

Ep #255: Resourcefulness & Self-Reliance: When to Figure It Out Yourself



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With Your Host

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This is episode 255, and today we're talking about what it really means to be resourceful and what happens when we lean too hard on others instead of ourselves. This is part two in our three-part series on independence and dependence.

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

Alright, folks, welcome back for episode two of this three-part series. If you haven't listened to the first episode yet, that doesn't actually matter. You can go back and listen to it at another time. Just make sure you come back to it and catch all three episodes.

Okay, let's start by talking about resourcefulness because it's really important, and you're definitely going to hear from me about why I think it's so important. I might get a bit ranty today, just to prepare you.

So, resourcefulness is adaptability and creativity in the face of difficulty. It thrives in scarcity. So when there's a lack of time, lack of options, lack of money, resourceful people are able to stretch what they have and find quick and clever ways to overcome obstacles. So being resourceful is clearly a great skill to have. So is self-reliance. So self-reliance requires you to accept yourself. You have a sense of self-worth and self-confidence to be able to make decisions and to trust yourself. And there's nothing wrong with turning to others for help or for collaboration. We're going to get more into that next week because both of those things are wonderful, but it's important to be aware of when relying on others comes at the expense of building competence and self-confidence.

So these are qualities that clearly I really value in myself and in others for all sorts of reasons. And that then informs the standards that I have for myself and for others, both in my personal life and in my professional life. For instance, I'll give you some behind-the-scenes details. I only hire

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people who are resourceful and able to figure things out for themselves. And that is embedded into our hiring process. So I don't want to give too many details away. I don't want to alert you to too many things, but there's something very simple that we do in every application process, and it's this tiny, very simple thing. And when I first told Bek, who is my director of operations, about it, she was like, "I really don't think we need to do that," which cracked me up purely because as someone who is very resourceful, she could not imagine anyone doing this thing.

And I said to her, "Let's just leave it in. It's a good way of filtering people out because we're always blessed to get loads of amazing applications, and we just need some quick ways of filtering people out." And sure enough, this thing tripped some people up. And it just immediately lets us know who is going to find it hard to work in the role because the work that we do requires initiative and problem-solving. So that's what resourcefulness looks like: not waiting for someone else to hand you the next step and instead engaging your brain and giving things a go first. And then even when you do need to ask for help, which we all do, but resourcefulness ensures that you take responsibility for your part of the process of asking for help.

So before you ask for help, you orient yourself and think about what is the actual problem that's going on. Like, get really clear on that. Save someone else the legwork of trying to figure out what on earth you're actually saying. Think about what you could try or what you've already tried. Share that with them. Think about what information you need in order to move forwards, right? It's these things that build your own competence and confidence because then when you figure things out, even if you do that imperfectly, which is also going to happen, you prove to yourself that you can do these things. And that really matters. And then when you're asking for help from other people, you're doing so in a very intentional way that is effective, it's efficient, and it's also respectful of your time and energy and the other person's time and energy as well.

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So I'm going to talk about the problems we can encounter in a moment, but let's start with why they matter. Imagine you encounter an issue and you're able to rely on yourself to figure it out, to use your problem-solving skills, to think and act independently, and to have confidence in yourself like that. Isn't it satisfying to do the work of getting to grips with something, wrapping your head around it, and figuring it out, sorting it out, or even improving it? I find that kind of work so enjoyable and satisfying to do. It can also be frustrating at times as well, but overall, I really love it. I love it, including the frustration of it. That's kind of part of the pleasure. Read into that what you will.

And I also have a preference for researching things. I really enjoy reading, learning, as well as taking action. I actually really struggle with verbal instructions, so clearly my preference is for typing things into Google, reading what comes up, following through on instructions, things like that. And I recognize that's not everyone's learning style. So some people prefer asking others as a way of learning, and verbal instructions might be their preference. Or it could be a means to engage in a conversation and experience connection of some kind. So I'm not saying those things don't matter. Clearly they do.

But here comes the rant. There are some things that people do that I am honestly floored by. And the most common example I can think of is when someone asks a question in an online space that Google can answer. Like, the thing that they put in and shared in an online group, they could have put into Google and got the answer immediately. And I'm not talking here about asking the person who's in your office or next to you in a room and asking them a question. I mean typing a question on your phone either as a text to someone or as a post in an online space and asking other people to do some labor on your behalf when you could have put it into Google.

Now, I do know that life existed before the internet and search engines, okay? I was actually around. I remember the first time I used a search engine. It was actually pretty hilarious. It was when I was doing religious

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studies at sixth form, which is college here in the UK from 16 to 18. And it was the first time I used a search engine. And I was doing research for an essay I was writing about Adam and Eve. And when I put Adam and Eve into the search engine, guess what came up? A whole lot of sex toys and pornography, which my teacher was mortified by. So using a computer and a search engine like that for the first time is imprinted on my brain. So I do remember that it's possible to find out these things through human interaction. And human interaction is also important, but I personally have a very low tolerance for being treated as Google. That's not my name. My brain is just very confused when I receive a text message where I'm being asked to be someone's Google.

It doesn't happen a lot. In fact, I can't even remember the last time it did happen, but I do remember a time a long time ago. This is back when I had a BlackBerry. You're getting my technological history here. And I was out and about, I think in between appointments with clients that day, and I got a message from a friend asking me something that was pretty simple, and you would be able to get that information if you had access to the internet. I can't remember what it was, but just the fact that they were asking me, I assumed that they didn't have access to the internet, but maybe they just had enough signal on their phone to be able to send a text message to me. So I looked the information up, texted it back to them. And then I just asked, "Oh, where are you? What are you up to?" And they were at home and they had internet access, which really confused me. This is very different to being resourceful, giving things a go yourself, and then if you're struggling to do that, then asking for help.

So recently I was trying to figure something out and I thought it was going to be this simple thing that I'd be able to figure out pretty intuitively or that if I encountered any issues, Google would give me all the answers I'd need and I'd sort it all out on my own. And I went through this, and you know, I pride myself on being resourceful, especially when it comes to tech-related things, and it wasn't simple, and I was really struggling. And there's only so

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much time that I'm willing to invest in something now where I'm like, actually, it's better for me to ask someone.

So I reached out to someone else with expertise in this field and said, "Look, here's the issue. Here's what I've looked up. Here's what I've tried. It's not working. Is this something you can help with? And are you available to? If it's something that it's better for us to get on a call and figure out, I'm available at these times." I just made it as easy for them to reply. And I think I also sent a screen recording of what I was dealing with should they then be able to figure it out, just to avoid all the back and forth communication and not wasting my time, but more importantly, not wasting their time.

So notice how in that example, I really saved a lot of going back and forth. And I also didn't overload them with a mega-long message. I kept it pretty straightforward. So if I'm asking you for help, even if I'm paying you for your help, I'm still going to present things in that kind of way. And there's a skill in being able to do that, but that skill doesn't get built when the first step is always to ask others or to revert to others. So here's another story of what I mean. I quite frequently get DMs from people asking me what page of my book a particular topic is on. And listen, I love that people are reading my books. I always love that. And I love that they want to find that information.

I have no idea what page anything is on. I know I'm autistic. I don't have that flavor of autism where I can remember page numbers and content. I'm not a human index. I don't even remember what I said in my books, let alone the page number. When people tag me in stories and posts on social media and I click through to them, and they've quoted me, and I'm like, I don't realize it's me. I'm just like, "Oh, that's really good. I wonder who wrote that." And then I realize they're tagging me in it because that's what I said.

There is an index at the back of all of my books. And I don't even have copies of my book at home. I've got some in my studio space, but not even all of them are there. But even if I did, I am not prepared to look at the

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index on your behalf because I assume that if you have been able to send me a DM, then you are also able to use an index. So I remain baffled as to why this happens. But if I were to read the message and drop whatever I'm doing and drive to my studio, get a copy of the book, go to the index, open Instagram back up, find the message amongst all the messages I get, find the person, tell them the page. If I did all of that, then I'm agreeing to act in this way for them. And in doing so, I'm actively encouraging them to rely on me.

So when I do all of that, I'm not only agreeing to act in this way for you, but I'm co-training you to make me responsible for the effort. And that's the complete opposite of resourcefulness. It's passive dependence. But it can come across as connection and being interested. And I don't doubt that someone feels a connection with me through my writing and is interested and all of those things. And that's fabulous. But I want you to think about where this is showing up in your life. Where are you encouraging this type of behavior with the people in your lives? And I know it's going on because I see it all the time in the coaching requests in the membership, where you are training the people in your life to rely on you.

And this is where I want to zoom out a bit because it doesn't just show up through the obvious stuff, like the DMs and the what page is this on, right? And all those mental load handoffs. For a lot of you, passive dependence shows up in the emotional domain. So emotional outsourcing is when you hand someone else the responsibility for your internal world. And instead of checking in with yourself and asking, "What do I think? What is it that I want? What feels right for me in this moment?" You scan the room or your partner's face or your boss's potential tone of voice in an email or Slack message, and use how you've perceived their reaction to decide who you're going to be. Or when you always double-check if something is okay with someone or over-apologize, or ask other people to decide things for you, or ask if something makes sense to someone, or if someone minds you doing something, right? They're all ways to try and preempt potential conflict. You're also trying to control the other person's emotional response

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so that you can feel safe. So things like an apology can often be a bid for safety to try and manage someone else's mood.

And then we've got things like waiting for permission, which is one of the most common forms of under-functioning I see. Waiting for someone to validate your idea, someone to tell you that it's a good time, someone to approve your plan or co-sign on your decisions, so that you don't have to take responsibility for what's going on emotionally for you, or you don't have to rely on yourself and be resourceful for yourself. So this is why internal resourcefulness with yourself matters because it's the skill of trusting yourself enough to take that first step and then the next one, especially when you don't know exactly how it's going to go, even when you have no idea how it's going to go. But it can go beyond not using your own resources and into wanting to be saved.

So we are socialized through fairy tales and Disney to believe in rescue. Right? There's going to be this handsome man who swoops in with his fantastic hair and muscles, and the woman is going to be finally, well, not even woman, girl. The girl is finally going to be safe only when he arrives. So cringe all you like, it's true. Those stories shape how we relate to dependence. And even now, we're told to be capable, but not too capable. Independent enough to manage, but dependent enough to still be desirable to others. So no wonder we struggle with this middle ground.

So see if the fantasy of relief coming from someone else is lingering in the background for you, or maybe it's in the foreground. And rather than you getting curious and problem-solving for yourself, are you just hoping that someone else will notice and swoop in and rescue you? If that is the case, you don't have to judge yourself for it. Okay? It's just a thing that happens. Judgment is entirely optional and it's unnecessary and unhelpful.

So we're starting to get into this conversation about how dependence is about asking for help to let others contribute to your needs, your well-being without handing them responsibility for it and expecting them to solve everything for you or to swoop in and save you. So that functional

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dependence means mutual reliance, where you can ask for support without abandoning your agency, and you can receive that care without outsourcing your power.

Because your nervous system is wired for that co-regulation. So in the same way as independence can stray into hyper-independence, which we got on to in part one of this series, dependence can also cross over into emotional outsourcing. And when it does that, it stops being connection and it becomes about other things. And that's when things like trying to control others comes in when we expect others to behave a certain way in order for us to feel okay. And something that starts out as asking for help and asking for support can end up coming from this place of lack of inner resourcefulness inside you.

And I do want to take a moment to just be clear on this. There are times when someone truly can't function without external support. That's different. It can show up in chronic illness, disability, acute mental health crises. We're not talking about those times. I'm talking about the everyday habit of handing over responsibility for your regulation, decision making, or your sense of worth. When what you could do instead is engage your own resourcefulness, but you don't. So you can lean on someone and experience the shared steadiness that comes from reciprocity. But when dependence turns into outsourced responsibility, it can become codependence or enmeshment. So let's talk about them.

Codependence is when your sense of well-being depends on how someone else feels or behaves. It's the pattern of over-functioning for others and under-functioning for yourself. When you take responsibility for the other person's moods, decisions, or comfort so that you can feel secure or safe. And so their mood becomes a lot like your weather system. If they're okay, then you're okay. If they withdraw, you feel unsafe or unloved. And that constant emotional monitoring keeps you externally focused, and you're managing them and monitoring them instead of taking care of you. And sometimes it can even look and feel like deep care, but underneath is

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the drive for safety of if I can keep you happy, I'll stay safe. There's this fawn response of seeking safety through appeasement.

And enmeshment is when boundaries blur so completely that mine and yours lose their distinction, where you absorb other people's feelings, take on their responsibilities, and vice versa until there's no clear sense of where you end and they begin, which is obviously different from closeness because closeness and connection also has space in it, whereas enmeshment doesn't. You're just so intertwined that differentiation often feels like betrayal.

So both codependency and enmeshment are forms of dysfunctional dependence, and they can even mimic intimacy, but they're really fear-based attempts to secure connection or a sense of safety. And they both erode self-trust because you stop referencing your own internal signals, your own opinion, and instead you orient around everyone else's.

So I imagine that for most of you, you will notice the places where you over-function, where you refuse help, don't ask for help, don't delegate, try to do it all yourself, and also the places where you under-function, where you wait for someone else to decide or to lead or to save you. So your mission this week, should you choose to accept it, is to notice the times and places where you go to ask for help. And just ask yourself, "What am I hoping this person will give me right now? Have I already tried to meet that need myself? And what would it look like to rely on myself first?" It's not about getting rid of the request or the need to receive help from someone else, but it's just going through this process first.

This is how we start getting into that middle ground that we're going to get into more next week because that's where we are turning next to what functional mutual dependence looks like in practice and how to build it. So be sure to listen to that next week for part three of this series. I will catch you then.

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