

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

The way you see yourself is what's holding you back. So let's fix that. Growing your self concept changes everything: how you show up, how you make decisions, how you love, and how you lead. So let's get into it. This is Episode 222.

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. Let me tell you: you're not lazy, you're not indecisive. You don't have a discipline problem; you have a self-concept problem. And if you don't update it, you'll keep showing up like it's still 5-10 years ago, maybe even 20 years ago. So today I'm going to help you to see exactly how your self-concept is holding you back and how to start shifting it, because when you grow your self-concept, everything changes, everything shifts.

But before I do, I have to give a huge listener shout out to Katie. Katie sent me a message on Instagram telling me that she's been listening to the podcast for a year and that it's totally transformed her life. Katie told me a bunch of things that she's done recently that, in her words, Katie from a year ago would never have done. The way she's showing up, the changes she's made and continues to make – it gave me goosebumps. So Katie, I am celebrating you and all your success. It means so much to me to hear that this work is changing lives.

So if you are a listener to the podcast, longtime listener, maybe you've just discovered it and you're into it, I would love for you to share a recent favorite episode with a friend or two of yours or share it on your stories. This is how new people, just like Katie did a year ago, find the podcast, and your shares, your ratings, especially your reviews, they really do make a difference. So thank you for doing that. It means a lot to me.

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

Okay. Today, we are talking about one of the most important, life-changing things I teach inside my membership. It's also something that I'm constantly applying to my own life and in my business, just all the time, because it underpins every single element of your life, every single day, every situation, every relationship, all the decisions that you're making, all the goals that you have. We're talking about your self-concept. So this isn't confidence, it's not self-esteem, although they are part of it. This is your self-concept.

If you've never really thought about what yours is or what it could be, we're going to change that today, because this is something you are going to want to intentionally bring into focus. It's the foundation for everything else. If the term is unfamiliar, or maybe you've heard it but you don't quite know what it means, that is okay. You are going to understand that by the end of this episode.

So your self-concept refers to the collection of beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions that you hold about who you are. That includes things like your self-image, your self-esteem, and your internal narrative, the one that you have about yourself. It's the quiet but dominant narrative running in the background of your brain about who you are, how the world sees you, and what you believe is possible for you. This is why self-concept work is so important.

It is the answer to 'Who am I?' But what's really interesting is what people don't say when they answer that question, the stuff that they leave out or don't do a great job of stating. I'm going to give you some examples.

So ways that I could answer that question, 'Who am I?', I could say I'm a life coach, I'm a business owner, I'm a mom, I have a horse, I'm an author, I'm Autistic. Right? And all of those are true, and they're not negative descriptions, okay? So they're fine as far as factual statements about myself go. But they're not the whole truth.

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

So this is what I mean when I talk about a baseline self-concept, right? We're not in the negative, but those statements could be a lot more accurate and a lot more useful. So I'm going to go through some of them just to highlight the difference here. But again, just remember, it's not like these are negative things, but I'm going to get onto that in a moment.

So let's take 'I'm a life coach'. That could just as truthfully be, I'm a master certified life coach with loads of experience coaching one-on-one and group. My specialty is group coaching through my membership, and nobody coaches like I do. I'm also highly skilled at teaching coaching concepts, whether that's inside the membership, on my podcast, in my books, or talking to complete strangers in cafes.

Can you hear the difference between that and 'I'm a life coach'? Completely different self-concepts. Both are true though. One of them is going to have me creating far more impactful things in the world than the other, and I think you're going to know which one, because it creates a very different internal experience.

Or instead of 'I'm a business owner', I could say: 'I'm an entrepreneur and founder'. I've created and run multiple versions of my business for 25 years and continue to grow my business as it evolves with me. I actually used to call myself self-employed back when I first started. And that felt like a big deal, I think initially to say that, if I can go into the memory banks and recall it. And then after a while, I called myself a business owner, and that felt huge. That was me stepping into a whole other self-concept, and it felt like big boots to be stepping into. And then all of a sudden I was like, 'Wait a minute, I'm an entrepreneur. Yeah, I'm a business owner, but I'm totally an entrepreneur.'

So my self-concept in my business has evolved in the time that I've been running it. Now, what about 'I'm a mom'? This has been a really interesting one for me to think about in preparation for this episode. It's actually the one that I would just leave as it is. And I've been really curious about why is that? And I think it's because although I love being a mom and I know I'm a

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

great mom, it's not a central part of how I define myself. There's definitely aspects of how I parent that just reflect my views and my way of thinking more broadly. So it's just parenting, being a mom, it is important to me, but it's not the bulk of who I am. So I would just leave it as 'I'm a mom'.

Then there's 'I'm an author'. Again, true, I write books. But I'm also a best-selling, award-winning author whose books have been translated into multiple languages. I'm looking at my bookcase trying to remember all the languages... Let's go with Dutch, German, Mongolian is on its way, Italian... There's a bunch of others too.

Or take 'I'm Autistic'. I have been thinking of myself more and more as an Autistic icon. Why not? Right? Because I know the way that I speak about my Autism has an impact. So why not own that?

The way you describe yourself reveals what matters to you, okay? It reflects your values, but it also reveals how you've been socialized. Especially as women, our self-concept often reflects what society rewards or punishes. And that can show up in denigrating descriptions about your body or in offhand remarks that sound like facts but are actually well-practiced beliefs. And they might often be about who you are in relation to other people: being a good daughter, being a good mom, etc.

So I've put together a list of descriptions of varying kinds just to get your creative juices going in terms of your self-concept. So here are some well-practiced beliefs:

I'm good in a crisis but not consistent.

I don't have it in me to start my own business.

I'm a highly successful entrepreneur.

I'm nothing special.

I always leave things to the last minute.

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

I'm a hard worker.

I'm lazy.

I'm not great with money.

I'm a people pleaser.

I'm a loyal friend.

I'm not the best person for that kind of work.

I'm good at starting but not at following through.

I'm great at public speaking.

I'm ugly.

I'm too sensitive.

I'm someone who cares deeply.

I always mess things up.

My research skills are top-notch.

I'm not very popular.

I'm curious which ones... I just came up with ones that show up in coaching, some recent conversations I've been having. But I just want you to start thinking about which of those maybe resonated with you. Maybe hearing those, it took your brain in another direction. Just start to think, what is your self-concept made up of? What are the statements that make yours up?

Self-esteem enters the picture when we then add evaluation or judgment to it. But your self-concept is simply how you describe yourself. And as you've heard, it's not just one belief, it's the whole soup, loads of ingredients. And

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

it, of course, includes really positive views of yourself, as well as your limiting ones or outdated beliefs. It includes your successes, your hang-ups, your assumptions, and your quirks. We've got to make space for all of it.

It's how you see yourself being in the world. And that view shapes your behavior and your results. So if you think of yourself as someone who doesn't follow through, that belief will shape how you show up to everything, from your friendships, life admin, to your ambitions and opportunities and goals. And it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Not because you're incapable or bad at life, okay? Please hear me on that. But because your mind is excellent at making your thoughts appear to be true.

And some of these might sound like facts. You might have decades, reams of experience and evidence proving how they are true. But they're not, okay? They are practiced thoughts that have become beliefs, and then you view yourself and your life through the lens of that belief, which is why you can find so much evidence of this being true. Okay? But it's just like going to the opticians and doing that, the eye test where they swap in all the different lenses. You can just put in another lens and see what you see through that lens. That's always an option.

And I have to tell you, when I ask clients who have – and I'm laughing because I do this myself, I'm not exempt, I have certainly done this. But when I ask my clients to give specific examples of this thing that they've been lugging around with them, this belief, a lot of the so-called evidence is flimsy at best or completely missing. It is striking when I say to someone, 'Can you give me some examples of that from your life?' And they often actually start really strong, the belief is strong in them and they're like, 'Yeah!' And then they go to say it and they stutter a bit and pause and, 'Well, there was this time when I was 8.' And I'm like, 'Okay, right, good to know. This is good information. But do we really want to operate from that one time when you were 8?'

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

So you've got to know, notice when you've been carrying these heavy limiting beliefs around for years, because those beliefs seep into everything. That's why continually assessing and updating your self-concept matters so much, because it's always behind the times. And the more you practice these thoughts, the more real you feel. So the sooner you catch them, the better.

So think of your self-concept as the operating system for your mind. And when I say mind, always remember that includes your body; they aren't separate, okay? But when you have this operating system just running in the background and you don't question it, and you just assume it's true, then you act in ways that reinforce that belief. You act in ways that match who you think you are, not who you actually are or want to become.

And this is why: you keep ending up in similar patterns and creating the same results; you don't follow through on goals that excite you, and you sabotage opportunities even when they're exactly what you asked for. And you're not doing any of that on purpose. You're just acting according to your current self-concept. But when I say current, I mean how you're currently thinking about yourself, and most of the time it's already outdated.

Coaching is what helps you to interrupt that loop. It gives you a way to notice the thoughts, to examine and edit your self-concept. But this is not about becoming someone else. This is about becoming more you. Not by forcing yourself to chant affirmations in the mirror, unless that happens to work really well for you, but by helping you to see your current self-concept clearly, and then choose something new with intention instead of defaulting to the old beliefs that are holding you back.

Coaching is what helps you to see where your current self-concept is outdated or borrowed or incomplete. And it gives you tools to build a more accurate one as a starting point, okay? Remember, that is just the baseline. An accurate one that isn't negative is the baseline. Then we get to work on creating a self-concept that's coherent with the results that you want to

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

create. And you become the person, through your self-concept, who creates those results.

Now, I know some of you might be listening to this and thinking, 'Well, what if I get too full of myself and I'll become too big for my boots? What if I start thinking I'm amazing and I become insufferable and really arrogant?' This comes up a lot, especially for people who've been trained to value humility, harmony, and likability above all else. Hashtag women. So there's often a secret fear that if you start seeing yourself differently, if you actually own your skills, your insight, your ambition, then you'll become arrogant, or that people will think you've changed in some unlikable way.

Or it might not be that you're afraid of being arrogant, it's that you're afraid you'll always be overlooked, that you'll keep being underestimated. And the truth is, if that's been part of your experience, either in reality or in your imagination, it's probably made its way into your self-concept too. You've started to believe it about yourself, which is exactly why this work matters.

When that belief sits at the core of your identity, it shapes how you show up. You'll underplay your contributions, you'll avoid speaking up, you'll settle for less than you want. Again, not because you're incapable, but because your self-concept doesn't yet include 'I'm someone who gets noticed', 'I'm someone who's taken seriously', 'I'm someone people listen to'. So it's not just that others have underestimated you; it's that over time, you've started to underestimate yourself. And that becomes part of your internal narrative.

Or your fear with this could be: 'What if I start thinking I'm amazing, but I'm not? What if I'm just deluding myself and people can see right through it?' You don't fear being too much; you fear being wrong about being too much. The fear that if you let yourself believe good things about you, you'll get caught out, that it's not safe to back yourself unless you've got the receipts, the accolades, the evidence stacked a mile high. You fear backing yourself and being wrong. So you keep waiting for proof, and that's exactly why you

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

stay stuck, because it doesn't matter what proof you have, you're always going to think it's not enough.

You don't need to lie to yourself to grow your self-concept. You're not pretending, you're not posturing. You're choosing to relate to yourself in a way that supports the life you want to live. So we're not talking about fake it till you make it; it's choose it, grow into it. Okay? And we're just talking about describing yourself in an accurate way, not in a way that's behind the times.

Because when you wait until you've got absolute, undeniable proof, you'll never benefit from this work, okay? And think you won't go through the changes that you want because you're not acting like someone who believes in themselves. So the proof never gets created. Although, I really would say that the proof does get created; you just choose not to see it. You're determined not to see it because you're viewing yourself in this negative way. That's the loop.

But as for arrogance, here's what I want you to know: there is a big difference between arrogance and clarity. Arrogance is performative; it needs to prove something. But a strong self-concept doesn't need to prove anything. It's actually quiet, but it's also very obvious and solid. So what actually happens is that you become more grounded, more honest. You stop wasting energy trying to be invisible and relatable to everyone. And you don't turn into someone else; you just stop pretending you're less than you are. You give yourself permission to take up space as you actually are, not as the watered-down version that's easier for other people to digest.

And I know, some people might not like that. But they probably weren't your people to begin with. You'll find the ones who are. This isn't about being better than anyone else; it's about being fully you without apology or distortion. And that's not dangerous; that's liberating.

And when you coach with me in the membership, we're not just problem solving; you're building a different way of seeing yourself. And not just who

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

you are, but how you are in the world. You'll see yourself differently. You'll see yourself as someone who can take action, the action that you used to think was impossible. Someone who takes messy, imperfect action, who doesn't get caught in the same spirals of indecision, overthinking, or self-judgment. Right? The version of you who can ask for what you want clearly and directly, who can speak up in a meeting, who can rest without calling yourself lazy or feeling guilty, who can try and fail without making it mean something about their worth.

That's why I'm so obsessed with the concept of self-concept, because once you shift that, everything changes. And I've seen this happen so many times in clients. So I've put together a little compilation of shifts that I've seen clients go through. We've had several people actually, not just one, go from 'I don't know what I'm doing', 'I'm not experienced', 'I can't charge anyone', to setting up a business and charging clients because of that self-concept change. Going from 'I'm not experienced', 'I don't know what I'm doing', 'Can't charge anyone' to seeing yourself as someone who is a professional in your industry, who has all the experience you need to get going.

The member who believed 'I always freeze in conflict'. Right? That was their experience of conflict. They felt themselves freeze. But now they have hard conversations with an internal sense of safety and kindness because that's just who they are. They've built that skill, they've flexed that muscle, and become the person who can have those conversations. But they didn't get there by judging and punishing themselves for their response that they needed to work through.

Or how about going from 'I'm lazy', 'I'm no good at being consistent' to 'I'm someone who honors my energy and still shows up'? Okay? Because you don't have to choose between being productive or honoring your cycles or your chronic pain or neurodivergence or whatever else is affecting your current capacity. And hello, none of those things mean you're lazy, okay?

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

You can have a new self-concept that blends flexibility, self-care, and follow-through.

If you don't trust yourself to do anything unless there's a deadline and some kind of external accountability, you could try all sorts of systems to compensate for that. And I've certainly seen lots of people do that over the years. But then we get to coaching and you find out that actually what's going to help you is seeing yourself as someone who follows through. Okay? Maybe that's in your own way, okay? And maybe those systems and ways of doing things are going to help you, but they're going to help you a whole lot more if you see yourself as someone who follows through. Okay? That requires you to drop the identity of 'I'm unreliable' and replacing it with 'I can count on myself'.

You can steal all these thoughts by the way. And do remember there's always a transcript on my website for every episode that is released. Likewise, if you tell yourself you're bad with money and you judge and shame yourself for that, then you're unlikely to look at your numbers by opening your bank account or letters that arrive, statements. And you could feel ashamed about your spending habits. But that's your self-concept talking.

This has been one of the surprising delights of the membership is people's relationship with money changing. We've had so many members update their self-concept in terms of their finances. And all of a sudden, they're having regular money dates with themselves and their money. They're making intentional financial decisions, not because they suddenly have spreadsheets, okay, which plenty of them don't, by the way – that isn't a given – but because of how they see themselves as someone who is capable of stewarding their finances and that they're allowed to have desires that they spend money on in an intentional way.

Lucy was one of my clients who was recently on the podcast, and she used to think of herself as someone who'd missed her chance, who was burnt out managing chronic illness, felt lost about what was going to come next.

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

Her self-concept shifted from 'I'm someone who needs to get back to who I was' to 'I'm someone who's building something completely new'. How good does that feel? I just got all the feels as I said that out loud. And she's now started a business, she's launched her podcast, she's creating her life in a way that works for her body, her pace, and her vision.

So this shows up in all sorts of ways. And the examples I've given you here, it's always the same person. It's their life hasn't changed; they still got the same challenges, just a different self-concept, one that they chose on purpose. And when you grow your self-concept, you stop relying on pressure to get things done. Okay? You stop just waiting for motivation. And you become the person who does these things because it's just who you are, because your actions come from belief. And when you grow your self-concept, that means that it's not coming from panic or urgency or needing to prove yourself, because you don't need to prove yourself because you deeply believe 'This is just who I am'.

This is how you do things that are different or new to you. It's also how you do what you're currently doing, but without your insecurities driving the bus whilst you're trying to do it. It's how you make decisions without drama. It's how you take up space without apologizing for it. And that means that self-trust is a result of a grown self-concept.

So I want you to ask yourself three simple questions: Who do I think I am? Where did those beliefs come from? Which ones do I want to keep? And which ones am I going to upgrade? That's actually four. Because you get to decide who you are becoming. And not in some vague, aspirational, floaty way. I'm talking about clear, practical, grounded, daily level belief. Belief that is going to show up in your calendar, in your relationships. It's going to change how you reply to emails. It's belief that lets you ask for help. It's belief that lets you say, 'That's enough for today', and then actually switch off without guilt or worry about the fact that you have.

If you want a different result, you need to become someone new. Not lose yourself, not fake it, but evolve, evolve your self-concept. You can still be

Ep #222: Why Your Self-Concept is Holding You Back (& How to Shift It)

you, deeply, fully you, while becoming someone who follows through, who finishes what they start, who asks for more money, who leaves the job or starts the business, who upgrades their standards for what's acceptable in their life, who chooses themselves. But you won't get there by accident; you'll get there by deciding to grow. And this is the work that we do inside my membership Powerful. This isn't optional work; it's foundational.

And if you're ready to stop circling the same issues, the same goals, the same results, and actually become the person who creates the things that you want, then this is your next step. If you're already a member, amazing. You're in exactly the right place to do that. If you're not a member yet, more on that soon. And until then, start by deciding who you want to be, not in 5 years, now. Choose the version of you that knows what they want, because you do know what you want. Trust your voice. That version already lives inside of you. So let's just bring them forward. Let's have them step up to the mic and take charge, because they're ready to.

Okay, folks. Such a good episode to share with you. I can't wait to hear your thoughts about it. Let me know over on Instagram, or if you're in the membership, stick a post up there. And I will be back next week. Catch you then.

Hey, if you love listening to this podcast then come and check out my membership Powerful, where you get my best resources and all the coaching you need to transform your inner and outer life. Sign up to the waitlist at maisiehill.com/powerful, and I'll see you in the community.