

Ep #301: What Autumn Teaches Us About Decay and Growth



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With Your Host

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This is episode 301, the alchemy of autumn and embracing the beauty of decay.

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*.

Hello, folks, and welcome to the podcast. So, we are transitioning seasons at the moment. By the time this episode comes out, we will officially be in autumn here in the UK. And this morning I was playing football with my son in a little park near my work studio. Well, I think football is a generous way of describing it. I prefer to call it kicking a ball around. That feels like a better representation, at least in terms of my level of effort and responsiveness to what's going on.

And there are some trees in the park, and after a while I realised that there were some conkers on the ground, and I love conkers. I love how they look and how they feel. I think in the US they're called buckeyes or something like that. They fall from the horse chestnut trees. And when the conkers start falling to the ground, I love to pick them up and I like to keep one in my pocket just to rub and to hold.

I think they're a fantastic regulating resource that's easy for us to access. And by that I mean it's something that supports my bodily experience of being me and helps me to maintain connection to myself, especially when I'm doing challenging things that are a bit of a stretch for me. It's just a regulating resource, anything that's just going to support you in doing that. So, I was showing the one that I found to Nelson, and we were talking about how shiny it was and how smooth it was and then we just got back to kicking the ball around and the day went on.

And it wasn't until much later on that I remembered something from my own childhood. So, a bit of a backstory here. I was born in London and my brother was too, but when the recession hit in the 80s, we moved out of

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London to a council house in Gloucestershire and then Hampshire, but we, as in my mum, my brother and me. My dad stayed in London because that's where the work was.

And eventually they divorced, but I spent my childhood going on lots of trains with my brother and my dad. And we even did trainspotting, which I laugh, but I think it was a great parenting strategy. If you've got two kids to occupy, a lot of the time at train stations and on trains, plus all the train journeys up to Scotland that we would do to visit each side of my family in the holidays. Because my mum was from Saint Andrews and my dad is from a fishing town in Ayrshire, south of Glasgow.

So, with all that in mind, it was a great parenting strategy. But the other reason I laugh is, talk about an early sign of autism. We had these books that you'd buy in the major London train stations. And they had lists of all of the train numbers in them and I loved crossing them off. So autistic. Anyway, we would always wait at the same spot at Farnborough Station where I grew up. My dad would come down on a Friday, meet us there after school and take us up to London to stay with him for the weekend.

And one day, I'm not entirely sure how old we were, I'm going to have to ask my dad, but we picked up some conkers whilst we were waiting for the train. And that weekend we each put some just soil from the garden into a beach bucket. Sam's was yellow, mine was pink, I think, or maybe orange. But we planted the conkers inside them and then we just left them there in, I don't know what to call this thing, it definitely wasn't a conservatory on the end of the house.

It was more like a shed or greenhouse kind of ramshackle thing that we walked into when we walked out of the back door and before we could get into the garden. Anyway, the beach buckets were just put out there and every other weekend we'd be up with my dad and we'd check on them. And I guess my dad must have been watering them or doing something. Anyway, they eventually sprouted and then they started to grow. And eventually it was time to plant them in the garden.

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Now, I'm not sure how much thought went into this, but I don't think anyone was expecting them to survive, let alone thrive. So, into the garden they went next to each other and that was that, just job done, and they grew a bit and then a bit more. And at some point they went from being these spindly little plants to having a trunk, an actual trunk from a conker, from a conker that was planted in a beach bucket. Doesn't that blow your mind? It really blows my mind. Nature is amazing.

And every summer, my dad and I would go out and look at, well, I guess, Sam's one, my brother, we did that with his too. But of course, I'm thinking about it from my experience and I'm pretty sure mine just ended up taking over. Mine was the one that went for it. So, my dad and I as the years went by, so now I think I'm in my late teens and into my 20s, and we would go out and look at it and discuss the tree's growth. We'd look at the thickness of the trunk and the spread of the branches, how high they were reaching and at some point it was as tall as the house from a conker that I planted.

So now that I've painted that picture for you, I want you to think about the seeds that you planted in your childhood and what they have become. And of course, I don't mean necessarily actual seeds, but the beliefs, the thoughts that you have about yourself and others and the world. These seeds have grown over time, shaping who you are today. And for many of us, these seeds have grown into massive trees, much like my tree, deeply rooted, and even casting long shadows over your life.

Some of these trees are beautiful and they provide shade, they bear fruits, the useful beliefs and values that we've carried with us. But some might be trees that we no longer want, trees that have really taken over our lives and that represent outdated beliefs or past hurts, things that hold us back in some way. And just as autumn teaches us the importance of shedding what's no longer needed, we also must learn the art of culling, of letting go of beliefs and narratives that no longer serve our growth and that stand in the way of our growth, but letting go is just one part of the process.

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The act of culling creates space. Think about that. If you have a massive tree or something that's taking over the garden and you make that decision to chop it down or prune it right back in some way, what that creates space for, for new life. And in that space, you have the opportunity to nourish new growth. So, if you want to create a new narrative for yourself, think about it as planting a new conker, and initially that sprout or that sapling might seem insignificant compared to the towering tree of old beliefs.

And you might wonder, what's the point or this is never going to turn into anything. And you might be intimidated by the established tree's presence and the shadows that it's casting. Do not let this stop you because with the right nourishment, the seed that you plant now will turn into a sapling and then it will outgrow its beach bucket and be ready to plant out in the garden. It will be tested in its new environment for sure.

It will be exposed to challenges, but through that it will become more resilient. Its roots will deepen and strengthen. It will surge upwards and take you by surprise at how quickly that happens and eventually grow into its own magnificent tree. But just as the soil nourishes the tree, our environment and experiences shape us. So have you ever thought about the soil that you were planted in? In what ways was it rich and nurturing and when did you need to seek out nourishment elsewhere?

Sometimes the most resilient trees, the ones that stand tall and proud and bear the most amazing fruit, are the ones that grew in the most challenging conditions. Now, when you're nourishing your sapling of new thoughts and beliefs, that's an active process. It's about feeding your mind with helpful and kind and respectful thoughts, steering it away from its old, most practised thoughts, and ideally surrounding yourself with supportive people in the process and being in community.

So, through this we're recognising that we can't change the past and the seeds that were planted decades ago, we can't go back in time and change those, but we do have the power to influence what happens next. And just like trees, we go through seasons as well. There are times of growth like

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spring when everything feels new and vibrant, and things happen quickly. There are the times of flourishing, our personal summers, where we bask in the warmth of our achievements.

And then there's autumn, a time of shedding, letting go of what no longer serves us and of course, winter, time of introspection and rest. So, each season with its highs and lows has its purpose and beauty. And as trees grow, they branch out, exploring new directions, reaching for the sun, dancing with the wind and we might find ourselves branching out into new interests, new relationships, different paths. And you'll divert energy and growth in those directions. And it's okay to explore and expand like this. It's a part of growth.

And of course, while we can see the tree's growth above the ground, we often forget about the extensive root system that's going on below. So, as you are growing, as you are evolving, remember to grow down as well to deepen your roots because it's those core values, beliefs, connections, behaviours, all of those things that ground you and give you strength. And also, please consider that every tree has its time to blossom. And maybe you haven't fully blossomed yet or perhaps you are in full bloom.

Wherever you're at in this current season of your life, know that every tree has its unique timeline, and so do you. And if you're comparing your blossoming to others, that's a disservice to your journey and theirs as well. So, when autumn comes around as it is now, it brings with it this lesson on the beauty of decay. So, we see all the fallen leaves and although it seems like they've served their purpose and now they're just lifeless, they play a crucial role in nourishing the soil.

So, in the same way, your past experiences, even the painful ones, they can be the compost that is going to enrich what happens next. They break down, decompose and provide the nutrients for the new seeds, the ones that you are planting intentionally, all those new beliefs and thoughts about yourself. So even in decay, there's purpose and beauty.

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And as you notice the trees shedding their leaves in preparation for a new season, I would love for you to consider what old beliefs and narratives it's time for you to shed in order to make way for new growth. Autumn's a time of reflection, of release and renewal. So, it's time to take stock of where you are, where you've been and where you want to go. And the gardeners among you will know about the importance of pruning to ensure healthier growth in future seasons.

And in our lives, pruning can mean letting go of old habits, relationships or beliefs that no longer serve you. It's a necessary process for healthier, more robust growth. So, as you reflect on your life, think about the seeds that you want to plant, the trees you want to continue to nurture and the ones you might want to chop down. Or it's time that you gave them a really good prune. And of course, this all relates to legacy. Trees, when they're maturing, they drop their seeds, they start the cycle again. So, think about the legacy that you want to leave behind. What seeds are you planting for the next generation?

Thank you for joining me today. I invite you to reflect on the seeds that you've planted and the ones that you want to plant this season. Consider what needs culling, what needs nourishing and let's get to it. Alright, lovelies, I will be back next week, catch you then.

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