

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maisie Hill

Period Power with Maisie Hill

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

If you are in the horrors with menstrual cycle issues or you want to learn how to harness your hormones, then you are in the right place.

Welcome to the *Period Power* podcast. I'm your host, Maisie Hill, menstrual health expert, acupuncturist, certified life coach, and author of *Period Power*. I'm on a mission to help you get your cycle working for you so that you can use it to get what you want out of life. Are you ready? Let's go.

Okay, folks. Here we are. Another episode of the *Period Power* podcast, and I have a rather large treat for you today because I'm continuing the People of Influence Series with someone who has had a significant influence on my life in numerous ways. And I'm gonna ask her to introduce herself in a moment.

I think, suffice to say, we have a long history together. And the kind of brief for the conversation today was, "Let's talk about three ways that we have influenced each other." And we haven't discussed what we're gonna be sharing in advance, so I've got no idea where we're gonna end up, but I think it's gonna make for a really interesting and helpful conversation for all of you. So, I'm really excited to introduce Mars Lord.

Maisie Hill: Mars!

Mars Lord: Hello! It's so good to be here with you, Maisie.

Maisie: It's always good to be hanging out with you. But why don't we start off, before we get on to things, let's not forget to introduce who you are. Why don't you tell the lovely people how incredible you are?

Mars: Well, I'm sure that we can condense this into less than seven days. So, I'm Mars Lord. I am a coach. I'm a life coach. And I love and adore life coaching. I'm also a doula educator and a birth activist and a reproductive justice warrior. And those, I think, are probably my main titles. I speak, I educate, I write. But I'm a coach and I'm an educator, I think, with an activist heart.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Maisie: Yes. I think that's very well described because you do a lot of things. Like, we were talking the other day about how the impact that you have had and continue to have in all these kind of different areas.

I was kind of making the point, "Think they're going to look back in history and go, 'Mars was everywhere'? 'Mars was over here doing this and she was doing that.'" And I think just that's your legacy, and it's ongoing.

Mars: Yeah. And I like that. I like that. I mean, is it because I'm nosy and I see lots of things need attention? Is it because, as my mom says, "You have a lot of knowledge and you like to share it"? Or is it just that I really love people? I mean, I genuinely really love people. Though I do have a caveat to that: I love them until I don't.

Maisie: Yes. That's an important caveat.

Mars: Very important caveat.

Maisie: Yes. So, I'm gonna just get us started with my first way that you influenced me, because it kind of gets us into the story of how we met—our love story. And I have a feeling that you're gonna remember the details more than I will of how we actually met. I know we were at something birth-related.

Mars: Oh, God.

Maisie: Do you know what it was?

Mars: Oh, do you know, I think it was... If I'm right... Because I know where we went afterwards, and my memory of that is much better. I think we were at a mentors meeting for a doula organization. And I don't think you went to many, and I certainly didn't go to many more.

Maisie: Oh, I remember! It's all coming back to me now. It's coming back to me. So, Mars and I were both birth doulas.

Mars: Yes.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Maisie: And postnatal doula as well. And so, this is almost 20 years ago.

Mars: I know. It's a long time. 20 years ago. It's a lifetime ago.

Maisie: Because we mentored other doula who were on their journey as they were getting started. Okay, so we'd gone to that meeting and then we got on a bus afterwards, because we were heading in the same direction. And I don't know where we ended up. We ended up in a bar somewhere.

Mars: It was a pub in Muswell Hill that had the acoustics of a church hall jumble sale.

Maisie: Yeah. Which is great with someone with sensory sensitivity. So, we sit down and we're chatting away and we're having probably a bottle of wine, I imagine, or glasses.

Mars: Yeah, and we had some food.

Maisie: Okay.

Mars: I'm a Jamaican. I always need the food. But, yeah.

Maisie: But we're sitting and having a time, and I just remember being frozen to the spot at one point because you suddenly asked this question. And I can't remember exactly what it was, but it was along the lines of, "Why are you out having a drink with me instead of going home to your husband?"

Mars: This is very true.

Maisie: And I just froze because I just felt so seen in that moment. And, like, "Oh, shit, someone's onto me." Because it wasn't going well. The marriage wasn't going well.

And when you asked that question, it was like the beginning of the end had already started, but the moment that you asked that question, it put things in motion, I think, in my own mind if nothing else. Because I was suddenly

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

like, “Oh, why am I here instead of going home?” And of course, you’re a wonderful person. I wanted to get to know you, but...

Mars: Well, naturally.

Maisie: ...You just lasered in on that question. And I was just like, “Oh, fuck.” But, you know, when I think about you in all of your roles that you have fulfilled, and you as a coach who often coaches me, and you as a friend who I’m in just constant contact with, your ability to laser in on the question that needs to be asked is incredible.

And I’m just always in awe of that in every way that I see you. Whether it’s in your activism or when it’s in your coaching, I’m just like, “Oh, that’s the question.” You know? And I think that’s the skill of a great coach. You know, that’s what we pay coaches for is to ask you the question that needs to be asked. And so, I just love that our first moment together, you really hit me with a question.

Mars: Oh, yes. Gosh. And we were there for hours. I mean...

Maisie: I don’t remember leaving, but...

Mars: We were there for hours, because we went deep very quickly. And I think that same moment was a bit of a defining one for me as well, because “Oh, wow, I found a woman here who I just really like and am enjoying her company. And why the fuck is her life like that and she’s so fabulous? We gotta find out why the fabulous isn’t happening.”

Which is weird, because before we met, I’d heard your name a lot, because obviously we were both mentoring other doulas. And then I’d hear your name in sort of the lips of other doulas. “Oh, Maisie Hill.” “Oh, Maisie Hill.” “Oh, Maisie Hill.”

And I’d be thinking, “Who the fuck is Maisie bloody Hill? All I keep hearing is ‘Maisie...’” And I swear, when we sat down in that pub, it was like, oh, we were meant to meet.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Maisie: Yes. Definitely. And I think we both stood out in the birth world, you as a black woman and me as a young woman in her 20s with no kids and covered in tattoos.

Mars: Oh my God. The tattoos. “Oh, I mean... Oh, I mean... Oh! That’s not... Oh, yes. I mean, what do you think of Maisie?”

Maisie: Bit of a wild one.

Mars: Little bit of a wild one. But that was so good because I felt like it became the first of a few crossroad moments for me in my birth doula journey, because it’s like, “Oh, I’m asking this woman these questions and I feel them being reflected back into myself.”

I think that meeting was when we then started to push each other forward. Because I remember at the time, you said, “Well, I kept hearing your name as well.” And I was like, “Who, you?”

Maisie: Yeah. “Mars this, Mars that.” I was like, “I gotta meet this Mars at some point.”

Mars: I mean, right? I’m amazed that we didn’t meet sooner because it was a long time. I think it was about a year or so that I was hearing your name. And then, sitting down and just talking, it’s like, “Oh, okay, here’s a spirit and a soul I can sit with. Here’s someone that I can actually talk with and to.”

Especially having come out of meetings where everyone just sort of wittered on about somebody that they were wittering on about, and I would feel my brain just going, “And goodbye. My buddy’s here, but I’ve actually left the room.”

Until somebody would say something that would make me come up and say, “Wait, are you trying to say that we can’t do that? Why can’t we do that?” That would always bring me back into the room from sort of whichever land I was in at the time.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

But I do remember thinking, “Okay, I like this woman. I’m gonna just keep an eye on the way that she’s working, because I really like this and I feel a kindred spirit here.” Which, actually, I haven’t really felt anywhere in the birth world, or the birth world that I knew then.

Maisie: Yes.

Mars: Because it’s changed a lot. We’ll get onto that, and that’s down to you, of course, but we’ll get there. We’ve gotten to that part.

Maisie: Maybe in episode 12, but we’ll get there. So that, for me, is the first one. And, you know, I went on to leave that marriage. That marriage ended. But, yeah, that moment really stayed with me, and just you seeing me in that and being up for showing me that. Like, in a loving way, but in a firm way.

Mars: Yeah. Because what’s the point, otherwise?

Maisie: Yeah, but so many people don’t, do they?

Mars: I know. But that’s because nobody likes to upset or offend, and everyone wants to make it right and perfect, and everyone has thoughts about what right and perfect means. And I’m like, “Well, that’s what I think, but is that right and perfect for you?”

Maisie: Yes. Quite love that. Yeah. And so that’s just continued, really. Just the questions. The asking the brilliant questions.

Mars: Yeah. So, a defining moment for me was, I said that when we met it sort of put me at this crossroads in my birth work. And I remember looking and thinking, “Actually, I need to make this more financially viable and I need to make this something that I’m enjoying doing more.”

Now, don’t get me wrong. I totally love – loved – my doula work and love the doula work that I do in the training doulas. But, in the words of an American doula, “I like the lights on inside my house.”

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Maisie: Yes.

Mars: I know. And whenever I think about money, I'm like, "Do you want little lights on inside or outside, Mars?" And I remember that we were two of the first doulas to breach the thousand-pound...

Maisie: I know.

Mars: And it stands out for me because I was like, "Yeah, I can do that! I can do that! No, I can't do that. No, I can't do this. No. No, I can't do this." And we had started our relationship and were talking about what we were thinking, etc.

And then we both said, "Yeah..." I'm quite blasé to each other, but I know that inside I was like, "Shit, do I even mean this? I'm gonna breach the thousand-pound mark. Actually, I'm just gonna go to 1,200." I mean, when you think about it now... When you think...

Maisie: I know.

Mars: It's like, "What?" It was causing me anguish to charge for the fact that I was gonna be on call for four weeks, which meant I couldn't go anywhere spontaneously in those four weeks and had to be within 90 minutes of my client and might be at a birth and miss a wedding, or a birthday, or, frankly, a fun night out at the park with wine and friends.

Maisie: Yeah. And be awake for 24 hours or 48 hours, and all of the other stuff that's involved. And when you apply that to any other industry and say, "Well, what would you charge if you could only work with a limited number of clients? If it meant being on call? Never being far away? Saying 'no' to lots of things in your own life in order to do these things?"

Mars: Yeah.

Maisie: "Etc., etc. What would you charge?" And I just think back to the mental work that we both had to do in order to do that.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Mars: You were really generous at that time as well because you'd actually started to do external work around it.

Maisie: Well, the thing is, I decided to work with my very first coach. And I remember I went into my overdraft to do it, and was thinking, "I have no business signing up for this because I do not have this money." But I used my overdraft and one of the very first things we looked at was the amount of money that I was charging for things and did all that money mindset stuff.

And at the time, that coach just couldn't believe that's what I was charging for what we were doing. And that was why it's always so helpful, isn't it, to have that external reflection back, because you're so busy in your own head. You don't see if for what it is.

I remember saying to you, like, "I'm gonna charge this." And you're like, "Well, I'm charging that, too, then."

Mars: I did. I did.

Maisie: And then we went up to 2,000...

Mars: And everyone was like, (gasp). I mean, they were already in shock when we breached 1,000. And then, as we watched them all sort of gently going over the 1,000, then we sort of went up a bit more. And then we said, "It's time to do two."

Maisie: And then we went up again I think after that? Yeah.

Mars: We went up to two and a half. And both times, we both held our breath, and then, "Oh, Maisie, I've got someone... I'm gonna go meet them. We'll see what happens. I've told them my price." And "Oh, no, they didn't book me."

And then you were like, "Oh, I'm seeing someone... Oh, no, they didn't book me." And then you suddenly went, "They've booked me." And I went, "Someone's booked you at 2,000 pounds? Where's my 2,000?"

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

And instead of going into the “Oh, God, it’s all right for her. Oh, how could you...” I thought, “Well. Maisie and I stay similar in so many of these things. If Maisie can do 2,000, I’ll get...” And then I think it was only a couple of weeks later that I got my first 2,000, and that was a while ago. That was a fair while ago.

Maisie: I know. That was a long time ago. I mean, I’ve been out of the game for a while.

Mars: Yeah.

Maisie: This must be 10 years ago. No.

Mars: Yeah.

Maisie: Well, yeah, kind of around that time. I don’t know.

Mars: Yeah, I think so. We led the charge financially, I think, for birth workers. I think there are a fair few that are still a ways behind though, because I train doulas, and I’m like, “Now, what are you gonna charge?” “Well, maybe 600 pounds.”

I’m like, “600?! Are you mad? Are you mad? People spend three times that on a bloody buggy, and you’re talking about supporting them through the birth...” And they’ll be like, “Yeah...”

But even now, there are very few that are up at the and above the 2K mark, etc. But people will make the decisions that they make because of the thoughts that they have about themselves, won’t they?

Maisie: They will. But that’s just why I love the setup that you have with your birth work, like all the courses that you have and the support that you have in place, that you have this fabulous foundation. This doula training.

But then that’s continued on in the community that you have grown so that once people have gone through that training, they have that ongoing

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

support and mentorship so that as they are navigating that process, they have those opportunities to reflect and to grow and to move forwards.

Mars: Yeah. And I think that time with you when we tussled with it and you sort of shared the things that you were learning from your coach. And I'd be like, "What? Ohh..." and getting uncomfortable. And you were like, "Yeah, and this is brilliant because..." And I'm like, "Yeah, this is... Yeah... This is... yeah."

And they'd go away and I thought, "Hang on, though. Yeah, that is brilliant, and actually, yes. What value am I putting on myself and my own work that allows me to stay still rather than encourages me to move forward?" So, that was quite a significant thing for me, and it's really funny. I just remember thinking, "The way I work will never be the same again because of that conversation and those conversations that we had together."

Maisie: Yeah. And still do have together.

Mars: Oh, yeah.

Maisie: Like, that conversation has never really stopped, has it?

Mars: No. Whether you're walking on a beach in Margate with gulls... "Hang on, Mars, there's gulls. Hang on, let me just get past the gulls." Or riding on a bus in London: "Okay, Let me just get off. I've just finished a conversation with someone about sore nipples, but now I'll just get off a bus and talk to you about this other thing."

Maisie: Oh, I love it. It just hasn't stopped.

Mars: And I mean, would you have imagined that after that day in the pub?

Maisie: No. And I say "no" because I think it took me a long time in life. In fact, you're probably my first significant female friend. Like, I've had female friendships, but in terms of a close friendship where there's ongoing contact. You know, me being such an introvert/hermit, essentially.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Mars: Me being all out there.

Maisie: Me being a hermit. Me being autistic. You know, I enjoy my own world, and so it takes a special someone for me to want to have this much contact with.

Mars: Well, not surprised. Totally honored and privileged.

Maisie: Okay, so the second way that you have really influenced me... I think I've spent a lot of my life in anticipation of being told off and wanting to do things the right way.

Mars: I'm so ready to start coaching right now.

Maisie: Okay. So, I'm just often scared of guessing things wrong, which now I can understand through the autistic lens, but also upbringing, socialization, education, etc.

And when I became a doula—so, professional birth support to women in couples and families—I was in my early 20s and I didn't have a kid. I had all these tattoos. And I was, at the time, managing a notorious rock bar in Soho.

And I felt very out of place in the birth world. And I was trying to be professional and cover up my tattoos and dress a certain way that was still me, but I wasn't being... Like, it was this other version of me.

Mars: The version that you thought people wanted to see.

Maisie: Exactly. And so, that's how I was showing up. And I just remember calling you one day and you were leaving a client. You'd just been with a birth client. And you started telling me what a fabulous dinner you'd all had, and they bought this wine for you, and you'd had that, and it was all fabulous, and now you're just going home.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

And I just remember thinking, “Are we allowed to do that?” Which has stayed, and I can see there are often things that have happened, where I think, “Are we allowed to do that?”

That comes into parenting, mothering, professional work, the way we make decisions, things in relationships. And I think it’s been very instructive and liberating for me to see how you live. Back then—I don’t know how old your kids are now. I can’t keep track, but in my mind they’re still younger. But you had five kids who then were young.

Mars: The babies were—they were sort of six, eight months when I started.

Maisie: Yeah, so I think when I met you, they must have been like five...? No.

Mars: Probably about three or four.

Maisie: Yeah. So, you had five kids. And you had the best social life of anyone that I knew. And I just remember being, like, confused. Like, “How does she do this and is this allowed?”

Mars: Oh my God. Yeah. I mean, and the other thing that was happening at the time that we met—yeah, it would have been around then or just before then that my husband and I split...

Maisie: Yeah.

Mars: ...And parted ways. And before people start boohooing into their tissues, trust me, I’ve never had a moment’s regret about it. I’ve had such complete and total peace about it. And I just thought, “Do you know what? I don’t have to hold myself back from being who I want to be.”

Maisie: Yes.

Mars: “I can just be who I want to be.”

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

I do remember a school mum very specifically not inviting me to her birthday lunch or brunch or something. And the reason I say very specifically is because she sent someone to explain to me why I hadn't been invited. Honestly, middle-class white women... I hate.

And so, I sat her down and told her just how problematic that was. She said, "Oh, I did it because I know that you've got the small babies and it would be difficult for you."

And I said, "Um, I go out to dinner when I want. I go to the theater when I want. I go salsa dancing when I want. I live my life how I want. I know how to make arrangements for my children. You didn't want to invite me. You just didn't need to invite me. But what you did was the rudest thing."

And, of course, middle-class white women hate to be thought of as rude. I said, "Was the absolute rudest thing, because if you had just had your party, I'd have been like, 'Oh, that's nice.' Maybe I might have thought, 'Oh, shame I didn't get invited.' But for you to specifically not invite me has fucked me right off."

We have never really spoken since that day. Not because I wouldn't speak to her, but because I think suddenly she realized I'm quite forthright about what I do.

But living... I'm a black woman in a white western society that tells me how I'm supposed to be. And when I get coaching, I coach through all of these strictures that would be put on me. And I just decided, "I'm so fucking fabulous. I don't deserve to be made small by someone or something else."

And so, that's why I did and do the things that I do, because I'm like, "Yeah. Well, do you know what? What if it is only one time around?" I mean, if it's several times around, then look out, world, because I'm coming back.

But, you know, then I'm gonna live this in the fullest way, which is why I think coaching is so important to me as a black woman. Because we're not taught to do things and we're not allowed to do things in the fullest way. So,

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

I think my allow is my, “Oh, fuck you,” to the white patriarchy. And the white matriarchy too.

Maisie: Yes. Yes. One hundred percent.

Mars: But if you want to talk about significant moments... Another significant influence on me was after I supported the loss of a baby. And I remember, I sent you a message and I said, “I’m on my way to a birth, but the baby’s died.” And you replied, “I’m just back from a birth, but I’m gonna keep my phone on. And if you need me, you call me.”

So, I went off to do this birth that was all day and all through the night, and then when I left them at six in the morning, I just called you. And I remember for 45 minutes, you just stayed on the phone whilst I cried and told you that the baby had died.

And then you said, “How are you getting home?” I said, “Oh, the Tubes start in a minute, so I’m just gonna...” And you said, “You will get in a fucking cab now.” And I was like, “Oh! Okay.” And I did.

And the reason that is a significant moment for me was that was the first time... Was that the first time? Yeah, I think it was one of the first times that I felt truly, completely held by somebody in that space.

And then I remember just a couple of short weeks later, you said, “Right, you need to come to my studio,” because you were doing acupuncture. “I’m gonna give you a treatment.” And I remember you putting these needles in and then you telling me, “Okay, Mars, I think it’s time to end. Now you’ve got to get up.”

And I couldn’t work out why I was sopping wet, and I think the needles just brought out every tear—every bit of grief—out of me. And that time remains significant for me because I thought... It’s not like I didn’t know and believe that you were my friend, but it was like, “(Gasp) This is my friend.”

Maisie: Yeah.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Mars: You know? That was quite a significant moment for me because—I think I’ve told you before—I’m relatively good at sabotaging friendships, because I don’t actually completely trust that people will be the friends that they all say they’d be. And since I was 25, every five years, I do a cull. I get rid of the people that are just draining my energy.

Maisie: Are you due for one?

Mars: Yeah, I’m due for one next year. Oh, I’m due for one next year. But I have to say, COVID has really helped. The pandemic has helped with that because a lot of people—or people that I probably wouldn’t have reached out to—they just vanished. So, maybe I’ll get a year off.

Yeah, it was just really strange to me to find a friend who actually stood in friendship and acted as a friend. And what I love was just the fact that you were like, “Okay, I’m gonna cut right through the bullshit, Mars. Get in a fucking cab.” And I did.

Maisie: Yeah.

Mars: And if you hadn’t have said that, I was so lost, I would have just gotten on a Tube and probably freaked everyone out, because I know I freaked the cab driver out. Because he said, “Oh, have you just finished work?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Good night?” And I went, “No, the baby’s dead.” And he put his head down and his foot down and I was home before I knew it.

Maisie: Yeah. But I think that’s—especially when you’ve been caring for someone else, caring for a family, whether it’s professionally or personally, when you are giving your all to someone else, and particularly a birth where the baby has died and, you know, everything that’s involved in that...

When you come out the other side of that—and the same, by the way (for anyone who doesn’t do this kind of work)—the same is true when it’s a fantastically smooth birth, where everyone’s healthy and happy. It’s so intense, what you give, what you do in that process, even if it’s the birth

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

that lasts an hour or 40 hours. It doesn't matter, the parameters and kind of the conditions of what goes on.

When you come out of it, to have someone take care of you means so much. Because I've also been on the receiving end of that from you and from other birth workers that I've known, from partners... I've also not had it from people.

Mars: And you're like... Yeah.

Maisie: "Are you serious? Like, you're bringing this to me now when I literally can't think or do anything for myself?" And I know what you mean. It is really significant when someone is there for you in that way. And where you have somewhere safe to fall apart.

Mars: Yes. And it's the "somewhere safe to fall apart" bit that was the most important, and not because it was birth work, but because I'm a black woman in a society that says were not allowed to fall apart.

Maisie: Yeah.

Mars: I don't care what anyone listening says. "No, I don't think that." Because they do. And I have to be strong or, "Oh, my God, why are you sad? You're supposed to... You've got the strength of an amazon." And the fact that I found that level of friendship in a white woman freaks me the fuck out.

Maisie: I don't doubt that.

Mars: So, particularly with the work that I do in reproductive justice and things and with the sort of social-conscious awareness arising last summer, I just remember saying to a friend, or my sister, "Oh, do you know, I could just do without white people."

Maisie: Yeah?

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Mars: You know, “I just can’t be with them.” And then I said, “In fact, I imagine when I get old, if I’ve got more than five white friends, I’ll be shocked.” And she said, “So, who are your closest friends?” And I said, “Oh, it’s this white woman.” And it still makes me laugh now.

But so, the significance for me... And some people were like, “Why does it have to be a black/white thing?” Well, you kind of have to... Well, can a black woman choose to understand why it has to be a black/white thing? But I have had...

And even before that moment, I remember white friends that said, “Oh, I see you’re in need here,” for whatever reason. “I’m gonna stand with you.” And when I said, “Thanks,” they’d be like, “Oh, well, no, I didn’t actually mean it.”

Maisie: Yeah. It’s just something we say to make ourselves feel good and look good.

Mars: Yeah.

Maisie: Yeah.

Mars: Yeah. And I was like, “Oh. Okay.” And then you did the thing that you said you’d do. But I never doubted that you would. That was quite significant for me, realizing, “Oh, Maisie’s like a friend-friend. Maisie’s like a...”

Okay, this would take some serious uprooting if I wanted to get rid of this, which isn’t likely to happen, because you just have the most delicious child on the planet after my grandbabies.

Maisie: And your grandbaby is delicious. Every time you send me a picture, I’m like, “Oh, my ovaries. I can’t take it.”

Mars: Yeah, so that was my second one. But I’ll tell you, before you tell me your third—ha, ha... Ha, ha... Was another really significant—I mean, the third. How do we condense all of these things into just three?

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Last year when you asked me what I was doing, because I'd said, "Right, I'm gonna stop attending births. I can't be dealing with menopause on hospital floors and in birthing spaces, etc. And I'm gonna concentrate more on the training of doulas and mentoring doulas, and yeah, that's what I'm gonna do."

And you said, "Oh! Is there anything else?" And I went, "Well, I'm doing my activism and I'm doing all of this stuff." And you said, "Oh, I just wondered if you'd ever considered coaching."

And I burst out laughing. I went, "Oh, please. Coaches. That's all 'Emperor's New Clothes' shit." And then I listed the people that I'd seen who were coaches who'd made these huge, huge promises, and when you got in, it all sort of shattered away. And I'm like, "No."

And then I remembered that—probably about the same time that you'd got out of the birth world—that I had a thought, "Oh, I should be a life coach." And then I went, "Don't be so ridiculous I couldn't possibly be a life coach."

And so, you didn't just plant the seed. You dug up the earth, you planted the seed, you propped it back down, you fertilized it, you poured water on it, and you kept checking for shoots.

Maisie: Yes. I didn't leave it alone.

Mars: You didn't leave it alone. And as I sort of stepped into my coaching self, you reminded me that I'd been doing this for years. I just hadn't called it "coaching."

And I remember having a struggle in my mind, because I know that I'm a phenomenal doula. And I know that I'm a superb doula educator. And I'm just right up there. I'm the leading voice in black maternity or reproductive justice and cultural competency and safety.

So, I knew all of that about myself, but I couldn't quite see myself as a... "I can't do this, Maisie. I mean, ugh, I'm not really a coach, am I? I've got to

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

do something to be a coach.” And you kept saying, “But you are a coach.” I’m like, “Yeah, yeah, but what I need to do…” And you said, “No, but you are a coach.”

And then, you just said to me, “You just have to think about it like doulaing.” You said, “It’s what you’ve always done as a doula. You’ve always just coached your clients. Not made decisions for them. Not stepped into their shoes. But given them the space to get…” And the moment you said that…

Maisie: Yeah.

Mars: ...I thought, “I’m a coach.”

Maisie: Yeah. I know, it was just one of those things that, again, when you’re on the outside and, as a coach, looking at you as a friend—and you weren’t a client, but I definitely stepped into coaching you in that moment.

Mars: Yes, you did, my Maisie.

Maisie: And it was just so obvious to me. And I think it got quite—I want to say painful—for me to watch because it was just so clear to me that you were too big for the birth world. It is like the birth world was this small corner, which, let’s face it, did not appreciate it, did not get, did not respect the work that you were doing then, and a lot of people now as well.

Mars: Yeah. Yeah.

Maisie: And, as your friend and as your colleague, I could see that in you. I wanted you to be able to exist in places where you were valued and where you could really shine without this resistance from other people.

And I knew that you’d been coaching. You just had an issue with the word “coach,” which, I think, let’s face it, most of us have at some point in this journey. And I knew if I could just show you what coaching was, that it would come together, or at least I hoped it would.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

And it's really funny because I feel about coaching the way I've always felt about doulaing. So, when I attended my first official doula birth, I remember coming out looking like, "How are cars and trucks and trains still moving? Why are planes still flying in the sky? How has no one recognized the awesomeness of this moment?"

And then, as I took on my first official coaching client, watching them sort of just manage their minds and start to grow and change, everything inside me went, "Oh my God. Come up, look, world. Look at this thing. Isn't it amazing that something so simple can be so complex yet so simple and change everything?" And I wake up every day thinking, "I'm a coach."

Maisie: Yeah. I know. We have the best jobs. And we used to say that when we were doulas as well.

Mars: Yes. Yes. And I feel like I have been doubly blessed because, I mean, I still doula, I think, because I doula the people that I train... But I doula my coaching client. I had a consult earlier today, and she said, "You're really intuitive." She said, "I speak to people and they talk to me about frameworks and ways to do things. But you, you're really intuitive. It's like you're hearing me."

And I said, "Oh, thank you very much. That's kind of what I hope to do—to see you and to hear you." And I think that's why I like you so much, because I know how I view people and I know that I see people, and you are one of the few people I feel who sees me.

Maisie: Yes. That's my experience of our friendship as well. And I think there was a time when you were seeing me and I didn't want to be seen by you because I was struggling. And I pulled away a bit after I had Nelson and we moved here and I was, looking back, probably really anemic and shattered and all of those things.

Mars: You were definitely anemic and you were certainly, I mean... You're already a trim thing, but you were—in Jamaican words, you were "mawga." You were tiny. I rocked up to such, got on a train: "Hello, here I am."

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Maisie: You made me that soup that I love; the Mars Soup soup. Leek and stilton. I remember, you made it and you just went, “You’re a bit pale.” And that was when I was like, “Oh... Probably anemic.” Because just looking in the mirror, I couldn’t see that.

Mars: Yeah.

Maisie: So, that was like... I feel like I pulled away a bit then because I just didn’t want to be seen in that...

Mars: I’m a bit of a stubborn friend, aren’t I?

Maisie: Yeah, which is great.

Mars: “I’m still here. Hello. Have some soup.”

Maisie: Okay. Well, my number three... In preparing for this episode, I was thinking about the biggest influence and what would I not have if it weren’t for you? Or who would I not be if you weren’t in my life and hadn’t been in my life?

And undoubtedly, it’s your work and your activism, particularly around black women’s experience to childbirth here. But also, everything that you have shared with me of your life. And it’s been an education. And when I think about, you know, would I have learned about racism in reproductive healthcare and the disparities that exist?

I’d like to think yes, I would, but certainly the clients that I’ve had over the years who have been black and brown, and I’ve seen their experience through working with someone; they’ve told me. But because of knowing you, I have been able to see it and I wonder, “Maybe I wouldn’t have been able to see it or I wouldn’t have been open to seeing it?”

I don’t know if I would’ve been able to have those conversations with them and for them to feel like they could share those things with me had I not known you.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

And would I have included talking about that in *Period Power*? Would I have started having the monthly calls that we have that are just for the black and brown members in the Flow Collective? I don't know. You know, it's sort of like, I'd like to think that I would have, but I can really question that and think, "Maybe I wouldn't have."

You know, maybe I would have gotten there eventually with that, but what you have shared with me and what I have been privy to, it has been an education. And of course, that's the influence of my personal life as well, and not just my professional life. And it continues to. And I feel the privilege of that.

Mars: I mean, I feel that a lot of that comes from... I mean, we know that I don't do myself down, so I'm not doing myself down when I say this. But it's because of what you did why I'm able to be a friend to you.

We talk in the black communities—some in the white community understand it—about codeswitching: how you change to be with the somebody that you're in. You know, we tell people all the time, "Listen, when we don't see, we're not actually talking about you. When we bring like people together, we're not actually talking about you, because strangely life isn't all about you."

But you are always just such a safe space to be in. I've got friends who I love dearly, who I know love me dearly, but they just need me to understand why they know these things that little bit better. And they don't say those words, but they say those words in their actions and the things that they do.

I wouldn't fall on them or fall apart with them, because I wouldn't feel safe to do so. And because I feel safe to fall apart with you, I also feel safe enough to talk to you about the things that go on for me as a black woman, and to express them honestly.

Because you're not then going to question me as to, "Am I sure that this is what this is?" Or "Why is it that these things happen?" And you certainly

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

don't clutch your pearls and go, "Oh my God, this is so awful," and sort of sit and cry.

Again, I go back to the fact that you are my friend-friend. It's like, you hear me and what you get with me is all of the microaggressions and unspoken and overspoken racism that just inhabits my life, simply because I have several more layers of melanin than you do.

But you don't ever try to reason with me why this is a woman's experience or why this happens because this is everybody's experience. And you hear me as the individual.

So, being able to share myself with you is an easy thing to do, because actually it means I don't have to codeswitch. I don't have to be anybody but who I am when I'm with you. I don't have to, "Oh God, if I say that, she's only going to get... Okay, let's not say that. How can I say this so that I don't have to comfort and educate her?"

Maisie: Yeah.

Mars: And I never feel like educating you. Never.

Maisie: No. I don't think this is why we have the monthly calls that are for our BIPOC members. Because it's not a call that the white members get to come on or ever see, and it is just...

And just to be clear with everyone, Mars—I'm very happy to say—coaches on those calls. And I'm just there, for the most part, silent and not contributing because it's very rarely appropriate for me to. I just come and hold space and rarely offer something, and only when I've really thoroughly debated, "Is it appropriate for me to add this into the mix?"

Mars: And because you're there as well for any of the menstrual issues that come up. Because someone may think, "Oh, so you're there just to make sure she does it right." And I mean, the last couple, you haven't been on the call. And I've stepped in and done a call for you.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Maisie: Yeah, and you come in to... Because I remember getting the emails from someone, because I was away, and you came and coached everyone. And they're getting the emails afterwards going, "Can we have some more of Mars, please?"

Mars: You gotta share, baby. You gotta share. My fabulousness knows no bounds.

But yeah, I don't know. Who would I be if you weren't my friend? Do you know, I'm not sure that I would quite be here where I am now, because everything that I've done has led me to coaching to the activism. I probably wouldn't have given up on doulaing. You know, because it... I love this. I love people. But I like the lights on inside my house, so I may well have gone down a different path.

But having you to walk alongside, bounce ideas off, and almost dare to put our prices up... Because, in fact, I'm reasonably convinced that that meeting where we met, there was a lot of discussion about what was allowed and wasn't allowed.

Maisie: Yes. I remember that. Yes. There definitely was.

Mars: "You're not allowed to charge this. You're not allowed to do that. It's got to stay in. However, other people can do this." And I do remember, that when we were on the bus, we did laugh about the "not allowed" things.

Maisie: Yeah. What nonsense.

Mars: I know. But because of that, and because of our conversation—because of me saying, "Oh, here's a friend here"—it meant that I could do these things. And when I was ready to not quite hang up my doula shingle but hang up my attending birth—though if my one client that I promised I would do her final baby is listening, I'm keeping my promise to you.

But, you know, hanging up my doula shingle and stepping into coaching... I don't think that would have happened without us being friends, because

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

you didn't just say, "Oh, do you fancy being a coach?" In fact, you simply asked me if I would coach.

Maisie: Yeah. Because I had... Yeah, and just to be clear, I had a vested interest. Like, I wanted you to come and be coaching in the Collective.

And also, when you become a coach, we're told, "Don't coach your friends." Like, "Don't coach civilians without their permission." And we stick to coaching our clients. But when you are friends with other coaches, there is this nice dipping in and out of coaching and friendship and things like that.

But, you know, once in a while, I do like to be explicit and say, "Do you want me to coach you or do you want me to just be mad with you about this thing that's happened?"

Mars: I was talking to a new coach about that the other day, and she was telling me how, you know, she wants to coach her children. She wants to coach her husband. And she knows that she shouldn't and that she's trying not to do those things.

And I said, "You need a coach friend." I said, "My friend will be talking, and then something will happen, and then the question is, 'Coach or friend?'" And they'll be like, "Well, I don't want coaching, but I need coaching. Coach." Or "No, I just want to swim in this cesspool of fuckeries and just tell you how I feel about it." "Okay, friend."

And I think we navigate it really well, because I know that if I were like going in full-on coach mode, you'd be like, "Mars, I don't need a coach." And I wouldn't think, "Oh no, I've done something dreadful." I'd be like, "Oh, all right then. Let's call them wankers. Let's go."

Maisie: Yeah, I love that. Let's go.

And the other thing I think—and this is an extra; like, the bonus point on the end of my three—is we have an ongoing celebration of ourselves and of

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

each other. So, we have a daily brag system that we send each other every day something that we want to brag about and celebrate.

Mars: And sometimes, when one doesn't recognize the brag, we say, "Oh, that's your brag." It's like, "Oh, yes!"

Maisie: Yeah. It's that thing, you're like, "Are you seeing that these are celebrations?" Because I think that often we just miss them.

Mars: Yeah.

Maisie: It's just the brain works. It just focuses on the negative and doesn't see the things that are there to be celebrated. So, having someone going, "Wow, look at you doing that."

Mars: Yeah.

Maisie: It's fun.

Mars: See? That's why I need to teach you to be Jamaican, so that you go, "Is you dat?" My God, Paula's gonna listen to this and crack up.

Maisie: Anything else you want to add?

Mars: No, just that, you know, I hope we're still laughing and cackling over it in another 30 years. And "Oh my God, and do you remember the time when this happened? And how it changed things?" But no, I mean, I could talk to you for hours. Absolutely hours. And not be bored.

Maisie: I know. We have lots of things to talk about, and we will—I'll probably be calling you in 10 minutes time to continue the conversation. Well, thank you so much for coming on. It's always a delight to talk to you.

And how can people find you if they wanna learn more about you and the work that you do? And if they want to hire you as their coach?

Which they should 100% do, because listen, I am fussy as fuck about practitioners and coaches. There aren't many people that I feel comfortable

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

recommending. I set the bar high. And Mars soars above it. So, definitely go and hire her.

So, tell the people what you do and where they can find you.

Mars: Okay, so you can find me on MarsLord.co.uk. Or you can find me on Instagram. It's @_MarsLord. Nice and simple. Mars, fiery planet lording it over.

Maisie: That's really great.

Mars: I got to give them something great to say with the word "lord." But anyway, so I'm Mars Lord and that's where you find me. And LinkedIn if you want to go there as well. I'm not great with LinkedIn, I must admit.

I work predominantly with black-bodied women and people, but I love people, and so I'll work with whoever wants to work with me at the moment. My clients come to me for mindset coaching, and that crosses all the genres. I'll coach you through birth fear, through confidence issues, growing your businesses, standing up and being yourself...

And I do like to say that I like to give people space to grieve and to breathe, because sometimes there are lost dreams. Sometimes there are ways that society treats us that makes us feel lost and sad for things that we might have done.

So, that's what I like. I just love people until I don't. And to be honest, there's hardly anyone that can shock me with anything. I mean, look, one of my closest friends is a tattooed garage house dancer.

Maisie: Amazing. Well, we will link to your website on Instagram in the show notes so people can find you but thank you so much for coming on the podcast.

Mars: Oh, thank you for having me. I can't wait to return the favor, and also, I can't wait to come back again so that we can put the world to rights.

43. The People of Influence Series: Mars Lord

Maisie: Wonderful. I look forward to it. All right. Thank you, Mars. I'll talk to you in a few minutes.

Mars: Talk to you in a few. Bye-bye.

Maisie: Thanks for listening to this week's episode of the *Period Power* podcast. If you enjoyed learning how to make your cycle work for you, head over to MaisieHill.com for more.