

Ep #256: Interdependence: How to Give and Receive Support



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With Your Host

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This is episode 256, and today is your final instalment of my three-part series on independence and dependence. And today, we are focusing on the power that flows both ways, interdependence.

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, gorgeous ones. Here we are for the final instalment of this mini-series that has been so fun to put together for you. If you haven't listened to the last two episodes, I do recommend you go back and listen to those. It doesn't matter which order you listen to them in, but I think today's episode is going to be the most useful to you when you have listened to those two, because we're going to be building on them today.

So in the first episode, we explored resourcefulness and independence, the parts of you that pride themselves on being capable, competent, and able to figure things out. And then last week, we moved on to the other end of the spectrum and talked about dependence, where it can slip into emotional outsourcing and how to recognise the moments where more internal resourcefulness is needed.

And today, we're looking at the meeting point between those two poles because, as with most things, really, we don't want to be living in the extremes, right? Neither the hyper-dependent, I'll do everything myself end, or the someone else has to carry this for me end of things. So the real work is in finding that middle place where you can hold yourself and allow others to hold you, too.

So this is interdependence, and it's where your relationships, your team dynamics, your partnerships, all get to grow up a little bit because in interdependent relationships, there is mutual support, there is shared decision-making, there are healthy boundaries, there's taking care of yourself as well as taking care of others, and shared leadership.

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So there isn't the, I can't rely on anyone else, I have to do everything myself aspect of self-sufficiency that strays into hyper-independence, where you don't share responsibilities, you don't delegate, and everything is on your shoulders, whether it is or not, that's a whole other topic. But there also isn't the lack of resourcefulness and over-reliance on others that can also involve codependency. We spoke about that last week.

So interdependence at its core isn't about merging with someone or sacrificing your autonomy, nor is it about becoming so self-reliant that you operate in your own emotional silo. It's about being deeply connected without being consumed and being deeply autonomous without going into isolation.

So this is the work of recognising that healthy relationships, whether they're personal, professional, romantic, familial, they all require fluidity and that back and forth that is so important in relationships. It's shared leadership. Like, well, I'll lead here, you lead there, right?

And it's also not, this is really important, it's also not, well, half of me and half of you. That's not what this is. It's two whole people collaborating, or two or more people, I should say.

So, I find a really helpful way to picture this is through the metaphor of the herd. We've been talking a lot in my Herd Within small group coaching program about how horses model all sorts of things to us. We've been having such great conversations in there. But they also model interdependence to us in really fantastic ways.

So in a herd, the roles of that herd are constantly shifting depending on what's happening in the environment and which horse steps into which role depending on what's happening in the environment. The same is true for human dynamics.

So one horse might take the lead when something's going on. Another one might step into, like keeping an eye out for what's going on around them

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and kind of take that responsibility for the herd. And then another herd member might offer a steady presence when another horse is worried and offer some kind of companionship to them.

So everyone is contributing to the safety and the direction of the herd. So no one horse is holding all of the responsibility, and there also aren't any horses that are completely removed from it either. And this is interdependence, right? It's a living system where power and care can circulate among the herd members, and they're shared in different ways so that each individual is supported as well as the herd overall, because that power is relational.

And humans aren't different, okay? We are the same. Interdependence means that instead of defaulting to, I've got everything, or someone else has to fix this, we learn to say, I've got me. I take responsibility for me, and I'd also like you with me in this way. Can you be there for me? So there's collaboration without anyone collapsing, and there's support without outsourcing your responsibility.

So what we're talking about here is the skill of being able to ask for input and feedback without then deferring all of your decision-making to others and doing that kind of emotional outsourcing that we've spoken about. So this is where you get to receive help and also give help without assuming that either giving help or receiving help means relinquishing your agency. And there is a deeply biological aspect to this.

That reciprocity, the back and forth of signals between two nervous systems, is part of how we create safety, right? The subtleties of facial expression, vocal tone, posture, and the presence of another person who is regulated, these are all cues that help to activate the social engagement system. We are wired for co-regulation and shared soothing, sharing of responsibilities, working together, and collaborating is a physiological need.

So when you're allowing someone else to support you, that's your neurological intelligence at play. And yes, it often does require other things

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of us to collaborate in that way. But ultimately, that helps us with our creativity, with connecting with others, and with creating outcomes that benefit ourselves and the group as a whole.

But for many of us, this is precisely where things get very uncomfortable. You might find it relatively easy to offer help, to be the strong one, and the one who's capable, who holds everything together, but it's far harder to let yourself be supported. I've spoken to quite a few other mums about this recently, and how they're always the ones to offer help, but very slow to receive offers of help and say yes to them.

And if you grew up in an environment where support maybe came with strings attached to it, or where you were shamed for needing anything, or you were the one who everyone else relied on, then asking for help or receiving help might feel quite exposing or unsafe. And it might bring up fear of being judged or rejected, or the idea that you're burdening someone else with your needs. You might also fear being disappointed.

So this is where defaulting to independence starts to come in. But on the flip side, if you've learned to outsource emotional regulation and to look to other people for reassurance and permission or validation, then you're more practised at turning outward to others than you are with turning inward and trusting yourself.

So let's get into the power of asking. This is where it becomes incredibly useful to understand the difference between a request versus a demand, and then also entitlement.

So when you make a request of someone, that is honouring yourself and them. When you make a request, it is acknowledging the other person's autonomy and the fact that they may say yes or they may say no.

Whereas a demand carries pressure. Whether it's said explicitly or it's unspoken, it's rooted in the idea that I need you to behave in a certain way so that I can be okay. And then that can be intertwined with this entitlement

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where you assume that someone else owes you something, whether it's their time, their energy, their emotional labour.

So a big difference between requests and demands is that requests bring you into relationship with someone, whereas demands often take you out of that relationship, even when they're subtle ones, because they place the responsibility for your regulation and wellbeing onto someone else's choice.

And when you can make a clean request of someone, that's when you're going to really notice that your body stays anchored, that you remain in yourself. There's often openness and curiosity because you're inviting someone in rather than trying to manage their reaction to you or control their response or manipulate them into saying yes. So this is a key skill in interdependence, that ability to express a need or a desire without collapsing into dependency or trying to control the other person.

And of course, this also involves giving support and being available to others. It's not just about you asking for help, though I know that lots of you could do with building that skill. So when we're talking about giving support and being available to others, this has actually been a really hot topic inside the Herd Within, and it's been coming up in all sorts of coaching conversations that I've been having. And because of just the collection of times that I've been speaking about this, I've really noticed how there is a very common belief that helping someone will inevitably result in you being drained, overwhelmed, or being taken advantage of.

So I just want to name that and put it out there. I might have to do a whole episode about that separately, actually. Because we have to clear this idea up, because other people can't take more than you choose to give them. Right?

If you say yes to someone and you give them a yes that is beyond your limits, that is your choice to examine, not something the other person has done to you. That's your responsibility. Of course, we want them to behave

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in appropriate ways towards you and for them to act with responsibility too, but you get to say yes, and you get to say no.

Now, when it comes to your thoughts about the situation and someone's request for help, your thoughts are also your choice and your responsibility. Someone asking for your help doesn't cause you to feel irritable or resentful, but your thoughts about that request are what cause those feelings. And those thoughts are your choice.

Now, when we talk about exhaustion and helping people, that comes far more from the thoughts that you have about supporting someone and the feelings that they create, like resentment, frustration, resistance, etc. That's where the exhaustion comes from, far more than the actual giving of support itself. Now, I do understand that some types of support, like your time, travelling to someone, like some of those practical elements, can certainly make you more tired.

But I want you to think about when someone makes a request for help or support from you, and you are able to meet that request for help from a place of connection and presence. And you create that, you create those feelings from how you're thinking, right? Then you giving them that support can actually feel energising and enjoyable, even if there are those practical elements that maybe mean you get a bit less sleep, or you drive longer than you were planning that day.

But it won't feel that way if the whole time you're helping someone, you're thinking about how you can't believe they've interrupted you, or it's unbelievable that they need help with this, and unreasonable for them to expect this of you. How dare they? Like all those kinds of thoughts. That is going to be exhausting, thinking that way.

And on that note, if someone asks you for help and you say yes to that initial request, and you help them, and then they make an additional request for more help, it still remains that what you do and don't agree to is

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your responsibility. Don't get pissy with them for a decision that was yours. I know it stings to realise this, but there's a big difference, right?

When I'm trying to get something done and Nelson or Paul, for example, ask for my help with something, if I can focus on being connected with them, then I'm able to really enjoy that moment with them. And sometimes it's a practical thing that they need help with. Sometimes it's a bid for connection with me in some way. And don't get me wrong, there are also times when I say, I'm not available for that right now. Because, as I said, healthy boundaries matter in this. We get to say yes, we get to say no. That goes both ways.

So interdependence asks us to become skilled at making clear requests of others, to give and receive support, and also to repair things when they inevitably go wrong, which they will, right? We don't need to bring perfection into this. That's an impossible standard to set for yourself and also for you to expect of anyone else. If you do that, then you're just setting yourself up for so much disappointment by expecting it to go perfectly.

So the skill here is about staying in relationship rather than retreating or attacking someone or withdrawing emotionally. And what that actually looks like in practice is being able to say, okay, I've got me, I take responsibility for me, whilst also saying, and I could use your help with this, whether that's practical support, emotional support, whatever it may be. And it's also where you can ask people for their input and their feedback without deferring all decisions to that person and kind of collapsing and abdicating your responsibility.

So this really involves collaboration, but the kind of collaboration where everyone's agency stays intact, and you receive that support without outsourcing your power. So functional interdependence really is about that mutual reliance on each other and that ability to give and receive in a way that strengthens and supports everyone involved.

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The trouble is that most of us are pretty fluent in giving, but pretty useless when it comes to asking for and receiving help. This comes up a lot in the membership on our coaching calls, and it's always really fun to coach on and really fun to see someone take the coaching and go and implement it and start asking for help and getting to experience the positive response to it.

So usually we know how to be useful, how to show up, how to hold it together, but then when it comes to depending on others, that can feel like you're being asked to walk into a burning building.

So on that note, your mission this week, should you choose to accept it, is to look at your relationships and ask yourself, where could you allow more shared power in that relationship? Where are you overdoing independence? Where are you overdoing dependence? And what would one clean request look like in this relationship or in this situation?

And remember that the other person gets to choose how they respond and what they're available for, because free will does exist. So I also want you to practice being available for their response, whatever that is.

Some other tips for you as you go about doing this, when you're about to make an ask of someone, just slow it down for a moment and check in with yourself. Make sure you're being explicit with them. Are you being clear about what it is you are asking for? Or are you asking for the thing that you think it's okay to ask for, but not the thing that you actually want to ask for?

Are you being explicit, or are you hinting and hoping that they're going to guess and ask you, Oh, would you like my help with this thing? No, don't put it on them. You ask, you be clear. Or are you being passive-aggressive about it in some way instead of just making a clear, explicit request? Is this request clean, or is it loaded? Because that clean request that I've been talking about always allows a no, whereas a loaded one is where you're going to use the yes to confirm something about your worth or your

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relationship to this person or their level of respect for you. So keep the request clean.

And then if they say no, think about what you're going to make that mean. So this is where you can see whether you're actually inviting collaboration or if you're outsourcing your reassurance. So check in on what you're going to make it mean if they say no, and also what you're going to make it mean if they say yes, because all of those are just thoughts, and we get to investigate those, and we get to interrupt the ones that aren't useful, and find some powerful, intentional thoughts that we want to replace them with.

So these questions are all going to help you recognise what's going on and where you've handed the reins over to someone else. But you can get all of the questions, remember, on the transcript for each episode through my website, maisiehill.com. If you go to the podcast section, there's a page for each episode which includes the full transcript and any links that we've recommended in the process.

So please remember as you go about doing this work that clean requests create connection with other people, whereas loaded ones create pressure and disconnect in your relationships. And the all-important interdependence that I've spoken about today comes out of clean requests.

Okay, my lovely. Please have fun making clean requests and having interdependent relationships, and exploring this. This has been a really fun series to put together. That's it for this week. I will catch you next time.

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