

Ep #240: The Key to Achieving Your Goals: Focus on the Rocks



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With Your Host

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You're listening to *The Maisie Hill Experience*. Today, we're talking about goals and rocks. 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*.

Okay, folks, I'm excited to be talking with you today because we are talking about goals and rocks. Yes, rocks is what I said. I will explain that.

But goals and rocks is this process that I've been using for years in my own life, and it's been amazing for me. And it's been just incredible to see my clients using it. They've just been continually blowing me away over the last couple of months. I mean, they always do, but our weekly win thread is just getting a bit ridiculous now, in the best of ways. And again, there's this duality here of me not being surprised because I know, and I deeply believe in what's possible for my clients.

And at the same time, I'm reading all the comments on the thread and getting goosebumps, and tearing up, and going, "Oh my God, you did it." So what exactly are goals and rocks? I know goals, that's pretty self-explanatory. But I'm going to give you some clarity about what I mean by goals in a bit. But I want to cover what rocks are first, and then we can get into the details.

So, rocks are things that must be done in order for you to reach your goal. They are the things that are essential. So you have a goal, and then the rocks are the essential things that will support you in reaching your goal. It's not complicated, it's very simple, but there are nuances.

And if you're wondering why I'm referring to them as rocks, which I don't blame you if you are, let me explain. You might have heard of this concept before, I'm not entirely sure where it first originated from. I know an author called Stephen Covey talks about it in one of his books.

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But basically the story goes that a teacher stood in front of a class, took a glass jar, filled it with rocks, and then asked the students if it was full. And they all replied yes because it wasn't possible to fit another rock in. And then the teacher fills the jar up with gravel, showing them that there was, in actual fact, more space. And then the teacher asked the same question, is it full? And the students reply yes, and the teacher proceeds to add sand to the jar, filling it up even more. So your rocks are the essential things that lead you to your goal.

But as I'm sure you know and have experience of, life happens, we all get emails, we all get asked to do stuff, we get invited to things, requests are made of us. We also have ideas, and ideas are amazing. I'm an ideas person. But they can also pull you off track if you let them.

You might start the day off with a plan in mind, but then an idea comes to you, and before you know it, the day's over, and that other thing that was really important, your rock, hasn't been done, it hasn't been taken care of. And we don't have to judge ourselves for that. It's just something that happens when you're human. We can investigate it and can, of course, correct, but we don't have to judge ourselves for it.

Another thing that happens is we just get interested, and curious, and distracted by other things. So that's what I mean by life happens. So let's return to our jar analogy, picture your glass jar, and that glass jar might represent a period of time, like a day, a month, a season, or it could represent the amount of energy you have, or your capacity to make decisions. And then you have a pile of sand, which is just the life happening stuff, the day-to-day things.

If the sand goes in first, there's no room for the gravel, and there's certainly no room for the rocks. And the rocks are what is most important. So I'm going to give you some examples just to help illustrate this. As I said, jar can be a period of time.

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So let's just say it's a day and that your goal for the day is to paint a room. And your rocks, the things that are essential in order for you to meet your goal, are to pick a colour, prepare the room, and then paint it. Straightforward.

Now, where I live, there's literally a shop at the end of my road that sells paint and decorating supplies. So it would be very quick and easy for me to get some paint samples, bring them straight back home, paint them on to see what they look like, make a decision. That would be rock one just ticked off straightaway. But I could think about that bit of work that could do with getting done. And all of a sudden, instead of going down to the shop, it's an hour later and I haven't even made it out of the house.

And it's also likely living in a small town like Margate that I might just in that two-minute walk, I could bump into someone that I know and end up in a conversation with someone, and that would just take up some time, maybe not much in the grand scheme of things. And at this point, I might be thinking, well, I've got the whole day, what's the harm? So I have a lovely chat with them and then I'm on my way. Then I get the samples, but maybe it's later than I thought it would be already. And as I'm on my way back to the house, I start to think about, I could maybe do with a bit of coffee.

So I pop into the café that's right there, get one, again, telling myself it's just a few minutes, so no big deal. Then I get home, put the samples on the wall, and whilst they're drying, I check my emails and just get pulled into the screen. And before you know it, multiple tabs are open, I'm doing work instead of making a decision about the paint, and buying it, and prepping the room. All the other things that needed to happen in order to achieve the goal of a painted room.

And that could go on for some time, but hopefully I have faith that I would catch myself in this and I would make a decision and go and buy the paint. Come back, start prepping the room, a bit behind schedule, but it's still doable at this point. But then, as I'm moving furniture, let's pretend that I find a notebook that I thought I'd lost. Doesn't this always happen when

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you're moving furniture around? There's that thing. And in my excitement and maybe some relief that I've found this notebook, I get distracted by what's in it.

So I sit down, and I start flicking and reading, and then it just takes me longer to get around to my second rock of preparing the room. Then I realise it's lunchtime already, I need to eat, and then that's when, if you've been in a situation like this, it might be familiar to you, that you start to tell yourself that it's not actually possible to achieve the goal in the timeline that you had planned. And so in that situation, you might just resign yourself to the fact that it's not going to get done. Although it's not actually a fact, it's just a story you're telling yourself, but you will tell yourself that it's a fact.

So then what happens is we start to negotiate our timeline, and with me painting the room, I might just decide, well, I can extend the timeline. Notice how when you do that, that is a decision that you're making. And if you decide that, it doesn't have to be a problem, especially if you're making an intentional decision about it, which some of my clients have done. But that's not what we're talking about. This is letting the sand and the gravel get in the way of your rocks.

So now I'd be like, well, it's the afternoon already, I probably won't be able to do two coats now, I'll make do with one, and then I just keep negotiating with my goal and the timeline instead of just making it happen. And I might just put off the painting to another day because I'm a morning person and the light's better in the morning, so I'll be able to see the paint I'm putting on the wall better, so it just makes more sense to just put it off to tomorrow. Do you see how easy it is to find thoughts that just support your decision? Very easily done, they're also known as excuses.

But pay attention to how it feels in your body, be onto yourself about why you are doing this. As I said, it can be intentional, it can be a good supportive decision, but you just want to know what decisions you're making, why you're making them, what thoughts are they coming from, and do you like them. Because life is always going to be happening. There's

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always going to be a pile of sand to deal with. This is about training your brain to focus on the rocks, and you might start off being very intentional and focused on your rocks.

And then you'll look over at some sand or gravel, over to the side, and get distracted for minutes or hours, or days, or months, or years. And then you bring your focus back to your rocks. And as I said, you can be intentional about not doing things.

When I think back to writing my books, I just didn't have the mental capacity to be making decisions about our house, even though it would have been great to sort out a room or two, we just didn't have – well, I didn't have the mental capacity, I'm sure Paul didn't either, to be making decisions about things like that.

So in that scenario, the jar was my ability and capacity to make decisions. But at the time, my goal was the book, and my rocks were to come up with the way to explain things, to type them out and then to edit and refine things. And all of that required me to be making constant decisions, and being clear about this with myself meant that I had less decisions to actually be making day to day because I was like, "Well, this is what I'm doing, I'm committed to this, I'm making all these decisions over here. I'm just not available to make decisions in these other places."

And if you're wondering why all the decorating stuff, it's because we are finally getting around to doing some work on our house, that's my goal and my rocks that I'm personally working on right now. So this is why it's so helpful to set a goal and decide what your rocks are. And I'm going to give you some examples from my community in a minute, just to give you a broader sense of what goals and rocks can look like. But first, I want to talk about goals.

So I've spoken about this quite a bit on the podcast, but I want to return to the topic here because lately I've been seeing what I would describe as anti-goal chat on the internet and on social media. And I'm definitely

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onboard with that when we're talking about goals in the way that they're traditionally spoken about.

But I have a different approach to goals, and I'm going to expand on that in a moment. But typically, when people talk about goals, there's this forceful energy to it. And the approach is very much pursue this goal at all costs, sacrifice your health and life in order to do it.

And if you've been listening to my podcast for a while or if you're familiar with my work in any way, then you'll know that's not my style at all. So that is one aspect of traditional goal setting that I don't like. And the other aspect is when we attach our worth to our goals. And if you do that, then not meeting a goal will feel like the pits because you'll make it mean things about you as a person. And you'll just always be setting and pursuing goals from this unkind place because you're always trying to prove something to yourself and to others.

So that side of things, yes, I agree with, this isn't helpful or a kind way to treat yourself. It's very understandable if you find yourself doing this or if you've done it in the past. And in case you're wondering, I have been that person. But there's another way, thankfully, and I covered how to set goals in a previous episode that I did, episode 56. So you can hear all about the process in that particular episode. But to give you a quick summary, it's all about setting goals that are for you rather than using goals against yourself.

And that means that the goal shouldn't come from you judging yourself negatively. Don't create a goal from not enough-ness, it's never going to feel good. And don't create a goal that's a perfectionist fantasy of what you think your life will be like when you get there, when you meet the goal. Because if you do this, you'll be so disappointed because it's not going to be better than where you are now. You'll have a different set of results.

You will have created the result that you want, but your life is still going to be 50/50, it's just a different set of 50/50. Half the time it will suck, half the time it will be great. Either way, you still have your brain, there's no getting

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away from the human experience. Now, I want to finish up this episode with really inspiring you with some examples of goals and rocks from my community.

So the first goal that I'm going to use as an example, I just love. I love all of them, they're all amazing. But this person's goal was to love myself when I'm snappy in my autumn and accept that I'm lovable no matter how I show up in the world. I love this goal. I have a feeling you all will, too.

I actually coached this person during the Spring Forwards workshop and suggested that they have this as a goal rather than trying not to be snappy, which is, I think, what their original goal was. Because often when we're irritable and feeling emotions, and that comes through in our behaviour, we can be very judgmental of ourselves and experience a lot of shame. And if you can love yourself even when you're snapping at your kids and being 'horrible', then you'll completely change your relationship with yourself.

And then how you are around others will also change, but can you see how different this is compared to if you were to judge yourself harshly for your behaviour and try to change from that place? This is what I mean by setting a goal that's, one that's for you, and not rooted in you not being good enough. So this person's rocks, their three essentials were to journal and self-coach, to love, trust and forgive themselves in public, which they have been doing within the community and to ask for help. What a cool goal and what amazing rocks.

Another person's goal was to have a better relationship with themselves and feel more comfortable in their body. So their rocks were to find something nice to say about themselves every day, which they could agree with, to celebrate something about themselves every day and to process emotions rather than buffer with food. So buffering is a term that we use in our community to describe when we are engaging in behaviours in order to avoid feeling our emotions.

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So you can buffer with food, with alcohol, scrolling on social media, yoga, online shopping, working, just about anything. And it's not that any of these behaviours are bad because they're not, but when we buffer, we're trying to squash our emotions down, and that's just like trying to push a beachball under water. The harder you push down, the more it's going to fly out of the water and whack you in the face. So a lot of what we do is about equipping you so that you feel able to feel your emotions in a way that feels safe and doable to you. And that's different from feeling great, by the way.

Because when you can feel your emotions, you can process them. And then there isn't this huge build-up that leads to a stress response or several and internal or external outbursts, or just feeling very overwhelmed by how you feel. Someone else said that theirs was to come home to themselves, that was their goal. And their rocks were to feel more pleasure, to rest and to have compassion for themselves.

Another client said, "My goal is to finish writing my thesis whilst taking exquisite care of myself and maintaining robust mental health." And their three rocks were to self-coach around receiving criticism, and comments, and feedback, to rest and relax and to play. And they gave some specific examples of what each of those things would look like. Aren't these just amazing? I love all of them. This whole thread is gold. I want to read all of them out.

I'm trying to pull out the ones that will give you a good idea of goals that are for you, as well as what rocks can be, what they might look like. And I think you can already see how different this is to how the vast majority of conversations about goals generally are. So let's do a couple more.

Alright, this goal is to create more space for creative outlets. And their rocks are to prioritise doing instead of worrying about what's right, to focus on playfulness and making sure that they have fun whilst exploring their ideas and to self-coach when their brain will want to argue that they should be doing something more useful.

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And this final one that I'll read out is special to me because I remember coaching this person on their goal, and the goal is to be okay with getting things wrong. And I can't remember what their original rocks were, but when they shared them in the workshop, I was just like, "That sounds like a list of ways to avoid getting things wrong rather than embracing getting things wrong." So they amended the list to be taking risks, getting things wrong and not shaming themselves. That's so good. I just love this goal and these rocks.

And of course, there's nuance in this because we can debate what getting things wrong actually is and if that's true. But that wasn't the point of their goal. And there are just so many other amazing goals and rocks in this thread, from feeling confident in a new work role, reducing the level of period pain, increasing energy levels, to moving house and enjoying the results that have already been created over the past six months. I love that. Goals can include enjoying and celebrating what you've already created and achieved. It's so, so good.

And I am just so proud of everyone for all the ways in which you have embraced goals and rocks. It's such a privilege to witness your journey. And I just can't believe that coaching you is my job. I can't believe that creating this podcast for all of you who listen is my job. I just have the best job in the world. So this is a bit of a congratulations to all of my clients and to all of you if you're a listener to the podcast, wherever you are with your goals.

I just hope that this has been such an inspiring episode for you to listen to. It's been really inspiring for me to just be reviewing everyone's goals and rocks in the community, and also seeing the huge progress, the first steps people have taken, the giant leaps that you have all taken. It's so inspiring for me. And you're just all the best.

Okay, folks, have a cracking week, and I will catch you next time.

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