

Ep #263: Making the Next Time Easier



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With Your Host

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This is episode 263, *Making the Next Time Easier*, and this one is vital to your success this year.

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, I know everyone is focused on this new year and what you're going to achieve, etcetera. And that includes me. The last couple of weeks of the podcast have been focused on that. I taught at Design Your Decade. We've been talking about it in the membership. I've been thinking about it in my life. But I realised there's something that is very much part of my process at this time of year that I haven't told you about yet. And I was like, oh, we've got to focus on this for an episode before we get too carried away, and we're into 2026.

But I will say, if you are listening to this after this episode comes out and it's the summer or it's a year later or anything like that, the process I'm going to teach you is a process that you can use at several points in the year, not just in January. This can be something that you use after you do a big piece of work of some kind, after you go on holiday, after you do housing renovations, anything like that.

But right now, it is mid-January at time of recording, and I want us to go back in time to last month and examine what happened in December, specifically the holiday season, because going back to assess it is going to help guarantee your success this year. And I don't just mean in December 2026, but it will certainly include that because now is the ideal time to review the holiday season that you have just lived through, so that you can really get the gold and all the takeaway learning from it while it's still fresh in your mind and before we get swept away by the events of this year.

Because if you don't do that, what happens is that in a year's time, you'll be saying, "Oh, this happens every year, and I always forget. Why don't I do

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this instead? Every year I'm here thinking, 'Oh, that thing happened again. Why don't we do things differently?'

So, this is something I recommend doing after every holiday you take, every time you go and visit family or friends, every project you finish, anything along those lines. But the holidays are a concentrated version of disruption, travelling, social demands, obligations, work-life balance, loss of routine, which I'm going to get into. And that makes it extremely data-rich.

I love this time of year when it comes to coaching, coaching my clients in preparation for holiday season, assessing what happened, and also getting to hear about the things that my clients have recognised, because for many of my clients, the holidays are when they really recognise just how much they have grown into themselves and matured out of emotional childhood. And also, where there's perhaps still some work to be done.

But it's not just about emotional childhood and how you stick you in a room with your family, and you revert to your 13-year-old self. It's also about the practical side of things and how you negotiate, perhaps seemingly competing needs and desires of your friends, family, and colleagues. So there's a lot of relational work to be done here and old stories about obligation and responsibility, letting people down, all of which need to be examined and rewritten. So it is fertile ground for the work that I do, both in terms of how I help all of you through coaching, but also in terms of my personal work, because I've got my own stuff that comes up, too.

We don't have any family or social obligations to figure out. It is pretty straightforward for Paul and I on that front. Usually, we do have a few families over on Christmas Eve. So typically there's between 16 and 20 people over and it's great. I really love it. But Paul and I decided not to do that this year, or last year, and to just reset. So rather than it becoming something that's just routine and expected, we opted not to do it. And we just went and stayed the night with my brother and his family in London in the run-up to Christmas, and that was really great. I really liked it.

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But this year, I really recognised how this is the school holiday that I struggle with the most. This year it was only two weeks long, but there was no kids' camps on. There never is during the Christmas holidays. And most of Nelson's friends are busy with their families or visiting family, and he's an only child, so he's always keen to find someone to play with, but nobody's around.

And this coincides with when my internal go switch gets turned on. So literally the day he finished school was the day that my brain flicked on. And I was just in the zone with preparing Design Your Decade, but at the same time, I was suddenly faced with these kind of unending days that have no structure and just roll into each other. So I'm very much out of the rhythm and routine of my usual life. And I didn't know, for example, when I'd be going up to the yard to see my horse Buttons between visiting my brother, and then it being Christmas. There was actually eight days where I didn't see him. So I missed out on his company and the regulating effects of time spent with him, and also having alone time, which, as I've covered before, is really important to me. And I was ill as well.

And as I've been examining this and taking a look at it, what really stood out to me that kind of took me by surprise was that I didn't take enough responsibility for planning things out for me. And that's because for some reason, well, not for some reason, I know the reason, but when it comes to Christmas, there's a part of me that's waiting for permission from Paul, I think predominantly, not so much Nelson, but from Paul, to step away from our family time, either to work or to see Buttons or take time for myself in some way.

Isn't that interesting to notice? I was like, "Oh my gosh, I thought I'd worked through this." And lo and behold, here it is. And this is the beauty of the holiday season. You will see the places where you've made terrific progress on things and really shifted how you approach stuff. And then there will be moments just like this where you're like, "Oh my gosh, what is that? I can't believe that's still there." And then we get to coach through it and figure it out.

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The thing is, Paul is very different to me at this time of year. So this is when I get really engaged by my work. It's why I'd planned Design Your Decade to happen at this time of year, because it's when I get fired up. It's like, it's my go season all the way through into March. But Paul is the complete opposite of me. And Christmas is when he stops working and just wants us all to hang out and relax, which it's a lovely intention to have. I'm not going to say that's what happens. But when it's not Christmas time and when Nelson is doing kids' camps, I don't feel that way. And there's all sorts of reasons for that, but that's just good for me to know because then I can self-coach on it.

But it also means that knowing this, I can coach myself and also come up with a plan for next Christmas. It's no secret that I'm a big fan of protocols. My autistic brain is very process-oriented, and I think that really helps when I'm helping so many people at once in the membership or through the podcast. My brain is really primed to figure out a process that I can teach you all so that you can follow it. And maybe you'll adapt it in some way to suit yourself, but I really love giving you that foundation. That's what I love doing in terms of teaching.

But more importantly, protocols really set you up for success, and they simplify things. They remove a lot of ambiguity and reduce points of friction. And they also prevent you from having to relearn the same lessons again and again and again.

So at the simplest level, the process that I want to give you, there's three parts to it. The first part is we actually want to start off with what went really well this holiday season, or if you're looking at a project you've just completed, a period of study, a holiday you've taken, what were you really happy with? Start with what you enjoyed and what made your life easier. What felt just right, or what would you like to have more of next time?

So for me, when I look back, on Christmas Day, we went to my usual cafe that are open for a few hours in the morning. We had coffee and mince pies, which was just great because first of all, I love coffee and mince pies. That's a great breakfast. But it was also lovely to share the festive cheer

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with the crew there, and also, going there is just my usual routine. So that felt really good to me to have that structure.

Then from there, we moved around the corner to a bar that was open from 11 'til two, and our friends had organised a sing-song there. So one of them was on a keyboard with a microphone, singing Christmas carols and Christmas hits. And they had printed out booklets of all the lyrics to all the things that they were singing. And so we all had those, and we were all singing along. And I am always moved by multiple voices singing at one time. I always cry when groups of people sing together because it just really moves me. So that's whether it's a community choir or a professional group of some kind.

And by the way, if you want to listen to some seriously incredible music, check out the Bulgarian State Radio and TV Women's Choir. I think that's what they're called. I saw them at the Barbican a long time ago now, maybe 15 years ago, and one of the best performances I have ever seen. And I've seen some pretty good ones.

So this was right up my street, this community sing-along. And I will say that I am a terrible singer. But what I lack in tune and pitch, I make up for in enthusiasm. Paul was like, "You sang really loudly." It's true. I did, and I was just enjoying myself. I didn't really care how it sounded. I was just really into it. But that experience felt really meaningful to me, and it was just very Christmassy, so I would definitely want to do that again this year.

Other things to note, for one reason or another, I ended up putting our Christmas tree up in our bedroom, which is not actually where I wanted it to go, but that's how it worked out. And I loved it. I really loved it. It meant that every night I got into bed with my book, and the tree was just all lit up. The fairy lights were there in the background, and I just had my lamp on and, oh, it was just great. And I was just really happy to have that tree in the bedroom, even though that wasn't the plan. I'm not sure I could get away with it again, but it did really delight me. I think, probably, actually it delighted me so much that Paul would be up for me doing that again.

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And it was also great to just spend some time with my brother and his family, which we don't usually do at Christmas time. So I would want to do that again as well, because it was great for the kids to be all together.

So once you've looked at what you would like to repeat, then you're going to turn your attention to what you weren't keen on. And I like to do that by thinking, well, if we could go back in time and do it all again, what would you do differently? So this is where you will identify the specific friction points and the supports that were missing for you. Maybe they were just incomplete, or they were there, but there wasn't enough of them.

So for me, that's the lack of a plan that I've mentioned. So there wasn't enough plotted in, like enough structure in place for us to then plan around. So a lot of the days were started with this vagueness, and that lack of structure just doesn't suit me. I don't mind having a chilled day at home. I actually love it, but I do better when I know that's what the plan is. And I suspect Nelson prefers that too. One of his top phrases at this age is, "What's the plan today?" or, "Have we got any plans today?" So I think he's probably similar to me in that respect.

So next year, my vote is that we either go away or, if we are at home, that we book more stuff in. So, find the days when his friend's around, plan when we're going to go and visit my brother, have some family activities involved, and then I can plan stuff around that. And for me, of course, that includes deciding when I'm going to work or when I'm going to go and see Buttons and just talk with Paul and Nelson about that in the way that I do the rest of the year. The way I do things doesn't have to change just because it's Christmas. And it was only changing because it's Christmas, because of these thoughts that I had, these undercurrent thoughts that now I've brought to the surface and had a good laugh about and coached myself through.

So once you've got the things that weren't great, you're going to turn that insight into a protocol for the future. And remember, this isn't just an exercise for the festive season. I recommend doing this after trips, busy

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seasons, home renovations, any period of disruption, because this is how you stop relearning the same lessons the hard way.

So protocols do make your life a lot easier. You're really taking care of your future self when you do this because you are preventing future cognitive load by removing the need to rely on your memory, willpower, or just plain old good intentions next time. Paul and I did one of these after we had our bathroom done that we'll use when we do the next phase of building work.

And I wrote one of these years ago, I think after our first family holiday, because between being a young family and COVID happening, I can't remember what age Nelson ended up being when we took our first holiday, but I remember thinking, "Oh, there's some things that I would do differently next time." So I made a note of them, and that was the beginning of just my very simple one-page document that has become an SOP, a standard operating procedure for when we go away on holiday. And every time I come back from a trip, or when we're away on one, I just add a note to it if I think that's worth adding to the document. So it's just one page. It's not complicated, but it is incredibly useful.

And I saw this really clearly with my clients over the holiday season. So many of them used this process, some consciously, some instinctively, and the difference it made was noticeable. I have loved catching up with my clients post-holidays and talking about how their protocols supported them over the holidays. So they felt more resourced, they were less reactive, they weren't pulled into being the 13-year-old version of themselves. And it's not to say that the holidays went perfectly in all cases, but they weren't winging it and kind of getting pulled into those typical scenarios.

So when you come up with a protocol, what you're actually doing is making decisions in advance, and you're deciding what you'll do, what you won't do, what you're available for or not, as well as who you'll be and what you will feel like. So imagine the difference that will make when your family visits, or when you're visiting them.

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And the beauty of this is that when you have a protocol like this, and you're taking care of yourself, then you just get to love them. You get to love your loved ones instead of needing them to behave differently in order for you to be okay. Don't get me wrong, you can still have standards and boundaries. I'm all for that, but not in a needing to control them way. That's less useful, though, understandable.

So here's what I want to leave you with. Your mission this week, should you choose to accept it, is to revisit the holiday season you've just lived through, or if you're listening to this and you took a recent holiday or had an intense period of work, you could do it for that. Go through this process whilst it's still available to you and while you can still remember how it felt in your body and what exactly happened.

Ask yourself what you would keep, what you'd do the same, what you would adjust or drop next time, and then create one simple protocol. Don't make it complicated, right? It can just be two or three bullet points. This isn't about creating some unending flowchart of if they do X, then I do Y, and if they do this, then I'll do that, and blah blah blah. It's not a rigid thing. It's guidance that is going to set you up for success.

Those of you in Powerful, I'd love to read yours in the community, so go ahead and post them. If you're not in the membership, let me know through my social media. And have a cracking week. I'll catch you next time.

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