

Ep #224: Why Leaving Can Be Your Most Powerful Move



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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This is Episode 224. And it's time for us to have a conversation about leaving and how powerful that can be. So enjoy this one.

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

Hi folks. It's great to have you here. I'm going to be jumping straight into this juicy topic of leaving in just a moment. But first, I really want to thank you all. I have been inundated with messages from you telling me how you are applying the things that I teach on the podcast. And I just really want to acknowledge that. Because anyone can listen to a podcast.

But listening to it, reflecting on what you hear, applying it to your life, that's a whole other kettle of fish. So I love to hear about it. The best way for you to let me know how you're finding it is to leave a review wherever you listen. And that's what helps the podcast to grow and for other people to benefit from it too. So thank you in advance for doing that. I really appreciate it.

Alright, let's talk about leaving. We celebrate arrivals and the beginnings of things. We really go on about how new beginnings and fresh starts are the best things. But what about exits? What about endings? Because the most powerful things I've ever done, they did eventually start something, but they began with something ending.

I've left relationships. I've left roles. I've left identities that really defined me for years. I've left marriages. I'm going to get into all these details. They're coming. I've left cities, careers, entire chapters of my life, and copious previous versions of myself. Not in some dramatic blaze of destruction. Not because I failed, but because I knew, because something inside me was whispering that it's time to move on.

So, I told you were going to get details. So let's just start off with the marriages. So my first marriage started and ended in New York. And there was this pivotal moment that just stands out in my memory where I was in a

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bathtub. Our bathroom door was open. I was having a conversation with my then husband. He was in another room, but the apartment was so small that you could do that. And we were talking about me going back to the UK before applying for a green card. Because I don't know if it's still the same, but certainly then, this was like twenty years ago. Once you applied, you couldn't leave the country until it was approved. And if you did leave the US, then that could invalidate the whole process.

And it would take like a couple of years to do this. So we were talking about me going back to the UK. And I said, 'Well, I'd like to see my family. And then I'd like to go somewhere in Europe for a holiday.' And he replied, "But I thought now we were married that you wouldn't want to travel." And I just, I mean, even now, I can still feel my body reacting the same way, just like, 'What the hell?' And so I was floored. And I think my eyes must have just pinged out of their sockets.

I mean, even now I'm like, 'Why?' Why would you think that? And the expectation that who I was, and I'm someone who really thrives on independence and adventure. The expectation that should disappear now that I was someone's wife. And I just couldn't unknow that. And that moment just kind of it activated something in me, just an awareness, a way of, yeah, a way of seeing things.

And then shortly after this, I got mono, or what we call glandular fever in the UK. And I wasn't able to finish my fine art degree at FIT. I was just stuck in the apartment, too ill to leave. So I did a lot of reflecting in between all the naps I was taking. Because it wasn't just the conversation about traveling, there was other stuff going on as well.

And I have to say, at this moment in time, I was so young. This was my early twenties. I had no intention of being married at that age. There's no way we would have got married if we didn't need to do that in order to be together in the same country. We'd been together for three years, I think, by the time we got married. One year of me traveling back and forth, and two years of me being there at college. And had there been another way to

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be together in the same country, the wedding wouldn't have happened. But it did.

And it was so long ago, and I can't really remember all the ins and outs of the time. But I know I was going through a huge transformation. And the relationship felt confining. Now, part of that is because of who he was, what the relationship was. And it's of course also down to my perception of it and my way of thinking about it.

But I really felt that I was never going to be fully myself in that relationship for multiple reasons. And once I see the truth, I don't look away from it. It's staring me in the face. So I left. There was no fight, just a quiet, very certain exit. So that was marriage one. Marriage two, this is now in my early thirties. And now that I know that I'm Autistic, I understand this relation, well, all relationships really. I understand them all in a completely different way.

But this relationship was long distance for the first two years, and it was great. I think actually long-distance relationships really suit me, and now I understand that, that I know that I'm Autistic. But then he moved to the UK, and it was very different, and certain issues became apparent very quickly. And there were things that I tried to look past and work through, but eventually I just had to admit that we were just too different. And this was really where I learned how to stop being overresponsible in romantic relationships. To stop carrying us both and to treat him like an adult.

But much like in my first marriage, it became clear how different we were. And it wasn't explosive, it wasn't loud, but that clarity again was there. And when that clarity comes, for me, it just becomes obvious, okay, it's time to go. It's time to leave. And we're taught, we're socialized that staying means strength, that leaving equates to failure. But what if leaving is the bravest thing that you can do? Because I really think it takes courage and strength, also self-respect, to do this.

And Paul, my now partner, we joke about this because sometimes it comes up in conversation about previous relationships, etc. And he just, especially

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if he's explaining this to other people, he jokes that when I leave, I'm like a cartoon character with a stick and a handkerchief, and everything is wrapped up in the bundle over my shoulder. Because from time to time, I'll mention a belonging that I used to have, something that I used to have. And when he asks where it is, he's like, 'Oh, let me guess... you left it behind.' Because that is my tendency. I leave things behind.

But it's not just a joke and a funny thing to laugh about. It's also about how I don't drag things out once the decision is made. But here is the part of this that people don't see, that I've already done the work. I've stayed in marriages actually longer than I would have if I'd followed my initial 'get out of here'. Because I did want to make it work, and I wanted to give it a go, and I wanted to leave clean. But I will also admit there was also fear there about what people would say if I didn't put that work in first, it becomes a legitimate choice as long as you've done that first.

So by the time I do leave, I've actually already grieved, I've already processed. I've turned every stone, okay? And leaving looks fast from the outside, but it's slower on the inside. Though I probably, on this front, my slow is still quite fast compared to a lot of people.

But I've also left careers behind, not just marriages. So back when I was in the first marriage, I was also apprenticing as a tattoo artist in New York. And I really enjoyed it. I loved it. And my work was decent. But I wasn't all in. I didn't have the passion or commitment that I think you need to succeed in that industry. But this was twenty years ago. And back then, especially in a top studio like the one that I worked in, having that commitment and desire and obsession really mattered. But for me, it felt more like a hobby. So even though I was in a great studio, had loads of opportunities, I just sold my machines and packed that in. Okay, decision done.

And then a while later, I moved back to the UK. I started working in the Crobar, famous rock bar in Soho. And whilst I was there, I started training as a practitioner and a birth doula. And I was doing things like massage, aromatherapy, reflexology. And then later on, I did my degree in acupuncture. And all of that was with this focused interest in reproductive

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health. Lots of additional training in cycle issues, fertility, pregnancy, postpartum, perimenopause, all of it.

And I left that career at what some would say was the peak of my success. So at this time, I had started coaching people so that I could work with folks who weren't local to me and couldn't come to me for treatments. And my work had already started to evolve more into coaching.

And I had a wait list of almost three hundred people waiting to work with me. And I had spent over fifteen years building that practice. And I loved it. And that work taught me everything about reproductive health and working with people. It really laid the foundation for everything that's followed, all my workshops that I've done, the books I've written, the courses, the entire membership started off from this. But I could feel that shift. And it's not like there was burnout from working with people or things like that going on. There were actually no challenges. It was just a knowing inside of me, this pull that said, it's time to do something else.

And I just knew that there was another way for me to use my unique talents to help people. So I left. And from the outside, it looked like I was walking away from everything I'd worked for. And a lot of people assumed I'd go bigger, that I'd set up a clinic, that I'd train other practitioners. But it didn't interest me. And inside, I knew I was already moving on. And I just really trusted myself to make something new. So that's what made the first online courses I offered possible. That's how the membership started.

So I've left many versions of myself behind. And my clients are doing this too. Not everyone is leaving marriages or changing careers. But I think it's fair to say that everyone in the membership is working on leaving behind versions of themselves that no longer fit.

So that could be the good girl, or the always available, very reliable colleague or friend. The overfunctioner, the perfectionist. The high achiever who is keeping all the plates spinning whilst silently falling apart. So these are all versions of yourself, identities. Maybe not fully identities, but just roles and behaviours that you are accustomed to being in. Because we can

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outgrow identities, roles, even coping mechanisms. But we're told to stay and to make things work and to be grateful for what we have. Don't rock the boat. And certainly don't seem heartless by leaving someone.

So we internalize this. And then when we do leave, whether we're talking about a job, a friendship, maybe a version of yourself too, there can be guilt, or thinking that you're selfish, or maybe you have something to prove or justify. But leaving really isn't a failure. So I think we need to stop thinking of it that way. Sometimes it's the most responsible thing that you can do. Especially when the thing that you're leaving was once really right for you. I think that can make it harder sometimes.

But staying in something that you've outgrown is a slow way to disappear. Leaving is actually a way of coming home to yourself and creating space for you to be you, for you to thrive. I think about the house plants that I need to repot now that it's spring. And you know how a house plants can get rootbound, where you take them out of their pot and all the roots have been growing round in circles and the repotting has been long overdue. And its roots are just taking up so much space in the pot that it can't absorb the nutrients that are actually available to it. And then the leaves start wilting or the roots might even rot. We don't want that for you, do we?

And leaving doesn't mean that you're heartless. Let's address that. I have been called cold. I have been told that I move on too fast, that I'm inconsiderate. One ex was very bothered that I posted photos of me smiling on my business Instagram. By the way, it wasn't just a regular one. It wasn't a 'Fuck you... I'm having a good time' even though we've just broken up. It wasn't that at all. But he totally saw it that way. And he told me that people thought I was being insensitive. And I was like, 'Are you kidding me?' I know I'm not. That's not my intention. You might be interpreting my behaviour that way, but that's definitely not my intention. And are you serious? You want me to stop running my business because of you? Absolutely not.

But here's what people don't see. They don't see all the reckoning that happened before the leaving. They don't see the self-coaching, the gut

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checks, the grief that I've already moved through. So by the time I actually go, I am done. And leaving can be the ultimate act of self-respect. Not just walking away from what isn't working, but walking towards what's next. But we can get so caught up in proving that we're loyal and committed, that we're not flaky or selfish or ungrateful. But you don't owe anyone a version of you that no longer fits.

And something else I want to say on this note. I never made my divorces mean anything about my worth or my ability to be in a relationship. Okay? And I've met quite a few people with "failed" marriages. Like, even the way that we talk about them is not so good. But I'd met people who've really taken it on as part of themselves, that they've failed in a relationship, or they made bad choices, etc. I didn't do any of that. And you don't have to either, with anything that you're leaving. You don't have to make it mean that you're unlovable. You don't have to question if you're too much or not enough.

Or that you were asking too much of the other person. I was coaching someone on this in the community recently, and it actually wasn't about a romantic relationship, it was about a relationship in their family. But your standards, the requests that you have of others, just because someone is unable or unwilling to do those things, that doesn't mean that you're asking too much. And I didn't use the end of my marriages as a mirror for my value.

It was simply the end of something. That's all. And that's why when someone tells me that they're getting divorced, I don't go, 'Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.' I say, 'Congratulations!' Not because divorce and breakups aren't painful. They can be deeply painful for some people, but it can also be liberating. So when someone tells me they're leaving a relationship that no longer fits, I see courage. I see their clarity. I see the freedom and self-respect that's involved. And I want to celebrate that.

Because leaving something that once defined you and doing it with love and truth is no small thing. Okay? And we celebrate engagements, we celebrate weddings and babies and anniversaries. All the cake and cards

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and gifts. But divorce is supposed to be quiet, right? Tucked away, treated as a failure. There's no party for choosing yourself, but we need to have those. Buy yourself a bouquet of flowers for raising your standards.

Because the end of something, when it's done well, when it's done cleanly and consciously, is just as worthy of celebration as the beginning. Maybe it's even more so. Because it takes guts to leave, especially when you're the one who knows it's time.

Maybe you've left things quickly and been judged for it. Maybe you've hesitated to leave because you're afraid of what others will think. You don't need to prove how hard it was. And you don't need to earn your exit. Leaving is allowed.

And my clients are leaving all sorts of things, jobs that were maybe once their dream, but actually they've realized aren't a good fit for them. Relationships that feel heavy or that they've outgrown in some way. Sometimes there's habits and strategies, things that they do that once really worked for them, but now they're actually the thing that's keeping them stuck. Or they're leaving things like people-pleasing behind. And they're not clinging to roles that drain them. They're choosing the things that light them up.

And not a single one of them is doing that casually. They're doing it with intention and care and awareness. Because leaving well isn't about cutting ties and running. It can be that. But really it's about loving yourself enough to honour what's true. And someone recently asked me about how I know when I'm ready to move on versus when I just need to take a break and have a rest. And I thought that was such an interesting question.

So here's the deal. When I need rest, I still feel connected to what I'm doing. Okay? There's a liveliness there. I'm still in it. It just is maybe a bit slower or less available to me. And this is how it was for me last year. I still felt connected. This is, in terms of my work, I felt very connected to it, but kind of needing to remove myself from my work in order to figure some things out. I'm I've got a whole episode coming up quite soon about all the

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things I realized. So we'll pause that thought, and I'm going to come back to it.

But when it's time for me to leave, I feel that disconnect. Even if I'm still physically present, something inside of me isn't. And that's how I know. And I think when it comes to things like that, leaving is how we update our self-concept in real time. It's how we honour what's going on inside of us so that the outside marries up to it. It's how I move from who I've been to who I'm becoming. I think a lot of people fear leaving and starting from scratch. It doesn't have to mean starting from scratch. I mean, that could be a thought that actually works for you, right?

But that thought is optional. You don't lose what you've built or erase the value of what came before or lose how amazing that relationship was until it wasn't. You carry those things with you. You bring the experience with you. And all the insights and skills that you built, just as I did in those relationships and in my careers. And the people that I've helped as a practitioner, they are still part of my legacy. That all that knowledge and wisdom that I have from all that stuff that I used to do, I still use it all the time in my day-to-day life as well as with my clients. Right? The work in the membership still incorporates Chinese Medicine principles, even if they're not explicit and obvious to other people.

So the tools, the lessons, the instincts, they don't disappear when you move on, they deepen. But I know that there's often this issue about, well, what about when people don't want you to leave? Right? Or people have opinions about you doing so. And I think that's the thing. Sometimes the hardest part isn't the leaving. It's what people are going to say after, or not what they're going to say, just your fear of how they're going to react. What they'll say about you.

And honestly, that might just be your imagination. But maybe they do try to guilt you, or they tell you that you're selfish and disloyal and heartless, right? Or they might not say anything at all and just kind of go quiet and disappear on you. And that might be a concern for you as well. But here is what I've learned. The fear of what people will say is rooted in your

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thoughts. And if you address those, if you meet those with compassion and truth, then those fears stop running the show. Because you see them for what they are. And then you can know, well, yeah, people might say that about me, but I know that's not true. And on the occasion that maybe there is some truth in what your fears are or what someone actually says, then you can make peace with that too and work through it.

But often people's reactions have nothing to do with your decision. It's all about their fear. Right? Maybe they're scared that you'll grow and leave them behind. Maybe they're scared of their own desire to leave something, but they haven't really let themselves acknowledge that and be with that. Maybe they're scared of the mirror that you're holding up in trusting yourself and the reflection that they see in that. You don't have to take that on. Okay? You can leave in a very clean way. You can leave by being kind. And you can leave without permission.

So I would love for you to reflect on what are you staying in that you know is actually done. So what roles, rules, relationships, or routines are you still carrying even though something inside of you is saying, we're done here? Or what version of you are you ready to retire? That's such a fun question to think about. Maybe you're standing at the edge of something right now and you keep thinking this isn't it anymore. But the guilt is loud, or the fear is loud, or someone else's expectations are loud, your own expectations are loud. So what I want to offer you is this, that feeling that you're having, maybe it's not failure. Maybe it's not to do with failure. Maybe it's to do with readiness.

That's it for today. What a fun episode. There's a part two coming up. So stay tuned. And just remember, the doors to Powerful are opening soon. Continuing to get messages. It's happening. We're very busy behind the scenes getting everything ready for you. And inside Powerful, you don't have to justify what you've outgrown. You can get coached on everything I've covered today. On the decision to leave or to stay. To clean up all the thoughts that you have, to leave cleanly, clearly, and without apology. Okay?

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Whether that's a habit, a belief, a whole identity, whatever it is, we're here to help you and here to coach you. Okay, folks, I will catch you next week.

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