

Ep #247: Goal Setting and The Long Game of Change



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With Your Host

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This is episode 247, and today we're talking about the long game of change. So your most important goals won't be resolved in a week. They're not quick hits of progress or novel new things all the time. These are goals that need stamina and for you to stick with them long enough that they actually reshape who you are.

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*.

Hello, folks. Welcome back to the podcast. Last night, we had our seasonal workshop inside the membership. So this is where everyone is invited to set their goals for the next 3 months. We do a lot of work on setting and achieving goals inside the membership. It's something I believe in for all sorts of reasons, and I just love getting to do goal coaching. So anytime that we do something that is goal-related in the membership at the start of each season, I usually like to record a podcast that accompanies that work and also encourages those of you who aren't in the membership yet to take part in goal setting.

And this time, I really want to encourage you to stretch and expand into longer-term goals. The ones that aren't just about what you can do this week or this month, but the ones that require something of you over months and years. Because although goals can happen faster than you think, I've talked about that in other episodes. It's important to know that is possible, that things can happen quickly. It's always really fun to hear from those of you who are like, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe that this big thing happened so quickly." And we see it in our members all the time as well. So goals can happen quickly.

But some goals won't be resolved quickly. They're meant to take time to be lived with and wrestled with because in doing so, you not only achieve the goal through doing the necessary work for them, but you also expand your identity and your sense of self. And those are the ones that I'm talking about today.

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So as you're listening, I want you to ask yourself, what's a goal that's big enough, meaningful enough that it will take something of you to create? Not just in terms of effort and stamina and things like that, but also patience, discipline, how you think of yourself, how you think about what's possible for you. A chunky enough goal that it necessitates you becoming a new version of yourself. That's the kind of thing I want you to think about today. Come up with a goal that is going to take care of all of those things.

But the thing is, we do resist the long game because it doesn't give us that dopamine hit of quick results, and we are very used to things that involve speed. Fast fixes and hacks and overnight success. Overnight successes, by the way, are rarely actually overnight. I could say that my first book, *Period Power*, was an overnight success. It was my first book. It did well very quickly, etc, etc. But when I describe it that way, that dismisses all of the work that went into researching, writing it, editing it, not to mention the 15 or so years of being in practice and actually treating people, all the training, my degree, studying my craft, researching, all the investments I made, the workshops, the courses that I taught before I got to writing the book. So, although it was the pinnacle of success in that arc of my life, it took 15 plus years to get there.

And during those 15 years, there were many layers of myself that were built along the way. But what happens is we have this tendency to collapse years of grafting into a sound bite, which is why you can then end up wondering why your own journey feels like it's taking too long. And it's not. You're just not giving the process the dignity that it deserves because long game goals are slow burns. They don't deliver immediate satisfaction in terms of completing it and having that big reward of being proud of yourself and delighted with yourself. Which means that instead, you're left sitting in the discomfort of doing the work before you have proof that it's paying off yet.

Now, I will say this is why I am such a big fan of celebrating hard and celebrating all your success along the way, because there is a way that you

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can give your brain that reward that then helps with motivation and reconnecting to your goals in order to achieve the long-term one.

So we are wired to prefer immediate results, and that's delayed discounting, where your brain values something that comes today far more than something that is of equal value or more likely greater value that is going to come in a year or in 10 years' time. So when you set a long-term goal, part of the discomfort is your brain being like, "Well, this isn't going to be worth it. Let's just do this short-term thing that's going to feel good instead." Right? And there's a time where that might feel like a really appropriate choice for you to make, but that's not what I'm talking about today.

And it's not telling you that this won't be worth it because it isn't worth it. It's just that your brain is biased towards the short term. And if you don't know that's what's happening, you'll interpret the feelings that come up because of how you're thinking about it as a sign not to do it, when really it's just biology doing its thing.

So the work here is building delay tolerance, right? Teaching yourself to stay in the discomfort of it when it hasn't happened yet, and just to keep showing up anyway. Because when you can increase your capacity for delayed rewards, you'll dramatically increase the range of results that are available to you. So most people only ever achieve short-term goals because they can't sit with how slow it feels and how far away it feels. But the things that transform your life aren't going to be achieved in a few weeks. They exist on the other side of that gap.

And just because you think something is impossible, it doesn't mean that it is, okay? And I think the most rewarding things I've ever done are the ones that part of me at least has said that's not going to be possible. But you know, then it's just fun getting to disprove that.

So when you practice delay tolerance, your discipline will become lighter, right? Because you're not white knuckling your way through it or criticising yourself for the particular phase of that goal that you're at. You'll be building

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the muscle of, "I can wait for the rewards, and I can keep going whilst I wait. They're totally going to be worth it." So that's what stops you from needing constant novelty all the time. I'm speaking to those of you who are always tempted to change your goals and come up with new things that are interesting. And it helps you to stay with something long enough for it to bear fruit.

So the long game requires stamina. It requires a different rhythm of discipline. And discipline here doesn't mean pushing yourself in brutal ways. It just means choosing again and again, right? Discipline is the act of recommitting. But do you know what you're actually recommitting to? So most people think that they're recommitting to the outcome, but that's not what this is about. You're recommitting to a process and to the person you're becoming along the way.

So the outcome, the result, actually becomes a byproduct. Even though it's directing you and it's informing where you're going and how you're getting there, if you're only recommitting to that shiny finish line, you will quit when it feels far away because you're putting all of the emphasis on that finish line. But if you recommit to the work, to the skills that you're creating and building along the way, and the identity shift that you're going through as you're doing that, you'll be winning every single day. You'll be winning every week, even when the final result is still in progress.

So this is why you need to be sold on your goal in the first place. This is why when you set your goal and you're feeling hyped about it and all excited and motivated, it's important for you to write down all the reasons why this goal matters and why you must make it happen. Because you're going to need to come back to that list during those times when you feel defeated, when you lose hope, when you're frustrated by yourself and why you've set this goal in the first place, when you're distracted by something else that's new and shiny and when you just rather not be doing the things that need to be done. So when you set your goal, write down your list of why this goal matters, why you must make this goal happen. Because that is going to fuel you throughout the process.

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Because the long game asks very specific things of us. It asks us to be strategic, to be thinking several steps ahead, not just about in this moment and what's going on today. And that's the beauty of coming up with a goal, a long-term goal that requires you to expand into something. You also have to use intensity wisely.

So although I've said that long-term goals are like a slow burn, they're also going to have bursts of focus and sprints, like sprinting, like picking a week or two, something that kind of timeline to really make great progress. That's something I did a lot when I would be writing my books. Like I would always be writing most days, but then I would pick like a week-long period, 2 weeks, sometimes 3, and use those as sprints to just really go for it. And that's where I would be expanding my capacity for how much writing I could do, expanding my identity as an author, as an expert, just like really going for it.

So that's what I mean by using intensity wisely, knowing when it's like a slow burn and just consistently showing up for something, and then when you're just going to go in with more intensity.

And the long game also asks you to follow through when it's boring, when it's repetitive, when you'd just rather not. So this is the necessary work where the greatest transformation can happen. It's not in those big, joyous breakthroughs; it's in those moments, weeks, maybe even months where you just keep showing up, and it's probably not going to feel great, but that's okay.

So when I was rebuilding the membership, that was a long game, and I thought it would take 4 to 6 months. It took 18 months in the end. And that was also without the usual ability to hyperfocus that I've relied on for years in order to do big projects of various kinds. And it was really important to me to do it. But it didn't feel exciting most of the time. I mean, if we're relying on excitement for long-term goals, we're not going to get very far. This is the kind of work that's slow but really necessary, and it really mattered to me. And that's the thing about long-term goals. They're less

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about the adrenaline of a quick win and more about the quiet strength of staying in it.

And when you stay in it, something subtle but really powerful happens. Your body learns that frustration and uncertainty and boredom and doubt don't mean stop. They mean keep going because you train yourself to tolerate that discomfort instead of escaping it. That is how you build emotional fitness and create resilience. And when you stay in it, then of course you're building evidence that you can do this. And that evidence rewires your sense of self because you're going to stop being the person who never follows through, who never finishes anything, and whatever else your brain likes to offer you during these moments, and you become the person who can.

And that identity shift is far more valuable than the timeline of how long something takes. Right? The goal matters, but the new self that you become in pursuit of it is what is going to stay with you for the rest of your life.

Oh, I get so excited talking about goals. And also, all of these emotions that we're talking about, they are fuel in the long game. You can use frustration and anger, and irritation. Most of us try and push them down or just like get rid of them somehow. But those emotions can be used to fuel persistence.

So think about a time when you were feeling fed up. Maybe fed up with being overlooked, fed up with procrastination, fed up with something that's going on in 1 or more of your relationships, fed up with a pattern that you've just been repeating for a long time. That fed-up energy can push you further than excitement ever will. So excitement can get you started. It's often there in the beginning. But frustration can keep you in motion when it paves the way to other emotions like determination, resolve, and commitment, and connection will carry you through.

Connection and commitment are the ones that I lean into the most because during those times when I was rebuilding the membership, when I was feeling frustrated with stuff or a bit dismayed with how long it was taking me

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to do certain things, I would just come into connection and think about the members. I would think about people. I would go into the community and like read things. I would just think about someone that I had coached, and I would think about that person, and then I would think about all the people who haven't joined the membership yet and how I know I can help them. And coming into connection with all of you is how I got it done.

So you can think about what emotions help you when you're in the long game with something, okay? Because you certainly don't need to feel happy every step of the way. I really recommend dropping that expectation of yourself. It's unrealistic and unhelpful, and it's going to hold you back. Okay?

So just work with your feelings rather than being afraid of them, so that you can use them in really powerful ways because the long game isn't about feeling motivated all the time. It's about using whatever's already alive in you, even the uncomfortable stuff, and working with it so that it moves you forward.

Another thing I want to say about the long game is that you can't play it if you're trying to do everything. The long game requires you to do some pruning, which is very apt given that this is the start of autumn. And one of the gardening jobs for autumn is pruning. So what pruning do you need to do? Right? That might mean cutting out distractions, saying no, walking away from things that take up your capacity, even when they're really tempting, and you love doing them. But sometimes you might choose not to do them in service of the long game. Other times, you'll choose to do them because they're also important in life. But it's being able to discern. I spoke about that last week.

Playing the long game involves being selective. So, in terms of our gardening analogy, if you don't prune, everything grows wild. But things won't necessarily thrive. Things will just like the weeds will take over. Ask me how I know. I feel like every time I do an episode where I mention gardening, I'm reminded that we really could do with tending to our actual garden.

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So the long game needs you to cut back so that what matters can actually take root and grow. And sometimes the thing that you need to prune is an old identity. The version of you who always people-pleased, for example, who always rushed and pushed for results, who needed things to be easy in order to keep going. The version of you who doesn't believe that you can do this, right? That version of you, that identity, is going to struggle to carry a long game. So you're going to have to let them go. How fabulous. And that old identity will hold you back way more than like a distraction would. But this is how you create space for your next self to emerge.

So here's what I want you to think about this week. Where are you expecting instant results when you could be playing the long game instead? What's one medium or long-term goal that you could commit to for the next, let's say 6 months to 2 years? Which emotions have you been suppressing that could actually fuel you forward if you were able to work with them? And what do you need to prune so that you can actually focus on the long game?

And this is the exact work that we practice and get down to inside my membership, Powerful, because we set seasonal goals. We build stamina. We stay with goals long enough for them to change us, and we celebrate hard along the way. So if you're done, you're ready to be done with quick fixes that don't stick, and you want to play the long game, come and join us. We have a lot of fun doing this work.

All right, folks. That is it for today. I will catch you next week.

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