Ep #304: Dead Relationships and the Fear of Starting Over



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With Your Host

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This is episode 304, and we are talking all about dead relationships. It's going to be a good one.

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*.

Okay folks, welcome back to the podcast. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, I am currently at home with a broken foot, actually recording this from my bed because three weeks ago, my friend and I took the horses to the other side of Kent, our county, for an organised fun ride. And two and a half miles into a 10-mile ride, the grass was still a bit wet with morning dew, and we hadn't clocked that, and my horse slipped over on the grass, landed on his side with my foot trapped underneath him. Thankfully, he got up very quickly and he was totally fine, but it was agonising for me.

Thankfully, there just happened to be a ride photographer positioned right where it happened. So she didn't catch it on camera. That's not why I'm grateful for it. It's because there was no phone signal there. So she had her car, she was able to drive off, find a steward, and the ride was so well organised that help arrived very quickly. So a big shout-out and thank you to the photographer and the ride organiser for taking me back to the start on her quad bike, and also to her daughter, coincidentally also called Maisie, for riding Buttons back.

So since then, I have been living upstairs at home. I can now actually make it down the stairs, and I've got crutches to get around on, but it's quite a lot of work to do that. I had never realised how much work your body has to do to do it. I've never been on crutches before, and my right foot, the good one, is having to do so much work. I've also got quite weak ankles. Thankfully, all this year I've been working on stabilising my ankles in preparation for this happening.

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But my body is changing so much because the glute medius, I think it would be on my left-hand side, has had quite the workout from having to always hold my foot off the ground. So initially, my hip and my glute medius were really sore, but now that side of my bum has gone really round and I've packed on some muscle there. But the right-hand side of me has gone really flat. So it's really weird looking at the difference. I've got three more weeks of the cast, and then I think the plan is to move to a boot. We shall see.

But I want to get into this topic of dead relationships today and specifically being scared to start over. I could talk about this a lot, but whilst I've been incapacitated, I've also been having fun on Instagram, and I recently did an ask me anything on my stories, and I just had so much fun answering your questions. I was offering coaching on relationships, making money, running a business, as well as personal questions about my cycle and being on HRT now. So I had way more to say than would fit into a story. So here we are with a whole episode.

Now, the first question about relationships that I got was how to know when to call it quits in a relationship versus when it's your negative thoughts that could do with some work on it. And I recommended to this person that they start with the Relationship Skills workshop that I recently did. And that is my most recent body of work regarding relationships and will help regardless of what you decide to do in terms of staying or going.

But my approach is to always look at the thoughts and feelings that you have to get curious about them, and then just clean up anything that needs to be cleaned up on your end, as in your shit that you are bringing to the relationship, your patterns of thinking and behaving, how you react. That's all good stuff for us to get into because when you do that, then you'll be in a place where you can look at things really clearly and make a decision.

But I will say that is not always necessary because sometimes my coaching is about why someone is trying to convince themselves or fight so hard for something that isn't working. So the coaching that you'd get from me is very

much going to depend on you as an individual, but I wanted to put together something that would be useful no matter what.

So, start with an assessment. Think about how much time are you spending convincing yourself to stay or having to manage your mind about the other person and the relationship that you have together.

Now, I manage my mind a lot in my relationships, every single one of them. So it's not that, quote unquote, a "good relationship" means that you won't have to do that, right? I think that is true of any relationship. They require you to manage your mind because people are annoying. Therefore, you will always have to manage your mind. And if you don't do that, then basically that means that you'll always need other people to behave exactly as you want them to in order for you to be okay. Other humans generally don't want to or aren't able to follow your precise instructions. Believe me, I have tried.

So learning how to manage your mind is essential because managing your mind will always be necessary in order for you to be yourself in your relationships and for the other person to be themselves too. But how much of that are you doing in order to keep the relationship going? Are you propping the whole thing up by coaching yourself? This is where you can use coaching against yourself. As I said, self-coaching yourself through annoying or challenging situations is a great skill to have. I'm all about that.

But the whole point of being able to do that is so that you can make powerful choices about your life and change the things that need to be changed. If there's something or many things that you are unhappy about in a relationship and you use the self-coaching tools that I teach in order to keep going despite that unhappiness, then I want to offer that when you do that, you are using coaching against yourself. In fact, I'd go so far as to say is that's not even coaching. Yes, you are using coaching tools, and they may be giving you some sort of relief or release from how you're feeling, but it's short-term relief with long-term costs.

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Not every uncomfortable emotion has to be eased or soothed away. This is why noticing what you're feeling, taking on board the information that's being given to you through how you're feeling, this matters so much. Because if you're quick to soothe yourself, whether that's with a glass of wine, through scrolling, or with a thought that helps you in one way, it's a helpful mindset, but it also means you're skipping past the information that your body's trying to give you. When you do any of those things or anything else, then you're going to miss that crucial information.

Because when you feel upset or disappointed or angry, but you repeatedly tell yourself that it's not a big deal, or if you feel those things and you write it off as PMS and you keep doing that cycle after cycle, experience after experience, you are contributing to a dead relationship. Because you're hiding and avoiding parts of yourself. You don't have to do that. You can choose it on purpose, but just be aware that is what you are doing. Whereas you could also just address it. And by addressing it, I mean you allowing yourself to be confronted by what you're thinking and feeling and then doing something about it in whatever way feels appropriate to you.

But you might be avoiding that because you're scared. And if you're scared, you won't want to add anything to the picture that is going to create more fear. And that can play out in terms of, let's say, you're frightened of leaving and starting over. That is a very common scenario that we coach on inside the membership. It comes up a lot.

Maybe your partner doesn't feel present or you don't feel that interested in you or in your life together, and you feel a flash of emotion. Maybe it's anger, maybe it's hurt, sadness, anything like that. But instead of paying attention to that and what it's trying to wake you up to in the case of anger- then maybe you just put on your favourite TV show, or you do some angry cleaning, find ways of telling yourself that it's not that bad. But in doing so, you deny yourself the opportunity for growth and also for freedom, growth in terms of maybe wielding your anger well, or freedom in terms of having agency and using it to change your life.

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So start by assessing where and when you're convincing yourself or avoiding the things that are bothering you. That's absolutely something we'd coach on because once you can see it, then you can move to the next step, which is deciding what kind of starting over you are signing up for.

So those of you who are in the membership dealing with this, then make sure you come and get coached on these things. Because you can start over in a relationship or start over by ending the relationship. I'm going to focus on the latter today because most of the messages I received when I was doing the ask me anything were from people who gave me the impression, in a few short words, that they wanted out. That's what they were wanting.

So this is where everything I just said comes into play, right? What are your reasons for wanting out? You've got to be clear on that. And I don't mean being clear on it in terms of having valid reasons that your partner, parents, or kids are going to accept. I mean whatever your reason is, because that's valid, and your reason only needs to make sense to you. It doesn't matter about anyone else.

This is about getting clear from your perspective why you want out. Because you need to keep that reason top of mind. Because when other people respond to your decision, they might say things that have you questioning things. Whether that's the person that you're breaking up with or ending the relationship with, because it's not just romantic relationships that this happens with, or it could be another friend or your parents or whoever. People are going to have their reactions. Of course, they are.

And if they say things that then make you question, then that's going to take you out of feeling decided and back into a state of stuckness, feeling stuck, feeling confused or doubtful. And to be very clear, you will feel that way because of your thoughts about their reaction. So if they react and your internal response is maybe they're right, then you are going to feel doubt. And that's a normal part of this process to experience doubt. Even if you feel really solid about your decision, you might have 2% of you that

wonders if this is what you should be doing or if you're going to really live to regret it.

So if you're 70% solid on the decision, then there's plenty of space for doubt to show up. Versus someone could have their reaction, but if you remain in that place of commitment and absolute conviction to this is the right decision for you and you love your reasons for it. What I mean by that is you are honouring your reasons for leaving, and you like your reasons for leaving, not that you like the events that have led you to leave.

Because here's the thing about decisions. Most of you are actually already decided about leaving, but you feel uncomfortable about your decision. I think that's the thing that really came through on the ask me anything over on Instagram was even though people were just sharing a few words, one sentence, the impression I got from that was that they actually wanted to leave, but they felt uncomfortable about that decision.

But it is far better to admit to yourself that you are actually decided and you do know what you want to do, but you've got some feelings about it, rather than telling yourself that you don't know what to do because when you tell yourself that, you will just twist yourself in knots and stay stuck. It is incredibly unuseful to tell yourself that.

And this is when it's really important to surround yourself with people who respect your decision and who support you. Hopefully, you get that from your nearest and dearest, but if not, who are your cheerleaders that you can go to? This is what I love our community for because when you are making these decisions, knowing that there's a place that will acknowledge and celebrate you for doing this whilst supporting you through the tricky bits, whilst you navigate your feelings and everything that comes after, that's just so valuable.

Quite a few of your messages were about when you know the relationship is dead, but feeling scared about the practicalities of separating. So I want to get into that for a moment. The first thing is to just write down all your

thoughts and feelings about separating. In actual fact, everyone do this. If you're in this position, just get all your thoughts and feelings down onto paper. I imagine there's going to be quite a few, some positive and helpful in that they help you to feel committed and to have courage as you do this. But then there's also all the other ones about how it's hard to do this, it's complicated or impossible, or that the process is unfair, that you'll have to start over and all the other thoughts that come with that.

So once you have got all those thoughts out onto paper, you can see them for what they are and get coached on them. Then I would encourage you to see the places where you are already separate. What do you have that is yours? And I know that for couples whose lives are really intertwined, this can be confronting and complex, okay? Kids, finances, friendship groups, home, etc., etc., the dog. But look at what threads already exist on their own or are starting to pull away from everything being intertwined. Which ones can you just start pulling on to begin that process of separating?

And then look at where is it straightforward. And listen, I know how complex this can get when feelings are involved, particularly. Even without them, it can be complicated. But think about what result you want to create at the end of separating, and then stay focused on achieving that. Hey, when breakups are messy, and there's hurt involved, emotions are running high, and they take you away from the focus of where you're trying to get to. And the paradox of that is that sometimes that is just part of how you process this, right?

It might well be one step forwards, two steps back for a bit. This is when you really want to know how to coach yourself and to have the support of a coach in a community or, failing that, at least one amazing person who has your back through this. You have to have that. I mean, I also would offer that I believe in you. You can do it without, but I've gone through this myself. It's great to have someone who has your back.

And some of what you're sorting out is going to bring up memories. Maybe that's the sofa you chose together, your memories with the kids and

holidays and stuff like that. And then there could be things that you also discover as a result of breaking up, either just through the process of breaking up or after it ends. It could be cheating in the relationship, financial secrets; all sorts can come out in the wash. But also, some of the stuff you have to sort out will be dull. And this is an occasion where dull is great, okay? So try this.

Just get all of your thoughts and feelings about the breakup and things ending on paper. And then make a list of all the things that need to be sorted in some way. And sort it out into three piles, three groups. The first one is just the admin stuff that you just need to take care of. The second one is the decisions that need to be made. Some of them are ones that you can make on your own; some of them are going to require discussion and/or agreement with the other person.

And then go through that list and make a note of the things that you care about and the things that you're just a bit ambivalent about, or maybe you just flat-out don't care about. So pile two has the separation within it. And pile three is just the stuff that you're going to need some professional support with, whether that's mediation, legal advice, when it comes to money, property, kids, anything like that.

But the point of the sorting out of things like this is one, often doing that is regulating in and of itself. It's going to help you to feel more resourced. And some of you might want to avoid doing this because you're already stressed out, feeling emotions, you've got lots going on.

But I would encourage you to do this because there really is something about getting it onto paper and seeing the situation for what it is. So when you do this, it's going to let you look at things as objectively as you can, which is the only way you'll see that a good portion of the list is already in pile one, right? It's just admin stuff, dull stuff that you can take action on where you can.

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But the main thing throughout all of this is just to give yourself grace, to have compassion and respect for yourself throughout this process.

Okay, that is it for this week, right? Be honest with yourself and please know that I believe in you. If you think you can't do this, borrow my belief in you. And if you want coaching as you navigate decisions just like this, that's exactly what we do inside Powerful, my membership. The link is in the show notes.

All right folks, I will see you either over on Instagram or on the podcast next week. Have a cracking week.

Hey, if you love listening to this podcast then come and check out my membership, Powerful, where you get my best resources and all the coaching you need to transform your inner and outer life. Sign up to the waitlist at maisiehill.com/powerful, and I'll see you in the community.