

Ep #238: Creating Spaciousness and Letting Go of Emotional Responsibility with Jess Edwards



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Maisie Hill

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This is *The Maisie Hill Experience*, Episode 238. Today we're talking about creating spaciousness and letting go of emotional responsibility, with guest Jess Edwards. Let's get into it.

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: Hello, folks. Welcome to this week's episode. And I want to say welcome back to my guest because actually, you've never been on the podcast before, have you? But...

Jess: No.

Maisie: We attempted it once, but now we're going to do it again, and the tech issues are not— we're through them. We're through the tech issues. So, welcome to the podcast, Jess. It's great to have you here. Would you like to go ahead and introduce yourself? Share any details you fancy, including your pronouns.

Jess: Absolutely. Thanks, Maisie. I'm so excited to be on here because, honestly, your podcast is a huge favourite of mine and I look forward to it every week. So the opportunity to be on here myself is truly a dream come true. So my name's Jess Edwards. My pronouns are she or they. I don't mind which. And I'm a theatre director and writer, and I live half in Margate and half in London.

Maisie: Yes, so you might get double seagulls as background noises today between Jess and I. So Jess, I have a lot of questions that I am dying to know the answers to, but I'm going to start off with one that is purely for my own satisfaction, which is you mentioned to me, I can't remember if it was on a coaching call or if it was when we previously tried to record, but you mentioned that your flatmate is also a member. And I'm just dying to know how that happened.

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Jess: Well, I am a huge fan of the community of Powerful, as it is now. And I'd love to actually tell the story of how I joined at some point because I went...

Maisie: Oh, well, do you want to wrap it all up in one thing? That's however you want to do it.

Jess: Yeah, maybe that would be good. So during the pandemic, I almost sadly felt like a walking advert for the conservative government because I lost all of my theatre work, and I worked in tech for a while because there was nothing else that I was able to do. I worked for this brilliant health tech startup, and one of the things that they did was online learning and community.

And that is how I discovered your work. So I was like, oh, this is a really interesting person who's doing this. And I came to one of your free Christmas workshops with the aim to learn about how someone else was delivering online learning. I was like, there is no way I'm going to join. This is not for me. I didn't even have a cycle at that point. I was like, it's way too expensive. I could not have been more sceptical about the offering. And I think 15 minutes into the workshop, I was like, I'm in.

And it was just the way that you teach and the way that you hold space and the learning and community that you do and all of your principles, I was just so converted. And it was amazing feeling to go from being about as sceptical as I could possibly be because I'd had some bad experiences in my 20s with exes who'd been a bit judgy with my relationship with my cycle that didn't exist. And so I had a bit of my own stuff around it. And to go from being so sceptical to being so utterly bought in within 15 minutes was just amazing. And I would say as well, being part of Powerful has nothing short of changed my life. I'm a different person than when I joined. And that change has never plateaued.

It's almost like, I think you have used this metaphor before, but it's almost like in a video game when you go to a next level and you're like, oh.

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Maisie: Yeah.

Jess: There's a whole other level here. So when with my housemate, who's a very, very dear friend and a wonderful, wonderful human, I was just sort of enthusiastically talking about everything I was learning. And she's also a writer, and she's also really interested in the self and self-development and how the brain works. And I was just like, you've got to join, come. And I think she joined 3 months or 6 months after I did. And it's so great because we kind of continue the community of Powerful at home, and we're often voice noting about goals and talking about them over breakfast. It's just fab.

Maisie: That is amazing. You have blown my mind open with the idea of that. And I'm just so glad that you discovered me through quite unusual means, it sounds like. And that you decided to join because it is so great having you as part of the community. And I know that you are really held in esteem by other members for the way that you show up to the community and the way that you show up for yourself when you get coached. And that was something I actually wanted to touch on. It was about your experience of being coached and specifically what you think helps you to be coachable.

And when I say coachable, just for you and the benefit of everyone listening, what I mean is that you're able to receive questions and perspectives that may be uncomfortable or challenging. And it's not that my perspective is the right one. So it's not about you agreeing with everything that I point out or offer you, but it's just I get a real sense when I'm coaching you that you are open to it. So I'd love to know more about your experience of that because I'm sure it would be helpful to other people who are getting coached.

Jess: Well, I think two things spring to mind. The first is that I've been on a therapeutic self-development journey for about the last 10 years because in 2016, I had a really debilitating cycling accident and ended up with complex

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PTSD as a result of that and was very lucky in some ways because I wasn't physically too badly hurt, but it had a really shattering effect on my mental health. And it's weird when I think of it now, I'm actually quite grateful that happened because I don't think I ever would have done any sort of therapy if it hadn't been for that, because there's no history of that in my family. Just something that I would have thought was not, I wasn't allowed to do or was not for me.

So I did some EMDR on the NHS, which was great, and a little bit of CBT, cognitive behavioural therapy, which I know has some things in common with the incredible self-coaching model that you teach, which I do every day and has changed my life so profoundly. And I've also been in talking therapy for a long time.

But it wasn't until I joined the membership that I felt empowered to enact some of the things that I'd started learning in therapy in my own life. And I think my therapist sometimes gets a bit frustrated because I'll be like, oh, I had this great discovery in coaching. And she's like, "Yeah, babe, I told you that like 5 years ago."

But it's the thing about the way that you teach and the way that you coach is so empowering of the participant, and it's just made me feel like an agent in my own life in a way that is incredibly exciting. And because of that overwhelmingly positive attribute, discomfort is worthwhile because it's the pathway to something exciting. So I think that's one reason.

The second reason is as a director, I'm often working with actors, not like a coach, because I think it's a more even relationship between director and actor, or I believe it should be. But I'm often making offers as notes that I see as metaphorical keys to unlock something in an actor. So I'm always thinking, what's the right way of putting this to unlock something in the performance or to unlock a part of the character? So I'm very curious and stimulated by psychological exploration. And so then to do that on myself, I think because I do it with fiction all the time, I think it feels a little more fluent in myself as well.

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Maisie: Yeah. I love that description that it's helping to unlock something, because that's certainly how I perceive coaching. The point of coaching is to help you access things in yourself. It's not there for me to implant things into you. It's just I'm going to ask you questions and offer you perspectives that are designed and intended to shine a light on parts of yourself or just different approaches that you can consider.

I can really recognise what you're saying in my experience of coaching you because you do get curious very quickly when I ask a question. And, you know, sometimes as a coach, I'm asking questions and I'm like, this might be a bit, you know, I don't know about this. But then I kind of, I have to get over myself in that moment and think, well, it's not about me being comfortable. This is about there's a question here I feel is in service of this person, and I have to be willing to ask it, knowing that it could be disruptive in my relationship with this person and their relationship with me.

Jess: So interesting. So interesting because I think it does have a lot of correlation with directing, but in a way, you're protected as a director because it's all in fiction. So when you're discussing the character, it's kind of safe because they're not real. And I'm quite often I find in the way that I direct anyway, which is very through experiential and personal lens, right? We do end up talking about ourselves a lot, but we often have the distancing safety of the character to like feel a little less vulnerable.

So I had never thought about the vulnerability of the coach in the coaching and client relationship, but I really, yeah, I can really understand that. But I think you're so brilliant at asking the questions because they are totally non-judgmental. I have never felt judged in any way in the community and specifically by you, but generally in the community as well.

I'm thinking of the coaching I had yesterday, where I suddenly was aware of my like feeling of vulnerability and it's so powerful, pun intended, to be able to access those feelings of vulnerability that are so uncomfortable and there are so few places in the world where you can feel that way and for that to be okay.

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Maisie: Mm, yeah. I know exactly what you mean. Yeah. I love coaching. It's the best. I love it. Okay. Now, you have had quite a momentous year so far. And may I, may I read out the beginning of your celebration post that you put up in the community?

Jess: Yeah, absolutely. It was written quite quickly, so it's not my best writing, but yeah, please do.

Maisie: Look at you judging yourself for your celebration. Just going to leave that one there. We'll come back to that. So you shared, "I want to take a moment to celebrate my goal, which was to create spaciousness during a period of extreme busyness in my work. And I'm so happy to say that I've absolutely smashed it. The me of a year ago could not believe I could do this level of work, opening three shows in four months. I'm a theatre director while remaining happy and fulfilled and not burnt out."

How amazing is that?

Jess: It's really lovely to hear you read it as well. As you read it out, I just like glowed. It was a really lovely experience to receive it from you. So thank you.

Maisie: Well, you did it.

Jess: I honestly can't believe it. I've like, when I haven't when I see friends, I haven't seen since, like, Jan or Feb, they're like, how are you? I'm like, I feel like a different person.

Maisie: So a year ago, if you'd had that same period of busyness, how would you typically be answering that question?

Jess: I'm this is what I did for years. I would say, I'm a husk. I've got nothing left. I'm exhausted. I don't know if I want to do this job anymore. I would just be very tired and very sad, basically. And I actually after the pandemic, avoided doing as much directing because I had this notion that it was exhausting. And during the course of being part of Powerful, I have really

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questioned that thought and been like, I really feel like this is a thought error. And I feel like there's another way.

And so just to have this period, which I wouldn't have chosen for it to be that busy, it was just that these three jobs landed that were all gorgeous jobs and I wanted to do them all justice. But I was like, okay, let's see. Can this be done? Can I honour myself and take care of myself, exquisite care of myself, as you say so brilliantly and powerful, and also do the work really well? And I honestly can't believe also how easy it's been.

Maisie: So fascinating. I have so many questions about this. So, okay, so let's rewind to you deciding to set this as a goal. So, tell me what was going on.

Jess: Well, initially, maybe I'll start with last year actually. So 2024 was a really, really difficult year for me. I had a very difficult breakup and also my grandma died. And that was obviously disruptive in my family and more things went on that aren't mine to share, but there was some really challenging stuff and it was an upsetting time. And I realised I was exacerbating how upsetting it was because I was taking on so much responsibility for everybody's problems. And my spring goal initially was, how do I stop taking responsibility for other people's emotions? Because all of my work in the membership has been about learning that you can't make someone feel something.

And it truly blew my mind the first time we spoke about that. And I was like, what do you mean? Of course, like, if I say something and the person's upset, like, I've done that. And of course, now I know it is their thoughts about what I have said that have upset them. And of course, that doesn't give you license to behave in an irresponsible way, but just to know that I can't make anyone feel anything, they make themselves feel things, has just been so liberating.

So, the goal initially was to stop taking emotional responsibility at work because I think a reason why I find directing so tiring in the past is that I

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must make it the best possible experience for everybody. And I must hold all of their problems and if somebody has a problem, it kind of goes into my body and it stops me from sleeping and I mistook that for care, actually.

Maisie: Yes. And this happens so much in so many different scenarios, especially when you've been socialised as female. You know, it comes up, you'll have seen on coaching calls in the membership in so many forms, whether it's a holiday, a night out with friends that you've had some part in organising, you know, just something going on at work. There's this taking on responsibility for making it the best experience for everyone else and without anyone actually even asking you to do that or thinking about your own experience or any of the other numerous factors involved.

Jess: And like, truly, you will not be surprised by this, but just a couple of, and I need to sort of share these with a bit of care because they're stories that involve other people who I was working with. It also wasn't that in these three shows, nothing went wrong. Loads of things went wrong. I just didn't make the emotion around them my responsibility. And it made me like a 10 times better leader because I could hold an uncomfortable conversation and name it and say, "Well, that's this conversation has been really uncomfortable, and that's okay." And just watching the people around me go, oh, yeah, I mean, I suppose it has been uncomfortable, and maybe that is okay. It was so interesting.

Maisie: Yeah, because if we're having a standard of I'm going to do this thing and it's going to feel great, then, you know, we're really setting ourselves up for failure there. But if we're creating the space of, I'm going to do this and it's going to be uncomfortable, but of course it's going to be uncomfortable. You know, and there's this level of accepting and creating space, which I know the theme of creating space was a big one for you.

Jess: Totally. And it was so useful. We had a brilliant bit of coaching just before I started this busy period. I think it was maybe two or three days before, and I shared my goal of stop taking emotional responsibility. And your brilliant provocation was, and you'll remember the phrasing better than

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I, but was something like, is there a way of making it something expansive, not something constricting? And that has been so useful as I've developed goals moving forward. Instead of a goal that is stop doing something or not do something, it's something that contains a positive. Well, positive's not quite the right word, but you know what I mean.

Maisie: Something that you want to create rather than stop doing.

Jess: Yes. Yes. And the spaciousness which we found together in that coaching was just so helpful. I have a morning journaling practice that is very important to me. And so every couple of days, I would just at the end of the journaling practice, write down, "How can I create space today?" And that was so great when I was in my most busy time because it might have been just like, "Just stand outside for 5 minutes at lunchtime and look at the sky." And if that was all I had time for, I still felt that sense of spaciousness. It was brilliant. And often there'd be like 10 things on the list. It was it was great.

Maisie: Okay, everyone, listen to what Jess is saying. This is so important because I think when we think about creating space for ourselves, of course, we go to the ideal scenario of I'll have several weeks off work. No one's going to have any requests for me. I'm not going to have to make any decisions, right? We go to the most ideal scenario, which, of course, I would love for all of us to have from time to time. But in doing so, we can block ourselves from accessing the space that is available. And so doing exactly what you described of, well, what is possible even if today is so busy and it's one thing after another, what can I do?

Jess: And it reminds me of two things. I think it was your most recent podcast about getting help when you're busy. I would say this, what I've just done, this personal inquiry, this goal around spaciousness and emotional responsibility, is probably the biggest personal inquiry I've ever done in my life, and I did it in my busiest period, and it was so much more powerful because of that. I think if I'd done it in a calmer space, I would have been like, "Oh, but it's easy to do it right now, because I'm less busy or

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whatever." And it was just it was exponentially more powerful for doing it in a busy time. So when I was listening to that podcast, I was like, oh, yes, I feel seen.

But also, I want to call out a really amazing resource that we did in the community, I think it was about 18 months ago, which was the self-love month. And so I think where I got the idea from for just asking myself in my journal, how could I create spaciousness today, was one of the prompts, the daily prompts that was part of that self-love program was, "What would self-love look like for me today?"

And I was doing that after I'd just had some quite, not super serious, but like some relatively serious surgery, and I was coming back to work, and I had a day of meetings, and it was probably, to be honest, a little bit too soon to be coming back. And I wrote down, "What would self-love look like for me today?" And what came into my mind was walking slowly. And I am in some ways a classic Londoner. I can't do it down the road. I go as fast as I can. If there's someone in front of me walking on the escalator not going fast enough, I'm like, "Oh, why are you so slow?"

And I, so the whole day with my like slightly sore post-op body, I walked slowly, and I was like on top of the world. I was like, this is amazing. How could life be like this, where I could just walk slowly? And it was just it was really interesting to like find this tiny little thing, this tiny act of self-love and self-care that could make such a difference to my day. And I went to every meeting in like half the speed that I normally would, and I felt so much better. So it's amazing.

Maisie: Makes a massive difference, not rushing. I'm always like, if you just want to do one thing that's going to improve your life, stop rushing. That's it. But what I want to point out is that came from one question in a workbook. Because, and I have to point this out because I know that we have folks in the membership who think that in order to use a workbook, you have to use all of it and you have to fill in every page and do it to the 100% version of it, which of course you can if it's useful and it feels good to you to do so. But I

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love what you've just shared because you can use one question and ask yourself that question on repeat.

Jess: Totally. And that was so powerful. That's the main thing I remember from that phase. And I think in terms of like what I use the membership most for, because I definitely have struggled with perfectionist tendencies in my time as I think so many of us have. I definitely at the beginning was like, right, I've got to do all the workbooks and I've got to watch all the material. And you're so brilliant at holding space for that not being the way to do it. And in fact, it's the opposite of the way to do it. But the thing that is endlessly valuable and endlessly fascinating is listening to the replays of the coaching calls. That is one thing I have gone all the way back to the very beginning of the podcast feed and listened to pretty much all of them because, and it's another thing if you'd told me before I joined the membership like, listening to other people's coaching and I'm not a parent, listening to parents have coaching about their kids, I would have been like, oh, that I don't know if I would get anything out of that. And I, it's just so useful. I love to listen to them when I'm walking around and just kind of mull on the material in the coaching. And it's it's so, so powerful.

Maisie: Yeah. Yeah. So for those of you who don't know, we have a private podcast feed that's just for people in the membership and on it, has all of our coaching call history. So you can just scroll through it, pick a call to listen to, hit play and get the coaching from it.

Yeah, I'm the same. And this is why it's a big part of why I love the group coaching format is because you get to hear stuff that doesn't directly apply to you, but is still useful, or you get coached on things that you maybe haven't thought to bring to coaching. But it's always, I think it's just really important having that community aspect where we get to hear, oh, it's not just me who struggles with this, right? Because that's such a big stick that we beat ourselves up with. It's just me who has this issue. So suddenly, when you're in an environment where everyone else is like nodding along

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and like, oh, yeah, this resonates for me as well. And you're like, oh, it's not just me.

Jess: It's so validating. And honestly, it's not an exaggeration to say every single call replay that I've listened to, I've had like an aha moment from. Every single one. I've there's been a moment where I've gone, whoa, that's something I do. Wow, how amazing to have the privilege of listening to someone else like untangle what they're facing with a coach. It's brilliant.

Maisie: Yeah. Yeah, agreed. I absolutely love it. I knew we were going to go off on so many tangents with this, which is exactly what I hoped for. So you set your spring goal. And what were the thoughts you had about that goal when you first set it? So, when you thought, I want to create this spaciousness during the period of extreme busy work, what were you thinking about it?

Jess: Well, of course, initially, I was like, well, that's impossible. Give it a try, but I was really like, it's not going to be possible. Definitely. And honestly, I thought it was too small, strangely, which is obviously the opposite of what happened. But I was like, spaciousness, like, oh, is that enough? Like, don't I need to make like brilliant?

Maisie: What do you mean by? Oh, yeah, I was going to say, what do you mean by not enough?

Jess: I wondered if it was unambitious. I am a ruthlessly ambitious person, actually. So it just felt a little bit small. And of course, the reality of it was the opposite. It was one of the most profound, the most profound goal I've ever set, probably.

Maisie: I'm going to put words in your mouth here, or ask you a direct question at least. When you say it was too small and like unambitious, do you mean it wasn't like a sexy enough goal for you to pick, or was it small or unambitious in another way?

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Jess: I think the truth of the matter is that I so couldn't imagine it, that it almost didn't exist. Does that make sense?

Maisie: No, I think I get a sense of what you're talking about.

Jess: I was like, spaciousness, that's not possible.

Maisie: So is it that it didn't feel tangible to you like a real thing because it was just so abstract?

Jess: Yeah, maybe that's what it is. When I first joined the membership, I always wanted to set goals that were like concrete and tangible and external goals, right? And my journey has been more and more towards internal goals because I've just found they have huge resonating effects and affect loads of external things, but end up being much more powerful to set.

And so I suppose the external goal I could have set was, create three shows that are really amazing. And that wasn't even one of my rocks. That is absolutely what happened, but I also managed to hugely shift my relationship with myself, my work, and my collaborators in the process.

Maisie: Oh, it's so good. So good. Okay, so you started off, you made the decision, you set the goal, and you started off thinking what, it's not possible and it's this unambitious, intangible thing. Why did you keep it as a goal when that's what you were thinking?

Jess: That's a good question. I think because I started to ask, I started with that question in the morning, how could I create more spaciousness? I think it was the simplicity of it meant it was always in my mind. And I love a goal. I find goals really helpful. And so I would be thinking about it and going, okay, what would spacious look like today? And it also was helping me say no to things.

And I just really quickly started to see its value, I think, once I started the work. And so that thing of spending 5 minutes outside on my lunch break or

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going home to read a book on the sofa with my dog instead of going out all evening, or making sure, which was another thing that I did, every single day, I created the space for my morning routine. So I would start my day really in a relaxed way rather than rushing out the door to rehearsal. So I just started to see the benefit, like literally within the first couple of days. So I was like, oh, hang on, this is good.

Maisie: So it's sounding like it created this filter for you for you to be saying yes to things, either requests from other people or that were coming from within. So there was this filter for you to say yes or no to things.

Jess: That is a perfect way of putting it. Yes, that's exactly what happened.

Maisie: But then it also sounds like, simultaneously, it created this standard.

Jess: Yes. Yes.

Maisie: Right. So you made the decision, and then suddenly you have a standard to which you're operating.

Jess: Exactly. Exactly. Which was great.

Maisie: It makes things simple.

Jess: Exactly, which is so good.

Maisie: Okay. So you had these thoughts at the beginning, it's not possible, but very quickly you started to see this is working, this is impactful. And then what happened from there?

Jess: It was just really interesting because one of my rocks was, stop taking emotional responsibility, right? And seeing quite quickly, I had some challenges to navigate with one of the shows. And I was also in prep for the show that I've got coming in the autumn. So it was really stacked on top of each other. And there were a few different problems from all the different shows that started showing up.

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And again, it was like the simplicity of it. I was facilitating this very, very uncomfortable conversation on one of the shows. And I just had in my head, "You don't need to take responsibility for how people feel." And it was just the noticing of it that allowed me to do it. It was honestly that simple. And I almost couldn't believe it. I was like, it's not my responsibility. And I think the me of even January would have gone, "Oh, but how can you really care for them if you aren't taking responsibility?" And I was actually able to care for them more because I was empowering them to take responsibility for themselves. It blew my mind.

So because I had so many opportunities to test not taking responsibility really quickly, again, it was in the first week, and it was pre-production for one of the others. And then I was like, whoa, that's amazing. And previously, actually, I remember in 2023, I was doing a show and I did a model on something, a self-coaching model on something that had come up on rehearsals, which was niggling at me that I was taking responsibility for. And it was really great reflecting on the difference between 2 years ago, something happened, I took responsibility for it when I shouldn't have. And then I had to do like, I think even a number of models on it to like work through it. And the model really helped me work through it. I was like, great, okay, I see what happened here, fab, but it was, you know, kind of 4 days over like a 3-minute conversation. And now...

Maisie: And sometimes that's how long it takes. Or sometimes it's 4 months and multiple coaching sessions and, you know, or 4 years.

Jess: Absolutely, which is neutral. That's, you know. But it was just amazing to go to feel myself in the moment, go, "This is not my responsibility," show up better as a leader, show up better as a collaborator, and be able to leave that conversation where it happened and not take it on with me. And then my rehearsal processes and my pre-production processes gave me opportunity after opportunity to practice this, which is why it was so great doing it in the busy period, because I went from being a novice to being a

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black belt in 3 months. Whereas if it had been a less busy period, I would have maybe done it twice.

Maisie: Yes. Yes. That's so important. Just that, first of all, seeing these challenges as opportunities to practice your skills, but also that level of repetition. You know, like when I talk about the importance of lessons and laps. And the laps that we do like we would do in the swimming pool, just where we get our reps in and we acclimatise to what we have learned, and we just start operating at a new level. Like you said, like you're in a different video game.

Jess: Totally.

Maisie: And it's like you've kind of landed like in Mario where you like land on a mushroom or something and you get supercharged up and you just like race through the race through the level.

Jess: Well, honestly, I have been describing it to my friends as like, I feel like I have a superpower. It's amazing. It's really amazing. But it's funny, like I also have stopped drinking. That was sort of part of my difficult year. And I don't have a relationship with alcohol that I'm worried about. I wouldn't identify as an addict, but I just thought, oh, I just want to take one thing off the table in my difficult year. And I do think for me, sobriety has enabled me to see my emotional relationship with things a little bit more clearly because there isn't anything in the way of me and the world, if that makes sense.

Maisie: Yeah, that makes sense.

Jess: So I think having those two things on top of each other has also been like a useful experiment for me actually doing those things simultaneously.

Maisie: Yeah. Well, I can just see all the places that you've created space for yourself in the not taking responsibility for others, in the deciding to stop drinking, in having conversations that are challenging, but then you're not taking them home with you and ruminating on them for days and needing to use your kind of self-coaching for managing your thoughts about, you

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know, not having the conversation. That's what I'm always like, we all have to manage our minds and coach ourselves about things. That doesn't stop. So what are you going to choose to manage your mind about?

Jess: Totally, totally, totally. And it was also, it's I think maybe it's useful to share at this point as well, like I have had a very personal relationship with my work and the way that I direct, and I share a lot of deep vulnerabilities and myself because I think if I'm asking an actor to be vulnerable, I it's important for me to go there as well. So we're in it together.

On one of the shows, I was a little bit more boundaried, actually, than I normally would be. And that was because of the number of people in the company. So it was 20 actors. It was a really, really big group, and there just wasn't the time to go as deep because of the number of people. And at the beginning of the process, I could sort of feel this happening. And it was the third out of the three shows, and so I was like feeling pretty well-practised now in my not-taking-responsibility video game experience.

It sort of started, and I could feel this happening, and I was a bit worried. I was like, oh, is it going to be as good if I can't do this aspect of my practice in the same way? And it was better. It was absolutely remarkable. And I was worried that if I couldn't be as open and vulnerable with this group of people, they would have a less profound experience, or they would feel less safe, or it would affect the work in some way.

And honestly, the opposite happened. And I don't think I would have had the courage to lean into that and be curious about that when I felt it happening if I had not been in where I was in the three shows and where I was in my goal.

A number of the actors wrote to me afterwards and said, "I have never felt as safe in a room. I have never before been able to advocate for myself the way I was in this room, and this is one of the most profound rehearsal periods I've ever had." And it was just amazing to feel that I could still do all

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of these things that are really, really important to me without it costing me my boundaries.

Maisie: Yes. Oh, that's so good. It doesn't surprise me at all. As I'm hearing you say it, I'm like, yeah, that makes a lot of sense. What's your understanding of that?

Jess: That's a good question. I think boundaries make people feel safe. And I think me being able to be more boundaried made everybody feel safer. It's another reason why I love your work so much, but I do a lot of nervous system work in my directing. So we do a lot of like guided visualisations, and we do a lot of yoga, and we do a lot of like embodied nervous system stuff, which helps people to feel safe. But I think because of being more boundaried, because of the number of people, the responsibility then was theirs to take for themselves, and I think that made them feel a much higher degree of agency.

Maisie: Yes. So it's sounding like you also created space for them.

Jess: Oh my god, exactly. Hadn't even realised that, but that is 100% correct. Yeah, no question. And I didn't even know I wasn't creating enough space for people before. It truly feels like a big level up in my creative practice as well as for myself. And it's just so interesting these stories we tell ourselves about like, oh, if I'm not open and vulnerable in this very specific way, then the work won't be as powerful. And it just wasn't true. It was amazing. Blew my mind.

Maisie: It's great to do that and just get that immediate feedback and learn that. This is why I'm so big on, yes, it's important for us to reflect and understand and explore things, and it's equally important that we're taking action and doing stuff because this could have been, and it's not like one of these is right or wrong or better, right? But this could have been something that you'd thought about, and we could have explored through coaching, and it could have been something that took a year for you to do it and then actually get that feedback and that evidence.

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So I think there is, again, it's just knowing where your tendencies are. Are you someone who hides in exploring and preparing and things? Or are you someone who's just always taking action and never reflecting? But, you know, it's that happy relationship between the two, and I'm just noticing that for you, you just did it.

Jess: And that's so interesting. And what that has immediately made me think is with my summer goal, which is too private to share on this podcast.

Maisie: Yes. We got into it on a coaching call. It's a great goal. It's a great goal.

Jess: We did. But what that has just made me think is, I wonder if I should find some practical application for that goal because I think that would speed it up in a really interesting way. So I'm going to go away and have a think about that this afternoon, I think.

Maisie: Yeah. Well, I think that's the thing. It's like explore it, run it through your checks, see what feels coherent to you.

Jess: Because you're so right. Like, yeah, I'm a bit of a mixture. Like, I'm a very cerebral person. I love to think about things, which is why I have the job that I do, right? But I'm also very, very practical and very naturally curious. So I'm also like, ooh, but what would it be like if we tried this out?

So I think I really thrive in those settings where I can immediately put it into practice, but I perhaps don't unless they're there, I might not immediately seek them out, which is what is making me think with my summer goal, maybe I need to create a few opportunities to that because they aren't as immediately obvious as they were for this goal.

Maisie: Yeah. Okay. I love that. Well, I can't wait to hear more about it in the community. So what was the point that you realised that you had achieved this goal?

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Jess: Well, again, almost straight away, which is really strange. It happened so much more quickly than I was expecting. And of course, I wanted to see how it played out through the intense work period, but even like in the first like, I remember I won't name anyone who was involved, but I went to this party, which must have been not even halfway through, maybe a third of the way through the time. And it was a birthday, and there were a lot of people from the industry there.

So it was sort of this strange mixture of like work and play at this party. And I had a lot of dear friends there, and it was a dear friend's birthday, and it was a lovely celebration. I saw this acquaintance there who was a high-powered man. And I said, how are you? And he said, "Oh, I'm really struggling. I have not been sleeping. I'm stressed. I've got, you know, 57 projects on my slate. It's really hard. How are you?" And I said, "I'm I'm feeling great. I've stopped taking emotional responsibility for people." And he went, "Oh. How?"

Maisie: Sounds great. It's like this magical, like mythical place. How do I get there?

Jess: Honestly. He was like, "How have you done that?" And I was like, I couldn't tell you. I've just been noticing. He was like, "Please, can I do that?"

And it was just really interesting noticing I have been him my whole life, and just being able to reflect on the fact that I just wasn't feeling like that. And of course, like, I'm sure there'll be stressful times in my career in the future. Of course, there will be. But I just have so much self-confidence in my ability to like weather them without making them about me, you know?

Maisie: Yeah. That's a big difference. Big difference. Well, congratulations.

Jess: Thank you. It's really, it's really interesting though, like, I do feel, I definitely feel a level of vulnerability about being like braggy, which of course I know is a product of socialisation and being someone who's

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socialised as female. And I'm so proud of this goal, and I'm so proud, so proud of myself. I really proud of myself, but I still do feel a little bit of kind of discomfort around sharing that pride, right? Because for so long we've been told, oh, no, don't be proud of yourself. Don't brag. And I hate that word. It's a horrible word, and it's a very gendered word, I think, often, don't show off. But yeah, I just wanted to name that was coming up for me.

Maisie: Well, this is good flexing of that of that muscle to do it so publicly on a podcast. I mean, who are you? Who are you?

Jess: Well, yeah, yeah, exactly. But I also like, I suppose the balance of that is that I so believe in the work that you're doing. And I so like live the positive consequences of it that I'm like, it doesn't matter that I feel a bit uncomfortable and braggy. Like, people should know about this. And that is exactly why I brought my wonderful housemate and, like all like told her about the community because I was like, "People have got to know about this. It's amazing."

Maisie: Yeah. And it's but it is the power of celebrating that is a hill that I will die on. I mean, there's numerous hills that I'm prepared to die on, but that is one of them. The power of celebrating and being seen to be celebrating, and just really experiencing that for yourself.

Jess: And it's an amazing aspect of the community. And actually, because I'm not a Facebook user, before when the community did use Facebook, I wasn't part of the like written part of the community. And so my housemate and I had a separate WhatsApp thread that was our private wins thread where we shared stuff.

Maisie: Love it. Love it.

Jess: But now that the community has moved to a different form, it's just so wonderful to be part of the celebrations that happen there and to see other people like taking that space to celebrate is like incredibly inspiring.

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Maisie: I know, I absolutely love it. I love it. Well, on that note, are there any other results that you have created so far that you would like to celebrate with us?

Jess: Yes. Yes, definitely.

Maisie: Oh, I love it. A strong yes. Go on then.

Jess: So I wrote my first play as a solo writer a couple of years ago. And I was very proud of it. It's a very personal play. And it had some lovely recognition from the Women's Prize, it was shortlisted for, and a couple of other prizes, which is lovely. And I was like, oh, well, now it will just be on. And of course, it wasn't because nothing just happens like that. And at the end of last year, I, a rare thing for me, set an external goal where I said to myself, "My play will be on in 2025." And I'm delighted to say that it is going to be on at the end of this year.

So I'm so happy about that. And that was 100% the result of like taking really concrete actions. So I met with a bunch of producers and have found this producing duo who are just the most brilliant humans. Like, they're so good and they're so talented and they give me amazing notes. And then went to a few theatres and ended up with my number one choice of theatre, who, again, have been like huge champions of the play. And I'm meeting with publishers about it next week. So I'm going to have my first thing published, which feels amazing.

Maisie: Oh my gosh.

Jess: But the self-confidence to do that and not just wait for it to happen, which is what I had been doing, but to go, I will take action and make this happen, is it's sort of, the reason I wanted to share it is that it sort of feels like the culmination of all of the work that I have been doing in the community to feel that I could do that and that I could ask for those things and have those meetings and have the confidence in my own work. 100% has come from Powerful.

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Maisie: It's so interesting. I mean, first of all, massive congratulations. That is just so, so good. Sometimes it's just, we don't realise that something is an option.

Jess: Exactly. Right. You're completely right. That's exactly what happened. And then I was like, hang on. I could just make it happen. Sorry, go on.

Maisie: No, that's exactly it. But so, well, you know by now, I'm sure, my favourite question when someone creates a result, whether it's a much-desired result, or even if it's a result that was undesired, is understanding how you created that result. Because then you can either course correct and do things differently, or you can replicate it, and you learn the you learn the lessons either way. So how did you create this result?

Jess: Well, practically speaking, I had the meetings, I sent the emails, I did all of the practical considerations, but I think more than that, I showed up in those meetings believing that the thing that I had was brilliant and deserved to happen. And I think so often, because you know, I'm I've always been a freelance artist my whole career. And I think I almost certainly have counted myself out of the room in the way that I've shown up in the room. And there's something that comes up a lot, I think, for folks in the community, and I think I definitely still do it. Like it's I don't feel that's like completely fixed.

But that just, I was showing up in the room being like, this is a great piece of work. I'm really proud of it. I will enact all of the notes that I feel are right that we discuss, but I believe this deserves to be on in 2025. And so showing up with that, like, self-confidence, it's not something I've ever done before. It's my first play was just radiating through the whole process. And so I think that was what made the real difference.

Maisie: Yeah, because there's all these things that we do, like have the meeting, send the email, have the conversation. And that's important, but it's how we do those things and what version of us is showing up in those

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experiences. And what strikes me about that is just the level of conviction that you had.

Jess: Exactly. I felt absolute conviction. And I think before and still, I do show up in some places and go, "I mean, maybe you might want to commission this play if you've got time."

Maisie: "I think you might like this, but you know, tell me what you think, and it's fine if you don't get back to me," you know.

Jess: Yeah, exactly. And I've been doing that forever. And I'm that's that's a longer disentanglement, I think. But I just so believed in the material that I was like, yeah, it's going to be on. And then it was.

Maisie: Right. So then the next question is, how did you create that level of belief and conviction?

Jess: It's a good question, and I don't know the answer to it yet. I think that's something I need to dig into because I want to bring that into other areas. Like I had a TV meeting where they asked me, "What is your dream project?" And I was like, oh, I don't know. And so I think I'm not yet, wow, this is like sort of coaching happening live on stage in this podcast, but I think it's such a good question because the answer is I don't know, and I must find out. It is imperative that I find out because I want to bring it into my other ways of showing up professionally, particularly into my like pitching meetings.

Maisie: I think it is important, and usually it's like some version of addressing unhelpful thoughts and limiting beliefs that you have about yourself and building a self-concept that matches the results that you want to create and that you have then created. It typically boils down to some version of that. But I think what's interesting is then when you do create such phenomenal results and achieve a goal like this, is the acclimatisation that then happens for this self-concept. As you said, in this level of video

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game. Now, it's like, oh, I'm here. Now what? What is this experience as this version of me going to be?

Jess: And it's so interesting, actually, comparing the external goal with the play and the internal goal of spaciousness. And the spaciousness goal was very, very conscious and very considered, like not kind of overly considered, but I was very aware of it happening, right? And the goal with the play, I was of course aware of it happening, but I didn't do the same level of like investigation and thought work that I did with the spring goal. It was more instinctive. And not like better or worse, but I'd love to kind of forensically dig into it now in my own coaching and figure out what those helpful thoughts were, because yeah, I really don't know when you asked.

Maisie: I mean, so what comes to mind there is I think that when you are working on a substantial meaningful goal, as you did for the spring in terms of experiencing this spaciousness during a really busy work season, when you're doing that, the up level that you go through just spreads into other things without you needing to do so much. And this is why I really encourage people to pick one goal and then work on that thing. Because even if you have other things that are going on, as most of us do, the effort and focus and love and attention you put on that one goal will have ripple effects on all the other things. And I think when you go through such a huge shift in your experience of yourself and your work, then you're just going to get that byproduct of, well, this is now just who I am. So perhaps less work, less effort is needed on these other things. What are your thoughts?

Jess: That really resonates, actually, because right at the beginning of my time in the membership, I remember asking, this is even pre Ask a Coach, I think, which is the most incredible resource. And I do use it, but it was a goal-setting period. And I think I had seven goals, and I was like, these are all really important. I need to do all of these seven goals. And I think I like wrote to the hello at Maisie Hill email address being like, "I've got these seven goals, like, how will I ever pick?" And brilliant Robin was like, well,

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we do really encourage you to pick one. And I was like, well, I can't pick one.

You know, I was really indignant, and it was my perfectionist tendencies like really having a field day being like, well, if you only pick one, like, the others will just like rot away and die and it will never. And it's been so interesting as a journey that singularity of vision, which is why I love an internal goal, because I found that like resonates out through everything that I do and ripples, as you say, in a way where you end up with results you never would have even imagined, right?

Maisie: Yeah. But you bring up a really good point in that when someone has multiple goals, which is great. I love it. We should have this lovely having all these goals to pick from. But when there is this, like, which one do I pick? How do I make a decision about that? It is usually wrapped up in some version of, if I don't achieve all of these things, it's going to mean that I'm a failure and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And if I don't achieve all of these things, then people are going to be mad or, you know, I'm going to be exposing myself to some kind of threat or negative feeling or experience of some kind. So that kind of fear of picking one...

Jess: But I think I've got that made me think of two things. The first is that, definitely, I was like, I have these seven goals because if I don't do all of them, I'm a failure. And I don't feel like that anymore, which is an amazing feeling. But what actually happened to me, I wonder if this resonates with anyone listening, is that I didn't do any of them because there were too many.

So I had all seven of these goals. I didn't do any of them, and I kind of, how can I put this clearly? I like trapped myself in potential. Because it's lovely to have these potential goals that, you know, they might happen. And if you have seven of them, you don't have to put the hard work in and the uncomfortable, scary work in to do them. And then you can just stay the same, which is like comfortable, but like pretty rubbish for me, actually.

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Maisie: Yeah. I think it's that thing of it's, yes, it's comfortable, but it's also so uncomfortable.

Jess: Oh, hugely.

Maisie: It's just familiar.

Jess: So you're like, so you're like, "Oh, this is fine because I know what this feels like." And I just feel so much more relaxed in myself because I now know in my body what it feels like to pick a goal, do it, and see the incredible results.

Maisie: Yeah. Well, on that note, then I also want to acknowledge that you stayed with it. Because that could have been a moment where you were like, "I had these goals, I didn't pick them, this process doesn't work for me, the membership doesn't work for me." You know, you could have left, you could have not done any of these things, but for whatever reason, you decided to stay with it.

Jess: Well, I was I was hooked on the coaching calls. I was like, I can't leave. It's too interesting. And I think that is useful actually for anyone who is considering joining or anyone who's a new member who's listening. I really did participate by like observing for a while, actually, by listening to the calls. And I got coached really early by Sade Curry, the dating coach.

Oh my god, you know what I've just realised is actually I got coached on basically my goal now, and I got the coaching and I was so rattled by the stuff that was coming up. It was great coaching, but I just wasn't ready to enact it, that I then didn't get coached for another 6 months. And it was really good to have that experience of going, go at your own pace. You don't have to jump into coaching right away if you don't want it. You can just listen. I really felt that at the beginning when I when I had that experience of picking all those goals and none of them working for me and feeling uncomfortable and unsatisfied by that. I was like, well, I think I'll always be

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in the membership because I'm always going to love listening to other people getting coached.

Maisie: Yeah. And I love coaching everyone. It's the best. The best. I'm always like, I have the best clients. And then like, anytime we do have guest coaches come in, they're always like, "Oh, you have the best clients." And I'm like, I know.

Jess: Well, it is really an amazing community. And like, also to feel, just reflecting on my experience of getting coached yesterday and feeling really, really vulnerable and just seeing the like, even just seeing in the in the people's faces who were on the call, the like expressions of kindness and generosity and support in the way they their faces looked was just so powerful to experience. Amazing.

Maisie: Great. Yeah. Being part of a community is so, so important. And we're thrilled that we get to have you as part of ours.

Jess: Oh, I just feel so lucky. It's amazing. And I think the work that you do is so profound, and like, I just think, yeah, the world is lucky to have Maisie Hill.

Maisie: I'll take it. I'll take it. Is there anything else that you want to add before we wrap up?

Jess: I suppose this slightly reflects on my relationship with joining. When I first joined the membership, I was earning a lot more money, and one of the thoughts I had before I joined was, I will never join. That is too expensive for me to spend on myself. And I could not believe how wrong I was about that. And like, just being really clear, Maisie and I did not speak about this in any way before the podcast. This is pure personal recommendation. It is the best money I spend on myself every month. Like, I am delighted to see that money leave my bank account because I'm like, the value that I get from it and the feeling of doing that investment in myself is so important as

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well, being like, "Yes, I put my money where my mouth is in terms of like supporting my own personal development and my own soul." You know?

Maisie: Yeah. We have this with every cohort that joins the membership. There are always, I don't know, at least a dozen people commenting in the community about how this is the first time they have invested in themselves and how uncomfortable it was for them to do it. But it's usually their first celebration in the community is, "I've invested in myself."

It's okay. We're kind of socialized to it's all right to spend your money on lipstick and it's all right to spend it on kids' shoes and of course, like I love putting on a bit of lipstick, but in terms of like we're socialized, it's okay to spend money on things that make you quote unquote "more attractive" to the world at large. It's okay to spend money on your kids. It's, you know. But actually, when it comes to like improving your experience of your life, the stuff that isn't as visible to other people, you know, definitely people pick up on it, but it's for all intents and purposes, we're talking about something that is internal for you.

Jess: Just the self-belief that instills in me each month when I continue that investment, sounds a strange thing to say, but it is really, really true. I'm like, "Yes, I did that for myself. Like, that's fantastic. I feel proud and glad."

Maisie: As you should. I love it. Love it. So do you know when your show is going to be happening and where? Can you promote it yet?

Jess: Yes, yeah, it's on sale, which is crazy to say. So the show is called Private View and it's going to be at the Soho Theatre, and it opens at the end of November. So I just made it into 2025. So it's on for a month at the end of November.

Maisie: Amazing. We will get the podcast team to add links to buy tickets in the show notes, so everyone can find it.

Jess: Thank you.

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Maisie: Congratulations on all of this, Jess. It's amazing. And I can't wait to see your show. I'm definitely going to be coming. And thank you for how you show up in the membership, how you get coached, and for everything you have shared today, because I, it's been such a great conversation and I'm sure really useful to people whether they're in the membership or not. So thank you.

Jess: Oh, well, thank you so much. Like, I honestly, you know, I value your teachings and what you bring so, so, so deeply. And I, it's honestly been such a like privilege to be on my favourite podcast at the risk of sounding like a fan girl, but no, I've loved this conversation, and I'm just so grateful to have access to the brilliance that you create. So thank you.

Maisie: Yeah. Great. All right. Have a fabulous rest of your day. Folks, have a great week. I will catch you next time. Have a fabulous week.

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