

Ep #285: Seasonal Goals and Choosing a Direction



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

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This is episode 285, our solstice podcast edition.

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*.

Welcome back to the podcast. Happy solstice. The weekend that has just gone was solstice, winter solstice for those of you in the Southern Hemisphere, summer solstice for those of us in the north. And the long-standing tradition in the membership is that at the start of each season, we set a goal for that season. So that works out to be four goals a year. And I encourage those of you not in the membership to do the same.

Now, in the membership, we have just finished the 30-day goal challenge. And this was a really condensed, intense experience. Oh, I'm going to have to talk about it another time, but I know that some of you have gone through that challenge and you're just like on a roll, you're all fired up. You've increased your capacity and you've done things you didn't know that you could do. And you've changed your relationship with discomfort and you just want to keep going with that. You're like, I know what I'm doing now. I know I've got the internal skills. Just let me at it.

But I have a feeling that some of you might also be thinking, oh my God, we just got done with these 30 days. And are we going to set another goal? Is that what we're doing? So I want to address that because this specific scenario in the membership actually highlights a larger conversation that I see happening. And this is a great opportunity to just get into that because I'm sure that those of you not in the membership are also seeing conversations about goals online. And it might all sound good in theory and be appealing to you, but you could also have life stuff happening and thinking that because of that, you shouldn't set a goal. So this episode is a direct conversation about that.

So let's start with my question to you is, why wouldn't you set a goal for yourself this season?

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Now, I have taken an educated guess about what your answers might be in response to that question. But I would really love to hear your answers, so feel free to hit me up in my DMs and let me know. Or if you're in the membership, talk about it in the community. Why wouldn't you set a goal for yourself this season?

So here are my guesses. The first one is I'm exhausted, and I need to recover before I commit to anything else. And this one is really serious because it's not that it is wrong. If you've been focused and going for it and your body is asking for something different right now, then listen to that. Likewise, if you just have health stuff happening, anything in that realm that your body needs you to take care of it, then you want to listen to that.

But here's my follow-up question. Is not having a goal actually going to give you that? So if your body's wanting rest, recovery, nourishment, strengthening, whatever you think it needs, could be all of those things, is you not setting a goal going to give you that?

I coached someone just the other day on the idea of taking a break from dating. And part of that was wanting a mental break from it. And I pointed out to my client that it's one thing to say that you're taking a break, but that doesn't mean you'll get the respite from it, because you can stop dating, but spend the whole time that you're not dating thinking about how you should be and the consequences of you not.

So that isn't a break. But the good news is that you can use thought work to take control of your mindset and ensure that you do give yourself that mental break as well.

But the other thing about not having a goal is you could drift into this season doing like a mix of everything and a lot of nothing and feel just as depleted at the end of it. Because in my experience, the absence of a goal is not what produces rest. It's what results in just drifting around. And drifting around is tiring because you're using all your resources, but they're not directed at anything. They're not helping you to do the things that matter most to you.

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I've got this concept that I talk about. You might have heard it on the podcast before, called ducking around, which comes from a story that my dad told me about a container that fell off a cargo ship in the middle of the ocean. And it contained like 30,000 rubber ducks. And ever since, those ducks have just drifted around the world, carried by the ocean's currents. They've washed up in places like Hawaii, Japan, the Arctic, and if you don't have a direction for your life, you will just bob around like the rubber ducks, just drifting and responding to others, adjusting your plans, adjusting yourself, accommodating other people and their plans, and postponing your own.

So you're going along with currents that are determined by others and how you fit into their lives, whether it's professionally or personally. So your obligations, their expectations, the requests, the most recent email, that's drift. And drift is tiring because you're using all your resources, but they're not going anywhere. They're not directed at anything.

And the thing is, rest can be your goal. Recovery can be your goal, strengthening yourself, nourishing yourself. These are all fantastic goals to have as a seasonal focus, and it is by no means an easy one. So having a goal isn't about pushing harder. It can also be about directing care towards yourself. But whatever you pick, it does mean having a clear intention about how you're going to spend this season. So more on that in a moment.

The second thought is, I don't know what I want next. I can't decide. Nothing is calling to me. This one I hear quite a lot, and I want to point out that not knowing what you want is itself something to explore rather than just waiting for knowing to land in your lap. You find out what you want by getting out there and trying things.

I was thinking about this the other day. I was reflecting on my early 20s and the stage of life where I didn't really know what I was going to do with my life. And professionally, I had no idea what I was going to do. And whilst I was living in New York, I was doing a degree in fine art at FIT. And to begin

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with, I was just working in a parrot store in the West Village whilst I was doing my degree. I know it's very random.

And then I started working in a tattoo studio in Park Slope, over in Brooklyn. Initially, as a receptionist, then I started actually apprenticing and tattooing. And then I worked in a few other studios. And yeah, I'd forgotten all about this.

One of them was in Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn. And, oh my gosh, I can just remember it was such an interesting place to work. But one day, this woman came in wanting to get someone's name tattooed on her. And my policy was that I only tattooed kids' names or, like mum and dad, that kind of stuff. Anytime someone wanted a partner's name on them, I would tell them, look, I've just seen too many people regret doing that, and I'm not going to do it. You'll have to go elsewhere.

But this woman was just so insistent about getting her name, and it was just, I was just getting like weird vibes. And it just didn't feel right. And then this guy came in and started just having a go at her, and then he started having a go at me because I wasn't going to do the tattoo of his name on her. And then gradually I got the full picture of what was going on, that he was her pimp and the tattoo was about his ownership of her.

So, yeah, just a random story, I know, but just an interesting studio to work at. So I worked there, worked at the parrot store. Then I did some bartending, then I worked for my friend's music merchandise company. Then I moved back to London because my friends had asked me to be their bar manager.

And so I did that, but I knew it wasn't my long-term plan. So I was exploring what I could do because all of those things I've just mentioned, well, the tattooing, I thought, like this could be my career. I was good at it. I didn't think I had the passion and dedication to it that you ought to have for that job. So I pulled back from that. But all the other stuff was just kind of like stop gaps, what I was able to do, the work that I could get, the things that I thought I would give a go.

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But I knew that the bar wasn't my long-term plan. So I started an RHS gardening course. That was an absolute nightmare for me. Not because of what I was learning, but just the time of the course, because the bar shut at 3 a.m. We'd leave at 4 a.m. at the earliest, and then the course started at 9 a.m. And it took me 45 minutes to get there. So I was just always late. Anyway, it wasn't great.

So then I did a one-day reflexology try-out course. Like it wasn't the full course, it was just come and learn something, give it a go, see if you want to do more. And I loved it. And my mom had trained in a range of therapies. She trained in massage, aromatherapy, reflexology, and I was living at home doing my A levels when she was training and doing her biology exams and things. I was also doing biology A-level. So we studied for our exams together, and I would ask her loads of questions about reflexology and aromatherapy and things to help her.

So I already had a bit of knowledge about it, but from there I went on to train in loads of different therapies and then acupuncture and just everything that's happened since. And that has become my career for now 20 years, I think we're at.

But I want to emphasise that where I am at now with my career and all the success that I've had has come from trying things out. It came from trying that gardening course. It came from that one-day reflexology course. And there's no way that I would have got to this point by just sitting around waiting for desire and wisdom and direction to land in my lap.

So there is a degree of needing to get out there and experiment and try things and take a few steps in a few different directions before you figure out the one that you want to go down. I think some of you can be very serious about putting pressure on yourself that you need to figure it out and you need to figure it out now. And in doing so, you cut yourself off from desire and play and experimentation, which are all key to figuring it out.

So if you don't know what you want, you also want to ask, why is that? Could you do with some exploration and experimenting? What about

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getting in touch with your desires? Or is it really that you know what you want, you're just scared of it? What would you want if wanting things felt safe? What are you not letting yourself want that you're suppressing?

So, good questions to be asking.

Now, the third one that I've come up with is, I'm worried I'm just setting myself up to fail again. I don't want to commit to something and then not do it. And I understand this, but I want to offer that the solution to a difficult history with goals is not to stop setting them. It's to get better at setting them and working with what comes up. It's not possible for you to build a better relationship with goals by avoiding them. That's not how it works. So you just got to get stuck in.

And the fourth one, I want to break from having to think about this. And that's fair, right? There's a place where that can be true and it can be useful. It's also worth noticing that a break from thinking about goals is very different from no goal. You can have a goal that doesn't require you to think hard. You can have a goal that's about pleasure, connection, ease, anything like that. A goal that gives you permission to do less rather than more. But having that as a clear intention for the season is very different from just letting the season happen to you.

I want to emphasise that if those are the things that you're desiring for yourself in your life, any kind of spaciousness, self-care, rest, that you need to set that as your goal, because otherwise you will keep putting it to the end of the list. Other things will happen. Emails will come in, emergencies will happen, things that are pressing, and you will find yourself continuing in the same vein that you have been, rather than going towards rest and nourishment and self-care.

But here's the argument that I have for a seasonal goal that I find the most compelling. I have been thinking so much about goals and my personal philosophy, from which I teach you all things. And I was talking to someone and saying, listen, here's why I think goals are important. And it's not actually about achieving them. It's about decision-making.

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So when you have a goal, every other decision gets filtered through that goal. It becomes the thing that you orient around. And that makes life considerably simpler than you might expect. And I know from all the years of coaching I've done that a lot of your cognitive capacity is taken up with all the decisions you're making day in, day out, or not making, as the case may be.

What's a priority? What's for dinner? Whether to say yes to that thing someone's asked of you, whether to take on that extra project, what to do about the family thing this weekend, whether to reply to this message like that or in a different way. All of these things require something from you, some more than others, but it all adds up. And without a clear priority, every single one of those decisions is competing on equal terms for your attention.

It's like a sound desk in a recording studio, you know, where the engineer twiddles with all the levels. Twiddles, I'm sure, is the technical term. All the knobs are just turned all the way up, and everything's registering at the same level all the time. So, somehow, one email, a very simple email, is registering in you at the same level as the substantial work project or your relationship with your parents. It's all very loud. And you start to feel like you're being pecked at, and you just want to run away and hide.

Now, you might think, well, why the fuck would I set a goal when I'm feeling that way? And it's because a goal changes that. A goal provides a filter that you can make decisions through and it's going to make things so much easier.

I'll give you some examples with some goals that I've either already done or have plans to do this year. One is doing our kitchen. So a big takeaway from doing our bathroom was that doing work on our house is the only project I can do because when we did the bathroom, I was working on the revamped Inner Odyssey course for Powerful. The Inner Odyssey is the foundational self-coaching course inside the membership. So it's got five modules where you build the internal skills from learning the self-coaching framework, the mindset framework that I teach, working with your

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emotions, your nervous system, and your cycle. So it's a really substantial piece of work.

And I ended up changing the timeline for creating and recording that course, like the whole revamp of it, because I realised that doing a chunky work project whilst doing a chunky home project on top of all my regular work does not work. So when we do the kitchen, that will be my goal. That will be my one focus and then just all the kind of regular work stuff. So I want to use my capacity for that in terms of making decisions, but also the capacity that gets taken up by things like having builders in our home and all of the other stuff that is involved.

So doing the kitchen and specifically taking care of myself whilst that's happening, that becomes the filter. And so whilst that's going on, I'll make sure that I don't have other things on my plate that involve a lot of decision-making because the kitchen project requires it. So the goal is a reminder to me as to what the priority is and the priority tells me how to decide everything else.

A goal I'm actually going to work on over the summer is to be able to hack out alone with my horse. So, hacks are when you go out riding rather than in an arena. And you just go through the countryside and on the roads, and we've built up a lot of confidence going out on hacks with others. But now I want to work on our solo hacks just him and me. So that's going to require time, focus, and repetition. So I'm going to need to work on it incrementally in order to build confidence and trust and there needs to be enough repetition and routine to do it because it's unfair to expect him to do it once a month and just be cool with it.

I also don't want to chuck him in the deep end. So we're going to start small and then each stage with it needs to become routine to the point of boring and then I'll up things from there. So that means I'm going to need to be at the yard more than I currently am. So when this is the goal, I'm going to be actively working on and requests come in or decisions need to be made about my schedule, I will run them through that filter.

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So if I say yes to this thing, how will it affect my ability to get to the yard? It will make all my decisions easier because I won't be like umming and aching over each one individually. The goal is providing a container and a framework for those decisions.

Whereas if my goal was to do a work project, then the decisions would get filtered through that instead. So in that case, being with my horse would still be important. That time is actually what makes it possible for me to do things like create a course because I just get so much out of being outside, being with him. It really helps me to regulate, it helps with my creativity and just reset myself so that then I can come back into my work, come back into my relationships in a really great way.

So, although going to see him is part of my way of supporting my work, it wouldn't be the priority. So everything else would find its place around it. So, for example, when I've been working on these big work projects in the last couple of years, I will make sure that I'm going to the yard and getting that time and getting what I need from it. But also, I will cancel a horse riding lesson, or if I'm like, I'm in this, I'm in my work, I'm focused on that right now. I just want to stay in that zone because that is my priority.

So I think those examples will give you a good idea of how having a goal, having that singular focus is going to mean that everything gets easier in terms of decisions.

So let me tell you how I think about this because I don't think all goals are the same and I don't think every season should look the same. So across a year, four seasons, we got four goals. I aim for a mix of four types. Two of them are what I'd call chunky progress goals. These are the ones that create tangible external results like writing a book, creating a course, hitting a financial target, making a career move. These are things that require sustained effort and time. When I'm doing those, I pretty much say no to every media request that comes through because although I love going on podcasts and like contributing to articles, things like that, those things do require a lot of me, and so they always come with a cost. So I'm very intentional about when I'm willing to pay that and when I'm not.

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So I have those two seasons where I do work, where I'm creating something impactful. And then I'll have one goal, one season where I work on an internal goal. This is about who you're becoming rather than what you're creating. It could be changing your relationship with yourself, building a skill that will create a foundation that you can then build on. One of mine was changing my relationship with the wind because the wind has a disregulating effect on me, but I live on the coast and it had gotten to the point where the wind was really dictating my daily life, and I decided to experiment with changing my relationship with it.

So internal goals can be something like that. They don't necessarily sound impressive from the outside, but they are frequently the most transformative, and they set you up for success with external goals. Other examples of internal goals I can give you, not jumping to conclusions. One of my clients picked this as her goal for the 30-day goal challenge, and it's been so fun to see her work through that. It could also be rewiring your inner voice.

There's a power class in the membership where I teach you how to do this, so you've got a process to deal with your inner critics. It can also be about making decisions, not people pleasing, experiencing your emotions, building the capacity to sit with uncertainty and discomfort. All of these things are great internal skills to pick as a goal. You could become someone who can receive feedback without taking it as an attack. You can see how these things would translate into so many other things and make a big difference to your life. So I typically pick one of those every year.

And then one of them, the fourth goal, so we've got two chunky work ones, one internal goal, and then one of them is what I'd call just a fun one. It can be about self-care, connection, my home life, a hobby of some kind. So a fitness goal would fall into this category. So would going out on hacks with my horse or doing the work on our house. But just because they're in the category of a fun one, it doesn't mean it's an easy one.

My clients who've picked goals like this are well aware of the internal work and relational work that's often required in order to succeed with them. I

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always remember this client who set the goal of doing a cartwheel, just one cartwheel, which on the face of it, I think a lot of people would dismiss as a goal because they're viewing goal attainment through this patriarchal industrial capitalist lens.

But that goal taught her so much about lightness. And I don't just mean in terms of lightness in the body in order to do a cartwheel. I mean her approach to it, because she'd picked a goal that was all about lightness and playfulness. But what she realised is that she wasn't being playful in her approach and in other aspects of her life. She was being very serious and strict and critical with herself. So setting that goal unlocked so many things for her. So it was way beyond actually doing a cartwheel and actually about her whole approach to life and her relationship with herself.

So it might be that working on a goal that involves spending time outside or going to the gym also means that you need to stop people-pleasing in your personal and professional relationships and create that time for yourself and experience the awkwardness that can come up when you start prioritising yourself and other people adjust to that. If you listen to episode 216 on the three phases of success, that episode of preparation, jumping, and riding away, I want you to use that framework to think about where you are right now and what this season's goal needs to be.

I'll give you a quick reminder of them. The first phase is preparation. It's where you set yourself up for success. You're clear on your direction, you're committed, and building enough momentum to get there. And then the jump that you do is like the execution. It's you taking a leap, doing the thing. And then riding away is what happens after. It's how you land, how you integrate, how you celebrate, and then set yourself up for whatever comes next. Go back and listen to that episode if you haven't. It's one of my favourites.

Some of you are in a phase of life or where you've just come out of the 30-day challenge, where you have done a substantial jump. You did the thing, you created momentum, and so the question for you might be, what

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does riding away now look like? What's the next jump you're lining up for if you are?

If you're on what I refer to in the episode as a bounce grid, where you're doing several jumps in a row in quick succession, then this season's goal could be a chunky one where you're using all that momentum that you've created already, and you want to keep that forward energy and let it carry you into the next thing.

But some of you will do that internal check with yourself and determine that you need to ride away first. So the challenge was the jump. The season ahead might be about lining things up for something new. So where you're riding away, where you're rebalancing, where you are integrating and setting yourself up for what's next. The rider who doesn't ride away from the jump properly sets up the next one badly. So if you need a season that's about integration and building the foundation for what comes next, then your goal should reflect that. But be on to yourself if this is what you actually need or if it's a way for you to hide from what you really want or need to be doing.

Maybe you could set an internal goal that supports the next chunky thing. Maybe the next big external goal requires a version of you that's more regulated, more trusting of yourself, less reactive to difficulty, then you can build that now. Do that training now. Work on the flat work, the poles on the ground, without the pressure of the jump, and know that this is what is going to make the jump possible later.

Or maybe this is a season where you're just going to take yourself out of the arena and just have fun and connection and play and rest for the things that feel great to you.

So wherever you are, my invitation is the same. Sit with the question of what this season is for, not what it should be for, not what would be the most impressive. What does this season actually need to be? But remember, no hiding. And then make that your goal. Give it a name, give yourself that direction, let it become the filter through which you make your

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decisions for the next 90 days. That's what a seasonal goal is. It is not a demand or a source of pressure or overwhelm. It is a direction.

And if you want support doing that, if you want to set this goal inside a community of amazing like-minded folks doing the same thing with coaching available throughout the whole process, then Powerful's where that happens and the link is in the show notes.

All right, folks, that is it for this week. I will see you next time.

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