

Ep #221: Decision-Making: Stop Avoiding and Start Deciding



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With Your Host

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The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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You know that thing you've been thinking about for weeks or months, maybe even years? That decision that you keep saying you'll figure it out soon. I'm going to help you with that today. This is episode 221. Let's get it done.

If you want to do things differently but need some help making it happen then tune in for your weekly dose of coaching from me, Maisie Hill, Master Life Coach and author of *Period Power*. Welcome to *The Maisie Hill Experience*.

Hello folks, it is so good to be back with you. It's been a little while since I recorded an episode. I batched a bunch of them in advance because I've been in a deep, big work project this year, and I really didn't want to split my focus whilst I was doing that work. I was also in Arizona for a week. I'm continuing my training in equine facilitated learning, feeling very excited about that.

So I was back in the desert, and I had the best time. While I was out there, I made some important decisions about where my work is heading and what I'll be offering next both in and outside of the membership. This is an ongoing series of decisions, but the membership is 100% where my focus is. We've got some big upgrades coming, and I'm very committed to seeing those through. So the kind of non-membership stuff, I am parking on the sidelines until I get this big project done and until the upgrade to the membership is complete.

This is why constraint matters. So I have been making lots of decisions this year and today I am going to coach you on decision making. So let's talk about indecision. What most people think is happening when they say I just haven't decided yet, is that they're waiting for the right moment. The perfect answer.

Some kind of feeling of certainty or a sign from the universe that this is what they should do. I've actually heard quite a few people in the last week mentioned this to me. But here's what's actually happening. Like, most of

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the time, you're avoiding the discomfort that comes with making a call. You're trying not to feel the emotional consequence that comes from committing.

Indecision is sneaky, especially the way we talk about it in society. The way we talk about indecision is in a way that it seems like a responsible approach to it. I'm just thinking it through or I need more information. I'm researching my options. You know, I'm gonna wait until I'm not stressed, okay?

And listen, there are times when it is a good idea to come out of overwhelm and stress responses because making a decision when you're focused on like potential threats rather than opportunities might not be the best idea, okay? I'm on board with that idea. But most of the time, lack of a decision is actually causing or contributing to the stress in the first place. So I'm all for tending to yourself in order to make a decision, but that's something that should take minutes, not weeks or even longer.

Sometimes getting some information is useful. Occasionally, when I'm coaching someone and we'll be talking about the decision, I'll just ask them some questions and be like, well it sounds like you're trying to make this decision really far in advance, instead of just getting some of the basic information that's then going to inform that. So occasionally, more information is useful, but most of the time, people have loads of information, loads of options, and we're trying to reduce those and pick something.

So in the majority of cases, these are all stall tactics, just a way to avoid judgement and responsibility and the possibility of regret. So indecision is a socially acceptable form of hiding. I want you to really let that sink in, okay? And I'm going to challenge you because I know lots of you carry the thought whether it's one that is known to you, or it's like a subconscious one that is just kind of running the show in the background, like a piece of computer software that's just always there. And that thought is that you're someone who's not good at making decisions or that you're indecisive.

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I really want to challenge that thought today and say, you're not indecisive, you're just uncomfortable and trying to avoid that discomfort by not deciding. It's a vicious cycle. So let's get really clear on what a decision is. This is where things get interesting because I love to look up the definition sometimes and I checked out the dictionary definitions of decisions.

So, some dictionaries say that a decision is a conclusion or resolution reached after consideration of the act or process of deciding something. It's a judgment, it's a verdict, and it can also be firmness of purpose or character.

But the part that I love the most when I was looking at this is that the word decision comes from a Latin word, which I'm not going to bother trying to pronounce, which means a cutting off. And that's what most people avoid, not the decision itself, but the cost of letting something go. So a decision isn't just a thought, okay? It involves us thinking, but a decision is an action that you are either taking or not taking, right? It's a deliberate cut, a choice to stop circling, to close the loop, to not keep every option open. And that's what so many people are trying to avoid. Because when you decide, you cut off the other paths, okay? And you let go of the idea that you're going to do both or that you're going to wait and see.

But it's that cutting off that is exactly what creates clarity. You don't move forward by keeping all your options alive. Some death is involved and that's a really beautiful thing. So you move forward by cutting the ones that don't line up with what you're trying to do, that don't align with your values. You're going to commit to the one that does. Sometimes that does really feel like a loss. It can also feel scary. You might grieve the path that you didn't take, even knowing that it wasn't the best option for you.

But the real loss is what happens when you spend months or years dragging around decisions that you're telling yourself you're too afraid to make. Because most of the time, what people are truly afraid of is choosing something and it not working out. And this has come up hundreds if not

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thousands of times in my coaching. Okay, it's the feeling scared to make the "wrong" decision or to feel the sting of regret.

But here's why I always tell my clients. By not deciding and not taking action, you're already living in the result that you're afraid of, where nothing is happening, where the things that you want aren't happening. You don't have the thing you want already. So what exactly are you protecting yourself from? Hey, the only way to create something new is to just make a call and go for it. Because when you hold off from making a decision, you delay getting data.

That's what's going to happen. When you make a decision, you just get more information. Information that either confirms this is the decision you want to stick with, or it gives you an opportunity to course correct and to do things differently. But you need that data first, otherwise you're just kind of plotting with your imagination and usually imagining the worst case scenarios. So you don't find out what works by thinking, you find out what works by doing. And most people say they're waiting for clarity, but that clarity comes from movement. I promise you. I have to remind myself of this time and time again as well. But we need that movement, we need that feedback, because then you have something real and tangible to work with, not just what your brain is telling you.

As I said, it's usually going to give you the most dramatic worst case opinions. Every time you avoid deciding, you're delaying that learning. You deny yourself the opportunity to gather that information, the information that you actually need to move forward with more confidence. So a decision is a judgment. There's no getting away from that. But can you lean into that? Decision is a judgment. It's a call that you make. It's not something that happens to you. It is something that you do.

But most people treat decisions like they're passive or external, something outside of them, and as if the answer is going to just magically appear one day. And then they'll just nod along, you know, and there'll be no discomfort, there'll be no emotional risk, there'll be no tension of any kind.

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And by the way, I totally get that, right? Wouldn't that just be lovely? But it also wouldn't require anything of us, okay?

And ultimately, we'd miss out on what comes from being the one who chooses, being the one who judges, who says, this is what I'm deciding is right for me. Even knowing that it might not be right for someone else, that it might have consequences you didn't intend or ones that you in fact fear, that people might be disappointed or offended or shocked, even horrified.

I promise you, there's people that are horrified. There's also going to be people who are delighted. And a reminder, most people do not give a shit and you're going to be making decisions and no one's even going to be noticing.

But what most people are really worried about is not just what they are going to think, but what other people will think and do. So you have to remember that if you fear judgement, remember that some people are going to judge you negatively, some people are going to judge you positively, and most people will be in that middle ground of not caring or kind of feeling ambiguous or pretty neutral about what you're doing with your life. But that's the discomfort that we're really trying to avoid when we avoid decisions. It's the judgement from others and also from yourself because let's face it, your inner critic loves a chance to pipe up and put you down, but that inner judgment is optional.

Let me give you a personal example that might sound really simple, but it's going to perfectly illustrate what I mean here. I'm actually late recording this podcast and I'm kind of glad that I am because I sent out an email where I shared this story last week on Friday and I got so many messages about it and I just decided I was going to include some of the email here too because it kind of works very well with this episode.

By the way, if you're not getting my emails, make sure you sign up for them. They are long form, they're filled with coaching, I use stories from my own life, anonymous client examples, and they're a really great read. I love

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writing them and you all seem to enjoy reading them as well by the feedback.

So, this is what I spoke about in the email. As you probably know, if you've been listening here for a while, I'm Autistic. And for me, socks are a whole thing in my life, okay? I'm very selective about socks, generally. And some socks I own feel really great until the temperature shifts and it gets a bit warmer and then suddenly they're like the worst thing ever. And some socks that I have look really great with certain outfits and I really want to wear them, but I know there's a limited amount of time that I can wear them because they can make me feel nauseous, especially if I'm getting dysregulated or tired. And then, you know, some are fine until they're just suddenly not. And then my nervous system is just like screaming, why have you done this to us? Why did you pick these socks?

So for several months of the year, when the temperature is shifting and getting warmer, but you know, not in a committed way, it's not reliably warm because hello, this is England. So I just carry two pairs of socks in my bag so that I'm covered on all the options. That's not because I'm indecisive, okay? It's because I know that what feels right first thing in the morning might not feel right a couple of hours later. So that's not indecision, it's not failure, that is self-awareness and self-respect.

But imagine if I judged myself for picking the wrong socks. If I made it mean I was terrible at making decisions, that I can't be trusted, sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? But this is what so many of you are doing with bigger decisions about your work, about parenting, money, relationships. Sometimes something just doesn't go how you wanted and suddenly where you're going to is, I'm terrible at this. But that discomfort isn't failure, it is feedback.

Most of you are walking around judging the decision you've made even before that decision is complete. You can think about this in a far more compassionate way. You can consider that you made that call, that decision, with the information you had at the time, with the perspective that

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you had at the time, with the tools that were available to you, with the version of you that existed then, before you got this important feedback.

Maybe the result of your decision sucked, maybe it stung, maybe it didn't match the vision in your head, maybe it was disappointing. That doesn't mean that you did it wrong. You made a decision and you got feedback. You got data. You got experience. You learned something. What most people call a "bad decision" is actually just an incomplete process. Please hear me on this, I'm going to say it again.

What most people call a bad decision is actually just an incomplete process. Because when you judge your initial decision too early, you stop yourself from finishing it, from finishing that loop. Imagine if I berated myself for picking the wrong socks and just kept wearing the socks and hating myself. Can you hear how ludicrous that would be?

But that's literally what you're doing when you judge yourself for the decisions you've made and when you stop too soon. When you spiral into shame or indecision, that's when you don't finish the loop by learning and making a new decision, which means you miss the opportunity to grow trust in yourself and to get the results that you actually want. But most people stop before they get to that part. They just panic, they shame themselves, they think, well I can't trust myself, I'm no good at making decisions, therefore it's better for me to be an indecision which it's definitely not. That's what breaks the cycle of self-trust, not the decision itself but the story that you attach to it.

By the way, you probably also do the same things with decisions that go well, by downplaying the wins, chalking them up to luck, telling yourself that you just got lucky with timing, or that you probably wouldn't be able to do the same again. It was just a fluke. So you don't trust yourself when things go badly, and you don't trust yourself when things go badly, and you don't trust yourself when things go well either. You see how unfair that is? Because when you do that, you don't make it mean that you were brilliant or strategic or powerful or decisive.

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And in doing so, you abandon your responsibility for the good stuff and you just like cling to it for the bad. So let's stop doing that. You don't have to do that. You're not the bad result and you're not the fluke success. This isn't about blaming. This is about responsibility, making choices and learning. You can be the person who chose, who acted and learned. And that learning is the point.

So the more that you're aware and the more that you're owning all of your role in this, the more clarity and power you will create. Because it's expensive to avoid making decisions, it costs you. You leak energy, you waste time, it takes up mental bandwidth that could be used for really fantastic things. You stay in limbo and that indecision actually creates tension and fatigue and mental noise.

You stop trusting yourself in that because you keep outsourcing your authority. And ironically, not deciding is still a decision. It's just a passive one with not great consequences. It's better to make the decision of not doing something and actually own that. The other thing that happens is that people just wait to feel ready. That's just like saying, "Well, I'll start running once I'm fit." It's not how it works. You need to start running by putting one foot in front of the other in order to build your stamina and your fitness.

And it's the same with decisions. You need to make a decision, start the process somehow and build your fitness at decision-making because that clarity that you want doesn't come from waiting, it comes from choosing. This is why I coach on decisions all the time. I just love it because coaching helps you stop circling and just start owning all those decisions. Doesn't that feel good? I know it does for me.

This is why inside of membership, we help you to make those decisions. We don't want to decide things for you and that is not our role as coaches. We want you to help you to make decisions based on your values, what your priorities are, what your preferences are and not what other people think you should do or what you've been socialized to think you should do. And when you get coached on this, a coached decision doesn't mean that

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you are then 100% certain. I want to do away with any idea that you have that if you get coached on this, then you're just gonna feel 100% fantastic about it.

That's not how it works. That's not the point either. Just notice with so much of this, it's about wanting to feel good. When you get coached on this, it means you've looked at what matters to you. You've identified thoughts that you have that are getting in the way maybe based on your past experiences or fears that you have, that you are owning your perspective and you're willing to go all in on it.

It doesn't mean that it doesn't feel uncomfortable or that it doesn't require courage or something of you. But doing that builds trust in yourself. Not because you're always getting it right and every decision feels fantastic and works out perfectly all the time. This is about trust in yourself that means you have your own back when things don't go perfectly. This is an ongoing process for every single one of us.

I consider myself a decisive person and there are places where I still get tripped up or rather I trip myself up where I delay and avoid and just like want someone to save me and come in and make the decisions for me. So I'm going to give you some of the prompts that I use myself and I also often ask them to clients inside the membership. So here they are, questions when you are faced with a decision. If you had to decide right now, what would you choose? What decision would your future self thank you for making?

If you knew both options, or all the options available to you, were going to be uncomfortable, which one feels more you? And what would you do if all of them were going to work out perfectly? No issues at all. And finally, what would you do if being wrong didn't matter?

I hope that has helped you with making some decisions. Those of you in the membership, you know where we are if you want to explore things further. But decisions aren't things that you need like more data. You don't

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need a spreadsheet, you just need a spine. That's something that we can help you develop.

I want you to think that the strength in decision making, that's a skill that you can build. In the same way that your bones, when you're a baby, are a lot softer and more fragile, but as you get older, they strengthen and develop. You have that internal strength coming from within. That's what I want for you. A lot of the time, you already know what you've decided. You're just afraid to feel something.

So if you've been circling a decision lately, whether it's something that you consider like a big thing or a little thing, I'm not really fond of describing things like that, but I want you to stop telling yourself that you're thinking it through because you're not indecisive. You might be avoiding the discomfort of making a judgment, but the discomfort of staying stuck is costing you way more.

So what's your decision? Feel free to message me, post in the community if you remember, let me know. I want to hear about the decisions that you're making. Go make a decision today, a real one, one that's got some edges to it maybe, one with some discomfort in it. One that reminds you that you're alive. That's what I am daring you to do today. Let me know how it goes, and I'll catch you next week.

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