

## Ep #225: When Deciding to Stay Is the Bravest Choice



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Maisie Hill**

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Last week, I spoke all about the power of leaving. This week, I'm flipping it around to talk about the power of staying. This is Episode 225.

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*.

Alright, welcome back. This is the flip side of last week's episode. If you haven't listened to that one, make sure you do. I spoke all about the power of leaving, of walking away, of recognising when something is done and trusting yourself enough to leave.

But today I'm talking about the other kind of power, the kind that comes from staying. Not staying stuck, not staying silent, but staying with, with yourself, maybe with some discomfort and challenges, with the truth, and with the thing you've chosen, whether that's a person, a relationship, a situation, a job. It could be all sorts of things.

There is a big difference between staying with and staying and hating yourself for it, or taking it out on other people, even though it's your choice. Because while leaving can be an act of liberation and self-trust, so can staying. And as I've been reflecting on these episodes, I do think leaving comes more naturally to me. That's just my tendency. I have those skills, right?

And I used to really just walk away from entire conversations that I found challenging. Literally, if something felt too confronting to me, or if I was emotionally overwhelmed, I would leave, like just out the door, down the street, gone. Just a really superb expression of the flight response.

And then if I did stay, I wasn't really there. I'd often dissociate. Paul and I, this is back when we first got together in the first couple of years, I would say, anytime we would be talking about something that was even just slightly confronting for me, like we're not talking big arguments or anything like that, just a degree of tension in the conversation. Something like a disagreement or, I wouldn't even say an argument, because I'm talking

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about a very kind, loving, respectful man talking to me, right? It's not like he was being aggressive or raising his voice or behaving in inappropriate ways that left me feeling unsafe.

But I didn't feel safe inside of me, and that had nothing to do with his behaviour. So what would happen is we would be having this conversation that I was finding challenging, and like literally 30 seconds in, I'd realise that I had no idea what we were talking about anymore because I just, I just wasn't there. And I would just like freeze and shut down, and like to the point of dissociation. So I would have to ask him like to backtrack and just remind me what we were talking about. And of course, he'd be a little bit insulted that I quote-unquote "wasn't listening."

This is why understanding how physiology impacts behaviour is so important, because once you have that lens to view things through, you stop assigning so much meaning to how people behave around you and towards you. And it's even better when you can coach yourself through it as well. And this is all the kind of stuff that you learn about and apply to your life whilst you're going through The Inner Odyssey, which is my signature course inside the membership that everyone gets access to, and it contains all of these amazing skills.

So for me, learning how to stay, not just by being physically in the room, but figuring out how to stay present has been some of the biggest work I've done. It meant learning how to stay with myself, to be in connection with myself. And then after I'd figured that out and built that skill, it also meant then being able to be in connection with someone else whilst there was like that charge and that slight challenge going on, and to navigate the internal flares of activation that would still be urging me to leave somehow. And to teach myself that I could actually tend to myself, take care of myself without abandoning the conversation or even the other person in the extreme.

And it meant understanding my capacity, knowing what I needed to do when. When I needed to pause and take a break, when I could ground myself, when I needed to ask for space without disappearing. So staying in those moments was really powerful. And you know, it took time. It took

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time. But I believe in this so much, that's why I teach all of this stuff, because it's literally been my work to figure out how to do this. But I didn't have anyone teaching me how to do it. I was literally just making it up, figuring it out as I went along, and it took an awful long time. It was still completely worth it, though. But then, when I've gone on to learn about all these things in my professional career, I'm like, "Oh, that's what I was doing then when I did that." Oh, when I figured out that helped me, that was actually like this thing happening.

So that's why I put all the resources together that I do, whether it's through the podcast or through the membership, because if I could gift that to that version of myself, I 100% would. So this is big work to be doing. It did take time. It was worth it. And now I'm really good at it. It was worth me figuring out, but I did so without judging myself for how I reacted. That's important. It's not like one response is morally superior. They're just different.

I've also stayed with my business because there have been moments in my career where I wondered if I should just get a job. Anyone who tells you, anyone who is an entrepreneur or has their own business, who tells you this never crosses their mind, my money's on they're lying, okay? And I just think it's important to be honest with you all about that, that of course you have these random thoughts from time to time that, "oh, I should just get a job," right? And there was a long period of time when I was making just enough to cover the bills from my business, and not much more beyond that. I loved what I was doing, but I was investing a lot of myself and not charging much at the time as well.

But here's the thing. This is what I always come back to. If I got a job, I would still have to manage my mind. Right? There's no getting away from this. We all have to manage our mind about things. So what are you going to choose to manage your mind about if you've got to do it anyway? If I had a job, I would still have to navigate my needs, tend to my energy, deal with people. And if I'm going to do all of that, I'd rather do it for something that matters to me, for a business that I'm building that's about the impact I want to have, the vision that I have, the future that I actually want. So I stayed.

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There were moments where that felt maybe, I guess some people would call it delusional, impractical, risky, even. But when I checked in with myself, it wasn't time to leave. It was time to recalibrate, to recommit, and go all in. So that's what I did. And I'm glad. Every time I've decided that, I'm like, oh yeah, of course. That's just my brain being a brain in those moments. It's going to happen. So now I'm just like, "Oh yeah, that's cute that you think getting a job's going to mean you don't have to manage your mind about things."

Okay, I think I have told the story about my third book on the podcast before, but for those of you that don't know, my second book deal was for two books. So when I wrote *Period Power*, that was a one-book deal. And then for *Perimenopause Power*, that was a two-book deal. So it was for *Perimenopause Power* and then a third one that was like to be decided. So I was contracted to write the third one, but when it was time for me to start writing it, I didn't want to.

And the original idea that I'd been like floating around and kind of had a loose conversation with my agent and publishers about, the idea was for it to be about the childbirth year. And that's a book that a previous version of me would have loved to write. I knew a lot about the childbirth year. I had vast amounts of experience of treating women during pregnancy and postpartum, and I'd supported hundreds of families as a doula. That was my world for a decade. But I was done with that phase of my life. I wasn't done with writing, but I was done with that subject, and it felt like I was taking a step backwards rather than forwards.

Plus, at this point in time, I'd spent years writing and editing, and then promoting *Period Power* and *Perimenopause Power*. My mom had died in that time. I had realized that I'm autistic. I had a toddler in the mix. There was a pandemic, all whilst running my business. And my body was just saying, absolutely not. We are not going to be writing this book. And I just felt so, I'm not sure I would even describe it as resistance. It was resistance, but it just felt very absolute. Like, this just isn't a good idea to do this for multiple reasons.

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So this was very uncomfortable for me because I had really wanted to write a book. And I actually just shared in the membership community a photo of some of the self-coaching that I had done about this in terms of how I was thinking about writing this book and like really selling myself on the idea of doing it. And my recent episode that I recorded about how to sell yourself will explain this process to you in more detail. But I like really sold myself on writing this third book about the childbirth year and why it would be so fantastic. And everything that I wrote down, I really believed, and it was still a no.

So I spoke to my agent, the wonderful Julia, and I spoke to my editor, the lovely Charlotte. I've got such a great team. I'm so grateful to them and their responses because they really were incredible. And Charlotte, my publisher, said, "Well, why don't you take a year off from books? Just park it to one side. Don't even think about it. Like have a year off from this conversation and anything to do with books, and we'll revisit the conversation in a year's time."

So this is what I was talking about in the leave episode about the difference between needing rest and being done with something. Because although I felt done with that chapter of my life that was about birth and postpartum, I didn't want to leave that third book. I didn't want to leave publishing. I didn't want to leave the relationship that I have with Green Tree and everyone who's involved in bringing my books to life. I just needed some space.

And what came from that space was my third book, *Powerful*. The book I actually wanted to write. The one that reflected where I was, who I was, and how I wanted to show up and serve. And that book only exists because I didn't walk, or rather, I did walk away from the idea of what it was meant to be, right? And the idea that's what I should be writing about. I walked away from that, but I walked towards *Powerful*. I paused. I took care of myself. I rested. I did what I needed to do to take care of me, and I stayed. I'm so glad I did. It's an amazing book.

Now, last week, you heard all about my divorces. Let's talk about my current relationship. So Paul and I have been together for over 11 years



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now. And of course, there have been hard moments, charged ones, moments where I thought about leaving. But what I realised yet again is that those thoughts that I have are an expression of a feeling or a stress response. It's like a flare of anger, a flight response kicking in. That's when I think that way.

So, you know, when I think, "Oh, I should just leave," right? In the heat of the moment. When I think that to myself, I'm like, "Oh, that's just the flight response. That's just me feeling this being a challenge and thinking the best way to solve this is to get the hell out of here." I don't actually want to leave the relationship. It's just an expression of that stress response. It's just maybe a need for some space to step away. When I work with those feelings and those kind of stress responses, when I stay with them and actually listen, I can see the thought for what it is, that it's part of the picture and a part that needs some attention, but it's not the whole picture.

And let me tell you, the old version of me would have packed the handkerchief bundle and been out the door. After I recorded last week's episode, I was talking to Paul about recording it and how I'd included his description of this cartoon version of me with the stick and the handkerchief and, you know, a few belongings in it, and I'm just off out the door. And he reminded me that there's actually another part to that description that I'd forgotten about that really cracks me up.

So this is how he describes me to people when they ask about my previous relationships, which those times are few and far between. But Paul says that I'm like an assassin. I'm quiet, efficient, all business. It's like, he describes it as two clean shots with a silencer. And then I'm just off into the sunset. No mess, no fuss, just done. Like in Leon, that's the film that he always references. I think that's accurate. There are things that I'm clinical about, including breakups, but in like an efficient way, but only because I've already done the emotional processing by the time I leave. That's what I spoke about last week.

I don't know what I'd be like if it were the other way around. I've never been dumped. I have been on the receiving end of really shit behaviour in a

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relationship and figuring that out. I've gone through all of that, but I've always been the one to end it. So I can leave, but I also know how to stay. I can ride the wave. I can tend to myself. I can speak up, and I can experience the charge of those conversations without disappearing.

So staying isn't always calm, and it isn't always quiet, but it is conscious, or that's what I encourage you to do. And here's what I ask my clients when we coach on things like this. It comes up a lot, the kind of, oh, should I stay or should I go, as the song goes. And a really important starting point to just get really honest with yourself is, what do you want? What do you want? Not what you think you should do or what you think you should want. Not what you think you have to do. Not what your friends want or your mum, or maybe what's convenient. You. What do you want to do?

Because once we know that, once we have that information, we can work through everything else that's coming up. But we have to know that as the starting point. So if no one was watching, if you didn't have to justify or explain, what would you want to do? Would you stay or would you leave? Staying can be challenging. It can be uncomfortable, but it can also be the most coherent thing you've ever done. It can be really worth it.

But staying is often what's expected of us. To be a good wife, a loyal friend, or a team player, a grateful daughter. So in many ways, we are socialized to stay, to endure, to not make a fuss, and to settle, and not just settle, but be grateful for whatever scraps we're working with. And we're taught that staying is what makes us kind and selfless and strong. But sometimes it's not strength, it's actually self-abandonment.

So when is staying actually the brave thing? Because staying, like really staying, requires discernment, not out of obligation or fear or performance, but to stay in the room, to stay with your values, with yourself, with your vision, and anyone else involved. But staying isn't automatically noble or better, and leaving isn't automatically selfish. So neither is the enemy. There's no right or wrong. Really unplug from the idea that there is.



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The work is knowing why you're staying and whether it's costing you your truth or it's revealing it. When staying is a powerful choice, it's because you're staying for you, not for approval, like a pat on the head or a reward of some kind. And certainly not because it's easier. It might be the hardest thing you do and the best thing that you do. And not because it's what people expect or want from you. You do this for you.

The other thing about this whole leaving and staying conversation is we do love a fresh start, right? A reinvention or glow up of some kind. But you can actually have that whilst you stay in a relationship or in your job. So please know that you don't have to leave in order to create that for yourself. And that's often a conversation that we have on coaching calls inside the membership, or ask a coach where you get written coaching from the coaching team, is this idea that if you want your relationship to be different or you want your relationship with your job to be different, that you can create that without leaving. But this is the difference between knowing how to work with your mindset and your emotions and shifting your perspective.

Staying can be radical, but only when it's rooted in self-trust rather than self-sacrifice, which is maybe what your parents' generation might have modelled to you. And sometimes self-trust can sound like, well, I'm tired, I'm fed up with this, but I'm not done. And you can decide that you won't abandon yourself in order to keep the peace. That you'll stay in this even in the discomfort of it, because it's yours to work with, and that is a choice that you are making. No one's forcing you to. You're not doing it out of obligation. Hear the difference there. That you'll stay because you choose to.

Because then when you do that, staying is an active choice. It's not passive. You're not just going along with things. It's not weak. It's not settling. It's a practice of deep self-leadership. And that doesn't have to mean staying forever. Okay? Things might be different in a week's time, a year's time, a decade's time. And it also doesn't mean compromising on your standards or your boundaries.

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So you can stay in hard conversations that, you know, maybe you would have shut down from before. You can stay in careers but shift how you work. You can stay in relationships and have a totally different experience of them. You can stay with your creativity, with your body, with your voice. So many cool ways that you can choose to stay. And you can stay when it would be easier to run. Easier on one hand, not the other. There's nuance to this. And you can stay with yourself even when it's uncomfortable. That is power.

So, my question to you, where are you being called to stay? Where have you been half out the door? Not because it's wrong, but because it's hard. Okay? And it's okay to acknowledge that. But what if staying is the move that changes everything? And what if you don't need it to look a certain way? Doesn't have to be perfect. Doesn't have to look graceful. Staying can be messy, real, and imperfect. Staying can be how you grow your capacity to create the life you actually want. Okay? You don't always have to go. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is stay.

If I had left every time it got hard, I wouldn't have the life I do. I wouldn't have the business I have, the relationships that I have. None of it's because I forced myself to stay, but because I chose to again and again and again. And you can do that too.

Alright, gorgeous ones. This has been so cool doing these two episodes for you. I'll catch you next time.

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