you to retrain your brain and teach it how to not interpret stimuli that is receiving as dangerous and respond with a pain signal. And for me, there's just so much overlap and connection with the work that we do in the Flow Collective because migraine is one of the most disabling conditions in the world. And it's mostly the majority of people with migraine are women.

And there's a lot of connections there, I think, to your work too. I know with your background in acupuncture and working with the menstrual cycle, just that connection between our nervous systems, our hormones as well and the role that they play, and our stress hormones and our stress responses, and how in our modern day lives our brains are trying to really adapt to stresses that we haven't evolved to deal with.

And so the brain is sometimes like making mistakes and sounding the alarm with pain that it doesn't need to be there. We often think in our modern medical system, it's like physical pain is a physical thing in the body that we need to treat and mental illness is something that we need to treat separately. And what I find really fascinating with chronic pain is that it's completely at the intersection between... It basically just breaks down the myth that there's any separation between our brain and the rest of our body.

Maisie: That's the thing, all the time, and I'm guilty of this myself and I always try to point it out when I'm saying it. When we talk about the body or we're talking about the brain, they're not separate by any means. But we're just, I think, so used to that shorthand, just in conversation, which it has its place for sure. But definitely from the medical point of view and how we approach health, they're completely separate.

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Miriam: Yeah, and I think in a lot of ways we accept the idea that if we're nervous about speaking on stage, for example, and we feel nauseous, we can accept that we can have a physical manifestation of something that we are experiencing emotionally. But when that translates over into chronic pain, somehow we forget that.

Maisie: Oh, that's such a good point. Yes.

Miriam: But then we also have the flip side, which again goes into kind of like the role of patriarchy in the medical system is that we can also have the flip side where people are told they're hysterical, it's in their head, that it's just anxiety, it's nothing.

Maisie: You need an antidepressant.

Miriam: Yeah, like they feel gaslit, they feel unheard and that can sometimes come up with pain reprocessing therapy because people think, are you saying that this is all in my head? Actually, what we're saying is it's all in the brain and pain that you experience as chronic pain, because it originates in the brain, just like a physical injury, it's as painful, as real, as any physical damage that could be causing the body, because it all originates from the same place.

So in fact, it's like the opposite. It should be seen as a confirmation of just how real and serious and disabling chronic pain can be. It's just a different avenue into how we approach it and how we think about it.

So I find it really fascinating how there's so many connections between your work and the work that I'm doing in pain reprocessing therapy because we're working on building new neural pathways, new thought patterns. We can't choose to be in pain. We would never choose to experience migraine, but we can choose how we're responding to it and how we're working with it so that we break the cycle of chronification that happens where the fear that you have around the pain and the preoccupation you have around the pain reinforces and worsens it.

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Which again is so interesting too because it connects to your doula work as well and the kind of like how we coach through like hypnobirthing and the pain that we experience in childbirth. But again, the important thing to say there is just saying a mantra over and over again of, "I'm safe, I'm well," and not really believing it deep down and having deep-held fear and belief is not going to get you anywhere.

So the work that we're really trying to do, I think in The Flow Collective and with pain reprocessing therapy, is like really get to those core beliefs, those core thoughts that are driving whatever cycle we're in and then working to redirect the brain and build up a new response. So that your new kind of automatic way of responding to whatever stimulus there is, whether it's your boss asking you to do a piece of work or whatever it is, that you're responding in a new way.

Miriam: Yeah, I think what I want to really celebrate, just going back to your original question, is just that I had, again, before being in The Flow Collective, I had worked with a health coach and I had just been fascinated by her business model. I was like, how does this, I'm really curious, I just want to have a call with her and understand how she's getting clients and like how she set up her discovery calls.

I wanted to learn all of these things about her business, but at the time I had absolutely no business being interested in someone's coaching business. I was just like, I worked for a non-profit. I hadn't even discovered pain reprocessing therapy or even coaching. She was the first kind of health coach that I'd worked with. But what was so interesting was that sometimes you can have, it's almost like free consciousness. It's like I wasn't consciously aware that I had an interest in business or setting up my own business or coaching, but I had these desires and interests that kind of, for me at the time, were like, where did that come from?

Maisie: I know. I was literally, I was thinking about this yesterday. It's so funny that you've brought this up because of course everyone knows if you listen to this podcast about my discovery of horses and horse riding in my

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40s. But I started riding in, it was April when I had my first lesson. And that Christmas before, like a few months before, Nelson had said to me, what do you want for Christmas?

And I had jokingly said a horse because it's like every girl's dream to have a pony or a horse kind of thing. And I just like jokingly said a horse just for a fun answer for him to roll his eyes at kind of thing. And then like months later, we're both having horse riding lessons.

Miriam: Yeah, and then how much time did you actually get a horse from then as well?

Maisie: It was like less than a year after I started having lessons was when I got Buttons. It was like six months after it was when I started looking for a horse.

Miriam: So you really did get the horse that you asked for.

Maisie: Yeah, exactly.

Maisie: That's what I was like, oh my god, I've got myself the horse that I wanted for Christmas. So it is cool, but I think this is the thing. If you're paying attention to the things that interest you, and you're paying attention to your desires and the things that you want, even if according to your brain at that point, there's no kind of plausible way or good reason for you to be thinking this way. It's like breadcrumbs that start you on a journey. I think that's where the self-trust aspect comes in.

Even just doing things for fun and enjoying, never mind self-trust, of just, I'm just going to be curious and see what this is about and maybe it won't even take me anywhere, but why does it have to? Why can't this just be a fun, interesting thing for me to do? And who knows what it might turn into. Not every hobby has to become a job.

Miriam: Yeah, but just that willingness to, yeah, like you say, be in touch with what the desires are, first of all. Like, even to acknowledge it. There's

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a metaphor that you shared in a podcast episode about having your little flame of an idea and not blowing it out before it's even had a chance to take off. And that's essentially what I did. I had this fascination.

I really wanted to have a call with this coach to find out, like, just ask them all about their business. In my mind, I was like, I have no business doing that. Why would I do it? What would be even my basis for asking her for it? But by the summer, the first summer that I was in the membership, I reached out to her and I had that call.

And I said, I realized through being in the membership how much I loved coaching other people. I got the bug. Loved coaching myself and then I loved kind of being able to see what was going on in other people's brains and being able to just, yeah, again, working on self-limiting beliefs. I had this self-limiting belief that I wasn't good at asking questions and whoa now like I have a whole role that's just about asking really good questions and yeah.

Maisie: It's so funny, the stories we tell ourselves all the time. I was getting coached recently and I was just catching the lies I was telling myself the whole time. It was like 20 minutes of me getting coached and I was like, oh there's a lie. I kept going to say things and being like, oh no, that's another lie. And then I tell the coach what the thing was. But it's just, I think that's really fun and really freeing.

Miriam: Yeah. Yeah. I do that too with my friend, Lucy from The Flow Collective. I'll send her voice notes and I'm reeling off all the things that I'm thinking and in my head I'm like none of that's true and then she'll come back to me and she'll coach me on all of it, point out how it's all not true.

Maisie: Perfect, I mean that's a relationship we all could do with having in our lives.

Miriam: Exactly. That's what's so fun about coaching friendships is like, not everyone's open to, like you say, that kind of, it can be quite confronting.

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When you've got that framework to work with and you've got someone else who shares that framework, then you know that it's safe to explore together and really fun as well. It can be very playful and silly.

Maisie: I agree. Amazing. Is there anything else that you want to share before we wrap up? I'm sure there's got to be so loads, loads more. We might have to do a part two.

Miriam: I would love to do a part two. Yeah, I mean there's so much, it's rare to say like something's changed your life and like sincerely mean it, but it's like your work and being in the membership I think has changed almost every aspect of my life. So it is really hard to bring it down to a few core things. I think one of my favourite examples is just even down to where I'm living right now. Living in this beautiful apartment that I found.

Maisie: It looks amazing. I love the, is it a rabbit or a hare that's behind you? The paint, the drawers.

Miriam: Yeah, it's a funny little rabbit that I found. But yeah, I, for a long time, we'd been living in a very small one bedroom apartment in Toronto and it was less than ideal, let's say that. It was, again, it was just, for example, we had skunks living under our floor for two years.

Maisie: My eyebrows just hit the ceiling!

Miriam: Just to paint a little bit of a picture of this place that we were living in beforehand. We moved cities last year and when I started looking for apartments and I found this place, my thought was it's too nice for me.

Maisie: I remember this, I'd forgotten all about this.

Miriam: Yeah, it was too nice of a place. As soon as I said it, I was like, oh, okay, I think I have to live here. And the other really fun thing about that search was I initially had been looking, I'd set my search criteria in looking for an apartment to a maximum of whatever our top price range was and I'd filtered all of my search criteria to that \$2000 or whatever it was.

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And then I just had suddenly had this moment of what if there's something for \$2050 and I'm not even seeing it. And I just felt like that was such a good kind of metaphor as well for what is just like beyond the realm of it's so close to what you're looking for, but it's just not quite in the realm of what you've literally set your filters to as being possible.

And I think that's like what coaching does is enables you to just expand the search criteria out like by \$100 or whatever and open up all of this stuff that can come in when you just move the needle a little bit. Yeah.

Maisie: Thank you so much for sharing that example because first of all, I think people are going to really resonate with the whole something being too nice for them, like whether it's an apartment or like underwear or like a cardigan or whatever it is. But also that is such a good way of talking about what coaching is and just like these limits that we place on ourselves and we're just like oh what could be on the other side of this limit of this filter of this line that I have decided and you were able to catch that which is amazing. But how often are we not even realising that is the limit that we have decided we are going to live within?

Miriam: Yeah, and that's what's so cool about having someone else that can point out the limit that you haven't even seen. And again, it doesn't even need to be like expanding it so far that you can maybe stretch to that point eventually, but like even just like moving the needle a little further can open up so much possibility.

Maisie: Yeah, that's so fun because you can just expand into a bit.

Miriam: Yeah, exactly. Just what would \$50 more get us? And actually a lot more is the answer. And it's not that big of a difference, but it's yeah. I just thought that was so concrete as well.

That's one thing that I really had the impression before I discovered your work was like life coaching. It was very, what's the word, like bougie or something, I don't know. But it's so grounded and a lot of the coaches in, all

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of the coaches in The Flow Collective are so down-to-earth and just real. It's real life stuff and it's real change that it brings about. So that yeah, you can truly like going into it.

It was totally beyond the realms of what I thought was possible for myself to get to where I am now. So that's the fun thing is you can just go in and see what's possible. Yeah. So I feel like I've barely scratched the surface of all the things that I could talk about. It's two and a half years of things in my life that have changed through coaching. And yeah, it's been amazing.

Maisie: It's so funny that you bring that up about like your thoughts about coaching though, because I think that was part of what I was coaching you in the community when you were talking about like all the thoughts that people including you like have about coaching. Oh, it's cheesy, it's for these kinds of people, it's this, it's that. And I think that's when I was like, what if all those things are true and it's still worth doing? Was that what the description was or have I mixed and matched something?

Miriam: It might be a bit of a mix and match, but I definitely, yeah, I've definitely had thoughts about coaching.

Maisie: That wasn't what you put down, but it just jogs something in my memory that has come up with coaching other people before, which is that there are all these things that people think about coaching. And I just like to think, yeah, there are cases where that's true. These are thoughts that I have had to negotiate. Paul, my partner, has started coaching in the last couple of years as well. So I've gone through it, coaching him, talking about it because he's just, oh, it's just so cringy. It's quite a fun thing to coach people through.

But now here you are coaching, doing your environmental work. Are you taking on clients at the moment for the pain reprocessing therapy?

Miriam: Yeah, we can maybe like, I can share my website or something.

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Maisie: I know people are going to be listening to this and wanting to know where to find you and how they get in touch because I'm sure they're going to want to work with you. So how do they do that? We'll put the links in the show notes but feel free to share them now.

Miriam: Great, thank you. Yeah, my website is minimizing-migraine.com. That's minimizing with a Z or zee. English spelling.

And it's @minimizingmigraine on Instagram. And yeah, I again, because I just coach part time, I take on a limited number of clients, but if you are interested in working with me, you can fill out the form on my website and then we can have a discovery call and learn about whether coaching together would be the right fit. And I work with clients across the spectrum of chronic migraine. Please feel free to reach out if you are struggling or want to learn more.

And I'm not super active on Instagram, but that's again something that I've learned is that you can still have a successful coaching business and not post on Instagram every day. And yeah, so I'll post on there when I feel inspired. It exists and it's there. And there's actually some really great resources just on my Instagram account. Like, I love that it's just there as an archive resource.

Yeah. Free resources. And same on my website. There's a resource section if you want to explore more about pain reprocessing therapy, which I really encourage people to do, because again, it's been really revolutionary, not just for me, but for many people living with chronic pain.

And I have a podcast that doesn't exist yet, but it will be called Minimizing Migraine. So maybe if you're listening in the future, you can find it on where you listen to podcasts.

Maisie: I love that. I love that you've just put it out there because you could have not. That's so much of what we talk about in the membership is just like getting going with things, making a move, say, and just getting on with

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it rather than being like, oh, I can't mention my podcast because it doesn't actually exist yet. Just let the people know they'll be ready for it when it's there.

Miriam: It's coming. It's been brewing in me and also working through those perfectionist thoughts that I've had about it that it needs to be like every week and a million consistency and all that kind of thing. Eventually I'll put something out there and again it will just exist as a resource that will be available to people. Your podcast was for me like I went back and listened from the beginning when I found it to every episode and it's just I love that about podcasts that they're just there permanently to discover any time. Yeah, I'm excited to be able to put that out there.

Maisie: Yeah. I'm so excited for us to put this episode out there. Thank you for being so generous, not just with your time, but with what you've shared and how you've integrated things and just being an example of how you can live. How amazing is that? You're an example of how we can live. You're an example of negotiating chronic migraines and going from such a debilitating place to how often do you get migraines now just out of curiosity? Or what's your experience of them?

Miriam: It really varies, but now I actually don't even count anymore. That's another thing that with chronic migraine, you get sucked into really tracking everything really closely and it's just another way that you get really sucked into and preoccupied with the pain. But I'd estimate it's down to a few times a month. It really varies. I go through bad patches and I go through great patches. So that's the other thing too.

Maisie: That's so important for people to hear. I would say with my Autism, I'm like, listen.

Miriam: Yeah, exactly.

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Maisie: It's not like we're all living these perfect lives where there's like absence of pain or struggle or anything like that, but it's just having the tools and building the skill to navigate them.

Miriam: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Because again, you can have a lot of perfectionistic ideas about recovery as well and what that means and it only keeps tripping you up if you let it. I keep working through that for myself as well and just really not giving too much thought to it as well. It doesn't mean that much anymore.

And partly that's because my experience when I do experience pain now and migraine flare up is I have the tools to work with it so that it just is less bad and that makes such a difference. And I love being able to share that with people because...

Maisie: It's the coolest thing!

Miriam: I find to turn like the hardest things that have happened to you into the most transformative things. And that's one thing that I've learned to do is just actually, this has been one of my biggest struggles and it can also be like the biggest gift as well, which I would never have chosen it. But the fact that it's that's the hand that I was dealt Again, we can just choose our thoughts, choose the way that we respond. It's simple, but it's not necessarily easy. Yeah. And it's just, yeah, it's just so cool. It's so exciting to know what is possible.

Maisie: Yeah. That sounds like a perfect place to end on. So check out the show notes for links to Miriam's website and Instagram accounts. Go check out the things, go check out her free resources. I just think these episodes with my clients, they're worth listening to again and again because you're all in a very different place to where I am with things and your experience of things is just so valuable.

What you've shared and there's just so many nuggets in there. But I just listen to this episode again and write down the things that Miriam was

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saying because they're really valuable, not just the things you picked up from the membership, but the stuff from the work that you're now doing. So again, thank you for being so generous with that. It has been wonderful to have you here today. So thank you very much.

Folks, that is it for this week. I'll be back next time. So catch you then. Bye.

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