

Ep #269: Reflection and Action: The Yin-Yang Balance



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With Your Host

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Alright, folks, this is episode 269. I've got all sorts of stuff to dive into today. Let's do 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*.

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. Wherever you are listening from, welcome. How are you doing? I am recording this at the end of February, and today we have our evaluate and activate call inside my membership. I introduced these calls as an experiment in January of last year, and they have become a firm favourite for me and my clients in the membership. They're where we just pause, take stock, reflect on things in order to reveal your next best step. So this can be in an individual situation, with a goal that you're working on, just how the month has been for you anyway.

And sometimes I'll teach something at the beginning. And last night, as I was musing on today's call, I was just sensing into was there something that wants to be taught or if it was going to be a call where I just jumped straight into coaching. And there was something. There were actually two things that came forward. So I decided to teach one in the membership. So I'll be doing that later on today. And I thought I'd do the other one here on the podcast, the one that's kind of a longer and more in-depth concept.

And it's about understanding the importance of reflection and action through the lens of yin and yang. So my degree is in Chinese Medicine Acupuncture. And although I no longer work as a practitioner, I continue to understand the world through the theory of Chinese Medicine. Because I just find it endlessly applicable in terms of health, human behaviour and the seasons and just practicalities of our daily lives.

So if you can call to mind the yin-yang symbol. And if you haven't seen it before, I'm sure you have. It was a very '90s tattoo for people to get, but it's just a circle that is divided into two swirling sections. One is black, one is

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white and within each section is a small circle of the opposite colour. And it's a symbol that represents the concept of dualism. And it just illustrates how seemingly opposite or contrary forces are actually complementary. Everything has its opposites, but these opposites aren't in conflict with each other. They're in harmony. They balance each other out.

So they're dynamic, and the balance between them is constantly shifting, but it's always seeking that equilibrium. They're interconnected. They're interdependent. And each give rise to the other. So that presence of a small circle of the opposite colour that exists within each half, that signifies that yin and yang are not absolute. They contain the potential for the opposite within them.

So that's why we talk about how within each force, there is the seed of the other. And that just represents the interconnectedness of all things. And the potential for change from one state to another. So the best way I can think about this is day and night. Day and night are interdependent. One cannot exist without the other. And the cycle of the Earth rotating on its axis creates the succession of day and night. There's that natural rhythm and balance through the 24-hour cycle, and that reflects that yin-yang principle that all things exist as inseparable.

And they can seem like contradictory opposites, and in some ways they are, but they both need each other. And it's just like the cycle of life and death, of growth and decay. And then, as I mentioned, within that yin-yang symbol, each half contains the dot or the circle of the opposite colour, just as day and night each contain the seed of the other within them. Think about how when it's daylight, but you look up, and you can see the moon. It's literally right there; that dot is right there.

And then dawn emerges from the darkest part of night. So even in that depth of yin, of darkness, there's the seed of yang, of light beginning to grow and come through. Just as when dusk is happening, the onset of night, that's arriving, is beginning as the light of the day fades. So, within the peak of yang, yin starts to manifest and vice versa. You're getting a

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whole lesson today. So day turns into night. Night turns into day, and it's just a continuous cyclical process.

And that transformation just underscores this whole concept that all states are temporary, and that change is the only constant. And those transition points of dawn and dusk serve as the moments when yin and yang blend into each other. So that change isn't as abrupt and defined as we think it is. It's a gradual shift, where each phase brings forth the next. So even when it's high noon, the shadow still exists. Yin still exists in the shadows. And even at the darkest part of night or the darkest part of the year, the promise of dawn of that yang element is inherent.

So there's this duality with a unity, showing that each force contains the essence of the other. So there's this nuance, complexity and interwovenness of all things, is the scientific term. So as you can imagine, it's this cycle of day and night that maintains the balance in the natural world and influences the behaviour of all of us, living organisms as well as climate and ecosystems, and it's essential for life. So that idea, that harmony arises from the equilibrium of opposites.

And it's not that day or night, one of them is superior, they're both necessary. They complement each other. That's what leads to the balance. And when you look at that symbol, the yin yang symbol, the black represents yin, which is associated with darkness, the moon, passivity. And then the white represents the yang, which is associated with light and the sun and activity.

So now that you've had a mini lesson in ancient Chinese philosophy, let's look at this in terms of evaluating and taking action, of activating. So the evaluate phase is the yin aspect of the process. Yin is reflective, it's inward-looking, and it's cool. It's mirroring that process of evaluation where we take stock of our current situation and of the events that have transpired. We look at our achievements, the challenges, and we gather insights. Gathering is also a yin activity.

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So like nighttime, it's a period of rest, of reflection and preparation for what comes next. And then the activate phase is its yang counterpart. So yang is dynamic, it's outward-moving, it's warm, and it parallels the action-oriented steps that we must take after reflection. We need to have both. So activation is where we implement the insights gained during evaluation. It's where we take decisive action and move forwards. That kind of resonates with the day, period of activity growth, progress.

And like day and night, reflection in terms of evaluating and action, the activate part of these calls, they're interdependent. Just as the dawn brings in the day from the darkest part of the night, insightful reflection illuminates the path forward, decisive action. And in the same way, the actions taken and the results that they yield, provide valuable material for the next cycle of reflection. Just as night follows day, it offers a time to assimilate the activities.

Now, let's talk about our natural inclinations, because we all come into this world with a certain constitution, that's what we call it in Chinese Medicine. And it's just our own unique blend of yin and yang energies. And those energies are going to influence how we are, how we interact with the world, how we respond to our environment and how we go through different phases of our lives.

So if we take my son, for example, he has way more yang energy than I do. And yang is associated with qualities like brightness, activity, expansiveness, movement. It's that outward-moving force, the energy of daylight and action. But in contrast, yin is more about that inward focus, reflection, coolness and the nurturing quiet of the night. And I definitely have a lot of yang expression in me as well, but I'm probably more used to stillness and reflection as my go-to place. But as I said, it's not, we're one or the other, and it's going to change depending on all sorts.

But here's where it gets interesting. Well, I think it's all very interesting, to be honest with you, and I'm just loving the opportunity to talk about this. So whilst my son and I have our individual constitutions and natural tendencies, I'm more yin than he is. There are people out there who are

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more yin than me. So then I would appear more yang in comparison. So it's a gradient. It is a spectrum that we all fall on, and it depends on what we're comparing things to.

And depending on who we're with, where we are in our lives, the time of day, what's going on with our menstrual cycles, everything and everything, basically. We might find ourselves shifting along this spectrum, embodying more yin at times and more yang at others. And that fluidity is important, because it's not about being one thing or the other. It's just recognising that these energies are dynamic. They ebb and flow within us, whilst it's all ebbing and flowing around us as well.

So it's literally influenced by countless factors, our health, our mood, our thoughts, the season, our age, diet, so much more. And this doesn't mean anything definitive about who we are because it's not a label or a box to fit into. Though, depending on your constitution, you might be more prone to viewing it as something that is fixed. Very interesting. And we all just arrive in the world with a certain constitution, and that's just your starting point. You come earthside, that's your constitution.

But depending on your environment, your life experiences, diet, movement, all the things, you will either move from that place to some degree, or who you are will be kind of compounded more and more. Oh God, my brain's going off in so many different tangents. I'm going to rein myself in and stay focused on this lesson for today; bear with me. But basically, who you are is who you are. So are you someone who's more at home taking action, or are you more at home reflecting? Where would you place yourself on that scale?

It is going to vary depending on all sorts of things, but generally speaking, where would you place yourself on that spectrum? This is just good information to know. And just like the yin and the yang, we oscillate between action and reflection, depending on who you are, what your constitution is, how you go about things. But both elements are essential to the whole.

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So just as the yin and the yang symbol, that harmoniously balances black and white, our lives are most enriched when we can find that balance between the doing and the being, between taking action, moving forwards and pausing to look back, to reflect, to have some stillness.

But of course in the world that we live in, which is usually fast-paced and all about productivity. Then the yang aspect of taking action, that takes centre stage, representing that outward dynamic energy that makes things happen, that propels us forward, where we go after our goals, where we tackle our to-do lists and we bring our dreams into reality somehow. It's that force that literally it wakes us up in the morning, literally and metaphorically. I'm going to get up, I'm going to make things happen.

And of course, this taking action is crucial. We do need to do that because without that yang, then our aspirations just remain that. They're just dreams that are just untouched, unrealised; they just remain in that dream-like state. But constant action without pausing can lead to all sorts of things, including burnout and maybe disconnecting from part of yourself. And that constant activity and movement can mean little or no time for reflection or just assimilating or integrating things.

So that's where yin, that reflective and introspective energy, comes into play. So yin invites us to slow down, to turn inwards, to contemplate the path that you're on. And it's those moments of quiet reflection that you can check in with yourself and assess your direction, is this where you want to be going? Is all this action taking, getting you to the place that you want to go to, or does something need to change? And that's where we come across the insights that are necessary for meaningful action, maybe course correcting, maybe continuing as you were.

You have that sense that things are moving in the way that you want to, to the place that you want to. And it's where we can ask ourselves the hard questions and really be honest with ourselves. Is this path where I want to be? Am I acting in alignment with my values? Have I moved away from what I want to be doing, what I believe in because I've been swayed by

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other people's opinions or expectations? And we can also ask, what have I learned from my experiences here?

Would I do the same thing again, or would I do it differently? And this isn't about just doubting our actions, but just ensuring that they are deeply rooted in ourselves, our authentic selves and the long-term vision that we have. So it's more about quality over quantity, depth over breadth. So without yin, our actions might lead us far, but not necessarily in the direction we want to go. And it can become just going for the sake of going.

You might have had this experience, or you might know someone who's spoken about this, where they're just so in the doing. And it's only when they pause, usually it happens because of health issues, something forces them to stop, or they take a vacation or something. And then suddenly, in the stopping, they're like, "This isn't how I want to be living my life. This isn't actually working for me." So it's all about balance. And when I say balance, I'm not talking in absolute terms. Balance is not static; it's continually shifting.

When you think about balancing on one leg, you can literally do that now if it's safe for you to, whilst you're listening. You balance on one leg, and if you focus on being perfectly still and not moving, typically what happens is tension creeps in and the more imbalanced you become. But when you allow for some softness and some movement, you find your balance. And in your life, sometimes the balance might tip more towards action, might be more about deadlines, goals, opportunities.

And at other times, reflection might take precedence, especially during periods of transition or questioning things, uncertainty or after a significant achievement or a setback. And then we can zoom in on this and think about individual tasks, projects. Or zoom out and think about what happens for you across the space of a week or a month or a menstrual cycle, or a season of the year, a season of your life.

So when we are in that dance between yin and yang, we're getting a sense of knowing when to push forward to take action and when to pull back and

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recognising the value of both, of both reflecting and taking action. Because after a period of action, it's not only okay but it's completely necessary, in my opinion it's completely necessary to shift into a phase of reflection. But similarly, after we've reflected, we need to step back into the arena and act upon those insights.

Moving between these two energies, embracing the drive of yang when it's time to act, and then welcoming the wisdom of yin when it's time to reflect. Which is exactly why we have these calls, to reflect, to sow the seeds of what action to take next, to discover your next best step, and then go and do it. Don't just leave it in a notebook, as a valuable insight that you suddenly rediscover years down the line. So, evaluating and taking action are both necessary; both rely upon the other.

Both also contain the seed of the other, and neither phase dominates. They both complement each other, and they create this dynamic cycle. And each phase also feeds into and informs the other, just like that continuous cycle of day and night.

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