

Ep #300: Relationship Skills



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

I cannot believe that I'm about to say this, but welcome to the 300th episode of the podcast. Back when I first had the idea of the podcast, I thought if I can come up with 50 ideas of things that I would talk about, I'll go ahead and start recording one. And I think in that first list, I actually came up with 100. And I cannot believe that this is now the 300th episode. So whether you've been with me from the very beginning back when it was the Period Power Podcast, or you found me very recently, welcome to episode 300.

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*.

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Okay, folks, welcome to episode 300. Over the weekend, I hosted an incredible workshop. Over 1,000 of you signed up for the relationship skills workshop. And it was such a blast. I had so much fun. The live experience going through with you was just the best. And unfortunately, the day after, I went and broke my foot. So I am recording this intro at home, but I have planned a very special episode for you today because I am sharing part of the beginning of the workshop.

Now for today's episode, you're going to get to experience some of the workshop from Saturday. I've taken some of the teaching from the beginning of the workshop and put it all together into a really helpful episode for you. If you want to hear the rest of the workshop, just head to maisiehill.com/relationships and sign up for it. You will get instant access to the full recordings and the workshop.

And of course, if you want to continue the relationships work and get coached on all things relationships, go ahead and join us in Powerful,

[The Maisie Hill Experience](https://maisiehill.com/relationships) with Maisie Hill

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

which is where you will get full access to the workshop in full, as well as everything else that the membership has to offer. You can go to maisiehill.com/relationships for that, and I will see you on the inside. But for now, enjoy this episode.

Welcome to the Relationship Skills Workshop. I am dropping a link in the chat in case you haven't picked up your workbook that accompanies our workshop. There is a fillable version that you can use on a device. There is a printable version. If you're watching the replay of this, you've got time, you can pause it and go and print it. But the most important thing is just that you've got something to write with, because this is a workshop, so there is going to be journaling time for you to work through some of the exercises. So just make sure that you have got something to write with.

It's really great, especially when you're taking part live, to be able to share and see what other people are saying because what I know, especially from having a membership, is the importance of us all being a bit vulnerable and sharing something that's going on for us because when we do that, what happens 10 times out of 10 is someone else reads it and goes, "Oh my God, they think the same way that I do. Oh, it's not just me that does that." Or, "Oh yeah, I hadn't thought about that, but that totally applies to me." There is huge value in us all sharing and taking part, and it's really fun as well.

So let's start off with you sharing in the chats. When something or someone is bothering you, what do you usually do? So what's your go-to response? Are you someone who just doesn't say anything? Do you voice it immediately? Are you a bit snappy with it? We're not judging that, by the way. We're just getting a read of the room and understanding what is your go-to response.

Okay, we've got some ruminators. We've got quite a few ruminators and defensiveness. Yep. Feeling uneasy, going quiet, rehearsing conversations with the person in my head, asking myself what I did wrong. Interesting. So interesting already just to get an idea of things. Complain immediately and be sassy. Get snappy, withdrawing, avoiding, snapping back, distancing

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

myself. Depends what my nervous system is doing. Interesting. Okay, great. Just getting the lay of the land.

So when it comes to your relationships, I now want you to think, there's these questions in the workbook as well. Think about someone that you get on well with, maybe someone at work, a friend, someone that you really like or respect, maybe you love them. I want you to share in the chat, why do you feel this way about them? So think of one person you just get on with. Why do you feel this way about them? What is it about them that you find enjoyable or endearing?

Okay, I trust them. I don't feel judged. I feel accepted and safe because they are so caring. Their way of thinking and being feel right. I know they're on my side. They make me laugh. They want the best for me. Their actions are consistent. They're authentic and honest. They're fun. We can have interesting talks for hours without noticing time. Great.

So what about someone that you're not getting on with or finding hard to love? Think about someone that fits that category. Why do you feel that way about them? What is it about them that's off-putting or you're finding challenging? They're emotionally draining. I can't tell what they're thinking. I don't understand them. Our interactions drain me. They never seem to understand me. I want them not to give me advice. They're overbearing and try to take over. I don't feel safe around them. They're mentally absent, judgmental, unreliable, clashing values. We're going to get onto that in a moment. Feel taken advantage of, because I didn't choose them and their behavior sets off the whole household's nervous system. They don't accept my borders. I think that's like a reference to boundaries. They don't see me. I'm always wary.

I want you to just notice that all of those statements that you've made, even when they feel very true to you, are thoughts. These are all thoughts that you have about people, whether it's the set of thoughts that you have about people in your life that you get on well with and that you love, or thoughts about people that really annoy you, which by the way can also be people that you love. I mean, people are just annoying. Let's just get that out of the

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

way. That is a thought, but I feel like it's a very true thought. People are annoying. I'm annoying. You are all annoying. Everyone in our lives is annoying. This is just the human experience of relationships.

But it's really important to notice the thoughts you have about people because your thoughts about them form your relationships. So now I want to take you into the foundations of today, which is all about values and connection and how we think.

So what is a relationship? It's the way in which two or more people or things are connected or the state of being connected. With relationships, things that come into relationships are early childhood experiences, positive and negative, your attachment styles, any trauma you've experienced, your stress response wiring, cultural differences, racial and gender biases and how they show up in relationships, neurodiversity, pheromones, like all of these things and more impact relationships.

But today, we are going to be focusing on the most accessible points of influence that you can work on, that we can all work on, and that can also be used to influence all the other stuff that I've mentioned. So the things we're going to focus on are mindset, emotions, and stress responses in terms of all the different patterns that we're interrupting and replacing in order to improve our relationships.

So your relationships are determined by the thoughts that you have about someone, your thoughts about your relationship with them, as well as your reaction to them, and vice versa. Because of course, as the other people are involved in the relationship too, it's not all us.

So let's talk about the power of thoughts. Your experience, as we've already demonstrated, of any of your relationships is made up of your thoughts. So that is your thoughts about them, your thoughts about what they think of you, that really comes into play. How you see yourself compared to them, whether that's better, worse, or equal. Are they superior to you? Are they inferior to you? Do you see yourselves as equals? The thoughts about how you think they should behave.

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

I noticed that even when I was coming this morning, I had planned on walking into my studio, but then I ended up asking my partner to drive me. And I was just like, "Why is he driving so slowly?" Why, of all the days, is he driving at 20 miles an hour instead of 30? So I had a set of thoughts about how I thought he should behave in that moment. We're going to talk more about that later on.

But the beliefs that you have about how relationships should go and your thoughts about what expressing yourself involves and having boundaries involves. Right? Because a lot of the time, the thoughts we have about doing those things are the things that get in the way of us actually expressing ourselves or having boundaries or having challenging conversations. So thought work is really important.

I'll give you an example of this. So this is one situation in one relationship, but how three different thoughts will influence them. So let's say a situation you're probably all very familiar with. It comes up a lot in coaching in the membership. Your friend hasn't replied to your message. That's the situation that we're dealing with. If you have a thought that that means she doesn't care about you, you might then feel hurt. And then as a result of that, you might send her a message telling her how you feel that you feel hurt. There's also other things you might do. You might not send a message and you might just stew on it and be upset. So lots of different ways to respond to that feeling.

Or you could think, I always have to chase her. Right? She never replies. You could have a set of thoughts like that. And then maybe you feel resentment because of that. And then what you do is you keep score and maybe you withdraw and stop reaching out. Versus your thought could also be, she's probably just busy. And then maybe because of that, you feel compassion, or you might just feel like quite neutral, like it's just quite straightforward. And then what you do is you stay in connection in that friendship and you just move on with your day.

Now, three different thoughts, each creating a feeling that then impact how you show up in the relationship. But I want to be very clear as I'm talking

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

about these different experiences and the different ways of thinking, not all of your thoughts have to be changed. When we go back to those previous thoughts, some of you, especially if you've been working with me for a while, might think, "Oh, a really great thought to think there is she's probably just busy." So there's the thought that you might have as a reaction to the situation, but then there's the thought that you choose to think that you bring in very intentionally.

So you might think, "Oh yeah, well it's just good to stay in that thought of she's probably just busy and you know, stay in connection and compassion and that would be a wonderful thing." Yes. And that doesn't mean that the other thoughts are a problem or that they have to be changed. It's okay to have those thoughts. It's okay to have those feelings. It's about what you want to do with them that matters.

So this isn't about always feeling calm and happy and like everything's perfectly okay in your relationships all of the time. It's about bringing all of who you are to your relationships in the way that feels appropriate for you. And sometimes that will mean expressing anger, hurt, disappointment, and all of those things.

So these thoughts that you have form your soundtracks that you have for your relationships. Each time you think a thought, that record is playing, and every time that record plays, a neural groove deepens. So we're talking about neuroplasticity and how the more you repeat a way of thinking, a way of behaving, the more that becomes embedded and becomes a more habitual or automatic response. So think about the soundtracks that are playing in your relationships. Is it time for you to change the record? Where do you want to do things differently?

Another thing to consider is does the soundtrack that you have for your relationships change dependent on your stress responses or where you are in your menstrual cycle if you have a menstrual cycle? I know I have very different soundtracks playing depending on where I am in my menstrual cycle. Right? The set of thoughts I have about my loved ones very different in the run-up to ovulation to immediately after ovulation, and certainly when

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

my period is due. So even in the same relationship between the same people, the relationship is always shifting depending on where you're at and depending on where they are at.

Someone's commenting, "especially my mum." So good to bring awareness to that. So now let's talk about values because, as you're going to see as the day goes on, your values are going to set the foundation for a lot of the other stuff that we are going to be exploring. Your values act as a filter. They shape what you notice, what bothers you, they shape how you interpret things, and they define your experience in your relationships. So when we have disagreements and conflict in relationships, they're often a result of a difference in values.

So for example, if one person values achievement and one person values balance, think about this maybe in a work situation with colleagues. If you've got one colleague who's like, "Well, we've got this goal, let's all stay late and just make this happen and be on target to know that this is done." But then you've got someone else in the team who really values balance and because of that, they protect their evenings. You can immediately see how there's potential for conflict between those two people. They're just approaching things from different values.

Another example, if you've got someone who really values collaboration and they enjoy working with others, but the other person really values autonomy and they just want to be left to do it themselves. Robyn, my lovely assistant who's here, I'm sure she can recognise that I am the autonomy person. I just want to get on and do things.

A lot of my personal work in terms of how I show up to professional relationships, in terms of how I show up to my personal relationships because let me tell you, Paul would have been agreeing with Robyn here, is about how do I honor my need, my value of autonomy, whilst also being in relationship with other people and understanding that relationships require collaboration and that the other person is bringing their values and how they approach their relationship.

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

Right, moving swiftly on. The next one, if we've got one person who values adventure and they love embracing the unknown, but then we've got the other person values security and they prefer stability. Think about if that's in a romantic relationship and you're just trying to pick somewhere to go on holiday. One person is like, "Well, I just want to go to the place we went to before where I know what it was like. I know where I'm going and what it's going to be like." versus someone who's like, "Well, no, I don't want that. I want to go somewhere I've never been before." And they're more prepared to take the risk that comes with that potential for conflict there as well.

So, I would like you to go to the exercise, the values exercise in the workbook. There is a list of values there. It's quite a long list. But I just want you to go through it, and ultimately you're going to get to the three values that you feel represent your values the most. So you could start off with selecting 10 and then reducing that down to three. And then think about where each of these values shows up in your relationships, whether that's a positive representation of them or a challenging representation of them. You can think about where these values are missing or where you would like more of them.

So for me, as I say, independence is really important. If I was in a relationship with someone where they wanted me to be with them all the time, they wanted me to run every decision through them and, like, really like that, I would bristle at that. I would find it really hard to be in a relationship with someone who didn't understand my need for independence. So as you're going through, just thinking about what is most important, what shows up in your day-to-day.

Now, I would love for you to share in the chat when, where, or with whom you feel the most connected and available for connection. The connection is really important in relationships, including the relationship you have with yourself. So where do you feel the most available for connection, or who are you with? What are you doing when you experience the most connection? I'll give you an example.

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

For me, when I have gone to see my horse and I've been outside and I've been very present with him, I feel really connected with him, but I also come home feeling really available for connection. I come home and Paul's like, "Oh my gosh, it's like a different version of you has walked in the door." I can make eye contact. I'm autistic for those of you who don't know, but that's when I'm like really up for eye contact and hugging and asking him about his day. And it's when I have the most social capacity because that can be something that I don't always have. So that's when I feel the most connected and available for connection.

On an afternoon walk with my husband and dog. My two best friends, they don't know each other. After working in the garden or allotment with the whole family, when I've been connected to myself and experienced the love and a zest for life within myself, in physical and eye contact with my partner, with no distractions or smiles. When I have a regulated nervous system, is that a cheat answer?

Well, it is part of it. You're kind of skipping ahead by a few slides, but I'll allow it. But after yoga and meditation, for instance, after exercise and movement. Yes. Mornings and afternoons in nature on the beach. Yeah, a lot of stuff here about nature. With my oldest sister and my friend living in Ireland, giving each other undivided attention and complete acceptance, knowing that we want the best for each other. What a lovely thought to have, that we want the best for each other.

After a really good concert, joy and connection and inspiration at the female-only weightlifting gym that I go to during a team workout. We all cheer each other on. We're all moving and having a good time. It's the best energy. Yes, I am loving these examples.

Just notice the common threads here: being present with another person or with an animal of some kind, being outside, doing something that tops you up, whether that's with another person or whether that's before you spend time with another person or something else. These are important to know because relationships are all about connection. So we want to understand

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

what helps you to be available for connection, what helps to bring you into a state of connection.

So we are all in search of connection. And when we're in connection, it's not always that we feel fantastic and fabulous or like mega calm. But it's where we feel all right. We feel open, flexible, hopeful, resilient, present, resourced, and resourceful. So when I talk about connection, this is very much a nervous system state where you feel safe and connected and your social as well. Now, I don't mean that you're like an extrovert and ready to be the life and soul of a party. That may be true for you, but it's just about that you're able to connect with others. That's what being social means.

So connection in relationships involves trust, authenticity, and with authenticity comes vulnerability as well, and mutual understanding as well as feeling seen, heard, and appreciated, which someone's just mentioned in the chat. When I feel listened to, that's massive.

So when we go through a stress response, that's what takes us out of connection because although connection is something that we're all searching for and wanting, even if you haven't had great experiences of it in your life or haven't had much of it, it is what we are wired towards.

But although that is true, the need to protect ourselves will always be the priority because safety always comes first. So any time our safety is threatened or feels like it's being threatened, which can certainly happen in relationships, then the need to protect yourself will always be priority. So think about that when you're experiencing connection with someone, but then they say something that feels threatening to you and maybe triggers your defensiveness. Maybe they say something that you interpret as a criticism, whether it is or not; that's just your interpretation of it. That's going to take you then potentially into a form of stress response.

Important to remember when it comes to connection: different strokes for different folks. When Paul and I, my partner, we had this conversation about how we experience connection in especially in our relationship together, that looked very different for each of us. So it comes into

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

communication, like the type of communication, like even down to whether someone prefers WhatsApp or someone prefers messaging or talking face-to-face or sending an email. So type of communication, the frequency, the length of the communication, the style of it.

Time together: how much, how often, is it planned or is it spontaneous? These are going to vary too. What about space? Time alone, autonomy, personal space, recovery time from being with other people. That's something I need a lot of.

Touch: how much, what kind, when, or if it's going to be there at all in the relationship. Sharing: how much do you share, how soon do you share it, how personal do you get, how deep do you go?

And then support. This is something that comes up so much in coaching submissions inside the membership, because often people are showing up to relationships wanting someone to listen and acknowledge and see them and hear them. But what they receive is unsolicited advice and problem-solving, and that's not necessarily what they wanted, or it can be the other way around. So that's going to depend. Advice or just listening, practical or emotional support.

When it comes to socialising, some people really prefer one-on-one, others love groups and everything in between. And then what about when it comes to conflict and feedback? Are you someone who likes to talk it out now? Do you like to process first? How do you experience connection when you're going through disagreements?

And the thing is, it is very easy to mistake differences in connection for someone not caring. Really important to be able to spot this in your relationships because how you like to connect with someone and how you experience connection with someone, they could have a completely different approach to it. So when you think, I've sent this person a 10-minute voice note and they just sent back three words. That's not necessarily that they're unwilling to connect with you. It just might be that they choose to connect differently. So we always want to appreciate that.

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

So what connection is, I came up with this, and I'm pretty happy with this description. I would say it's two people or more who can be together and still be themselves, because what connection isn't is merging. So when you merge, you're connected to them, but maybe disconnected from yourself, highly attuned to others and aware of their needs, but not aware of your own. Like you lose track of yourself in the relationship. And it could be that their moods become yours.

Whereas separation is where you're maybe connected to yourself, but disconnected from them, focused on your own needs, but closed off to theirs. And it's like the walls are up or the distance is there, so nothing gets in. So there's no vulnerability and therefore no closeness. Whereas with connection, you are connected to them and yourself. Each person gets to be independent, they get to have boundaries, there's emotional availability, and tension can exist, but you can stay connected and engaged to one another.

So share in the chat: what takes you out of connection or prevents you from experiencing it? So last time we spoke about what helps you to be available for connection or when you experience connection. Now it's about what takes you out of it.

Oh, interesting responses. Low self-esteem. Yeah, I can absolutely see how that can prevent availability for connection or take you out of it. Too much sensory input. Yes, hard agree from me on that front. I really struggle with that. Sensory overload, feeling ignored, feeling overwhelmed, having 10 tabs open in my head. Yes. For me, definitely rushing. I've really dialled down rushing in my life. It's not there. Well, it's not there most of the time. But on the times where it is there, or where I'm concerned about timekeeping, that takes me out of connection very quickly, which then makes it harder for to get everyone out the house on time.

Judgment, jumping to conclusions, shock changes, not being listened to, appreciated and allowed, tiredness, feeling like I have to prove myself, wanting people to connect my way. Yeah, that kind of insistence. Lack of confidence.

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

We always have so much fun doing these workshops. I love how you all participate. I'm dying. When someone is being really boring. Yeah, totally. Miscommunication, misunderstanding, lack of initiative from the other person. Yeah, that is a big one too. The three days before my period. Being hangry, noisy environments. Yeah, a lot of sensory stuff here. Surface-level attention. Yeah, so maybe not going to the depth where you experience connection. Physical pain. Yeah, that's an important one. Unsolicited advice.

Screens. Yes. So did you know there's this concept called biological rudeness? It's very prevalent in today's society with how present screens are, that when we are saying something to someone and they're like, "Oh, yeah, yeah." and they're just like on their screens, our response to that is like biological rudeness. I'm making a bid for connection here, and that other person just isn't responding.

So consider the difference, just to give you a really practical tip because this happens to all of us. We're on the receiving end of it, and then we're the ones who are doing it sometimes. What I try to do in my relationships is if there is something important that I need to do, I just say, "I really want to be present with you. I do just need to take care of this one thing on my phone so that then I can be available for this conversation and I can give you my full attention."

By just acknowledging, yeah, I'm doing a thing that is actually quite rude, but for whatever reason, this is important for me to do. So I'm going to do that and then I'm going to come back to the relationship. Versus if we're just chatting and I'm just like on my phone, "Oh, yeah, yeah, hmm. Yeah, okay. Uh, one sec, one sec." Very different experience. Thank you for all your shares here. They're fantastic.

So when it comes to the stress responses that I said that take us out of connection, we've got sympathetic activation. One form of that is fight, the other is flight. So when we're in fight, we are mobilised. There is a surge of energy. There can be defensiveness, there can be active aggression, arguing, snapping. I would say that other flavors of fight could also be

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

irritability, could also be overexplaining because that's kind of an arguing. Right? It's like a low-level arguing. And that shows up in relationships.

The other form of this activation is flight. So also mobilised, but it can be an urge to get away, to leave the room, to pull away from what's going on. That can also look like rushing and looking for new jobs or places to live. So in your relationships, the way you might experience flight as a stress response is that you just think, what am I doing with this person and you just start looking for places that you could live instead of living with them. Or it could be that when something's going on with your boss or a colleague, that you start looking for new jobs. So that is a version of flight.

Now again, these reactions, these stress responses aren't a problem, because sometimes it will be really appropriate for you to do those things. But it's just about what I would say is wielding them well, using them well, using them intentionally.

And then we've got freeze. So this is where we shut down, feel a bit frozen, foggy, floating, numb. You can also feel hopeless and helpless in this state, and it can also be a conservation of resources. So especially for all of you who have shared in the chat that where you experience overwhelm or where you're experience too much sensory input or you're in physical pain or you're tired, anything like that. What you might experience is that you just need to conserve your resources. So you go into some form of shutdown in order to preserve those. But that can also mean going blank when you're talking to someone else. You can just have a momentary, like, "Oh, what was I saying?" Or even just completely forget what you're arguing about. That used to happen to me when Paul and I first got together.

And then we've got the fourth F, which is fawn. So this is a blended state where we're partly frozen, but partly really activated inside. And this is what happens when we're people-pleasing. So this is please and appease, where you can have an external response, but that is different to what's going on internally for you. I would say this also involves like fake smiling and trying to manage other people's moods.

Ep #300: Relationship Skills

So they are the nervous system states, the stress responses that we want to be aware of as we're going through today and as you are returning to your relationships and working through things.

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