

#86: The Practice and Momentum of Rest



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With Your Host

Marissa McKool, MPH

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with Marissa McKool, MPH](#)

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Hey, you all, I'm Marissa McKool, and you're listening to the Redefining Rest Podcast for public health professionals. Here we believe rest is your right. You don't have to earn it, you just have to learn how to take it and I'm going to teach you. Ready? Come along.

Hi everyone. What is happening? For me, I'm working a little bit this morning and then I'm heading to my solo retreat. So every year way before I started a business I did this. And now I do it with my business. I take a solo retreat at the end of the year. I didn't do this during the pandemic, but before the pandemic and now I've been doing it again where I rent an Airbnb, or a hotel and I spend a couple days with myself reflecting on the year, planning for next year. I usually either, I'm not on social media, I take a break while I'm there or I'm not watching TV. I really try to disconnect.

Last year I did it at an actual retreat center in the Santa Cruz Mountains, holy shit, it was so amazing. A couple of years before that I did it up in the Redwoods, just renting a little Airbnb. This year I'm doing it at a hotel just because it made sense for a couple of reasons. But there's just something about intentionally planning time away from your norm, from the noise, from the distractions, just you to focus on you. That is really telling yourself, hey, I care about you, I'm prioritizing you. I'm putting you first. Doing that to set the next year is so, so powerful.

So I really encourage you all to consider doing it. You can figure out a way to do it no matter your budget, no matter your geography, no matter anything. I just highly encourage you to get out of your house, even if it's just a day and you don't do overnight. So I'm heading out this afternoon to do that and I'll be there for two nights. I have a full day that I'm going to do. I'm really excited about that.

Yesterday, however, was a bit of a shit show. Everything that could have gone wrong, went wrong. I calendar, I schedule out what I'm going to do. It's a big piece of how I get rest and everything I had planned to do in the

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morning just went wrong. My software wasn't working for what I needed it to. I contacted the tech support. They still haven't gotten back to me. It really threw off my whole day. And sometimes when that happens I can, I use the word, 'easily' lightly but I can transition to doing something else.

A lot of times it's really hard for me. When I have a plan and it doesn't go accordingly, especially when it goes off by as much as it did yesterday, and the frustration, I struggle with that. And I think a lot of people do. And that's where coaching and managing my mind really comes into play and having my own understanding and ability to tune into my mind and body and what it needs. So yesterday I realized I was trying to change the plan, work on something else. I was still frustrated, I wasn't able to concentrate. I wasn't showing up fully.

And I was able to realize, you know what? Actually part of the reason why I'm getting overly frustrated about this is because I actually need rest. Whether or not those issues would have happened, I needed rest. And my mind and body was trying to tell me. So I actually took the afternoon for a couple of hours and didn't work, watched some TV, baked some cookies. And I'm so glad I did. And it's not like those couple of hours I took that break, my brain was silent, and it wasn't making noise. It's not like it felt great the whole time but I'm so glad I did it.

And that relates to today's episode because we're going to talk about and you're going to understand that rest is a practice that you have to engage in. And once you start actively and intentionally engaging in it you will get momentum and the ability to do it even when shit has hit the fan, and everything feels like chaos like it did for me yesterday. Now, here's the thing, rest does not come naturally. Now, hearing this some of you might be confused, like, well, humans sleep every night and have forever so how can it not be natural?

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The purpose and need for rest for humans is natural but our ability to rest now in the modern world, modern society does not come naturally. Maybe thousands of years ago it did, I have no idea. If I could time travel I would go find out. I did a little qualitative research. But now in our society, in life now it doesn't come naturally. We don't know how to rest even with sleep. Many of you don't know how to calm your brain emotions, feel less worry about tomorrow's presentation to actually fall asleep at the time you want to or when your body needs to, you toss and turn.

We don't know how to step away from work or not worry what others will think of us, or how to take PTO without feeling guilty. The modern society we live in has prevented you from learning and therefore knowing how to rest. We live in a hustle culture that tells us all the time, being productive matters most, that to be valued and worthy we have to do it all. There are sayings like, sleep when you're dead, that really promote overworking, and diminish, and devalue rest.

Toxic capitalism uses the idea or promotes the idea that humans should be able to function like machines, always doing, always producing. The patriarchy as a system prevents you from knowing how to rest. As we talked about a few weeks ago in the Patriarchy and Public Health episode, the patriarchy tells women they cannot rest until everyone else is taken care of. That they have to be the perfect employee, perfect partner, mom, friend, daughter.

Because of this, in order to experience rest you actually have to intentionally practice it, it doesn't come naturally. You are not encouraged by the world around you, in fact, you're highly discouraged. Rest is like yoga. You have to practice it. It's like meditation, you have to practice it. It's like dancing, you have to practice it, like football, you have to practice it. It's lifelong, it's an ongoing practice. Your practice of rest also changes. Right now many of you might have minimal or almost nonexistent practices of rest.

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All of you rest to some extent and it might not be intentional, and it might not be a true practice. When you create an intentional purposeful practice of rest that practice changes with the season, with the phases in your life and what's happening in your current day. Rest looks different when you're in school than when you're a stay-at-home mom. And a practice of rest is flexible, dynamic, responsive, meaning it's giving your body and mind rest when it needs it. Being able to do that requires you to be able to read your body cues, understand your body, listen to your body.

And we are so socialized to disconnect from our body, to ignore it. I mean from doctors telling us that we're just making it up or imagining things happening in our body when we present medical things happening, to it being normalized to not eat when your stomach grumbles and many other things. You also have to be able to recognize your mental indicators, your brain indicators. And this is different than listening to your brain when it's telling you, keep working, you just have to finish this, you're almost done. That is not what I'm talking about.

I'm talking about when you feel your brain, your head feel foggy or heavy. You notice your eyes drooping, or you're rereading things a lot. Those indicators that really limit your energy and your capacity to move forward and indicate you need rest. Now, one of the reasons it's challenging for us to recognize our mind and body indicators, listen to them, know what they are is we've never been taught. And also we are completely discouraged from it. There is lots of barriers to rest in the world and promotions of burnout.

We cannot necessarily change all those especially not overnight. But what you can do in the face of that is learn how to understand your mind and body, what are your specific cues and indicators, learn about them so you can respond to them. And when you do this piece you get so much closer to yourself. You have a much stronger relationship with yourself and trust. You feel so much more connected to your body, to your mind, to your

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whole being. And this means integrating rest into your life, not trying to disrupt your life.

I think oftentimes what happens with, I mean truly any habit whether it's exercising, or eating a certain way, or starting meditation, or a practice of rest, is we try to go from zero to a 100 and it totally disrupts our life. And therefore it's not sustainable. The purpose is not to disrupt your life, it's to integrate rest into your life. That's why I don't really believe that rest is only defined by doing nothing all day on the couch. It can be that some days, but rest is so much more than that. It's the little things that you do every single day throughout the day.

That's why sometimes rest is a 10 minute walk after you've been sitting all day and sometimes it's a three hour hike. Sometimes it's watching Friends at 2.00pm on a workday like I did yesterday. And sometimes it's completely taking a break from TV for a week. In order to have a practice of rest it also means you have to intentionally plan and make space for rest. Rest does not magically happen. This is part of the reason I calendar what I'm doing.

I think a lot of times people in public health, when they try to have a better calendaring system or planner system they're only thinking about it in the context of getting more work done. For me that is not why I calendar. That's not my main motive for calendaring which is why I think I'm very successful at using my calendar and work not disrupting my rest. Because the main purpose of calendaring for me is to protect my rest, to create time for rest, to make sure I have time for me.

So when I calendar I'm not just putting things I need to do for work. I'm putting in the things I want to do for fun, I'm putting breaks. I'm putting my lunch. I'm putting working out, I'm putting other things. I cannot tell you how many public health professionals I talk to who got to such a place of burnout which they didn't even realize they were burning out, where their body literally had to shut down for them to rest. Because they didn't know

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how to (a) listen to their body along the way, and its signals, and give it rest. So then it just built up to huge burnout.

But (b) plan for rest until their body literally shut down and said, there's no other way, I'm forcing you. Rest is a choice. It's a choice you have to make, you have to make it happen. Put it in your calendar, protect it, commit to it. The practice of rest can absolutely be uncomfortable. I think we get these messages on social media especially that rest is joyful, and luxurious, and feel so good. And I think some of those messages really come from the idea we're already fed that you achieve that level of rest once you do enough, once you're successful enough.

So actually those messages don't even encourage us to rest now. It encourages us to try to hustle for our rest which doesn't work. The truth is rest can be really uncomfortable and that's okay. I think part of the reason so many people don't quit when they try to rest more is because of the discomfort and they think something's gone wrong. This must mean I can't rest. No, that's totally normal especially at first.

There is a period with all of my one-on-one clients, where a couple of weeks they're working through this discomfort of resting. Whether that resting is in the form of actually using sick leave and not working, saying no to other people asking for help, doing what they want to, reading. Rest can mean so many things to different people in different times of your life.

The reason it's uncomfortable is because when you go to rest your brain is telling you all the messages you've received around the world. You're being lazy, you're falling behind, there's so much more you should do. People are going to judge you, you're letting everyone down, you're going to get so stressed out next week. You have to do more. You have to prepare. All of those thoughts. Those thoughts are uncomfortable because we believe we can only rest when we deserve it or have earned it.

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So when we go to rest and we 'haven't,' and put that in quotes, our brain freaks out, tells us something's wrong. And then we feel that anxiety, or fear and go, "Oh, oh, this must mean I can't rest, I haven't earned it, I haven't done enough." Once I do enough rest will be easy and it will feel really good. No, you might have some tightness in your stomach or sweaty hands, or red cheeks, other physical sensations. Your brain might be making a lot of noise. You might struggle being present. You might get distracted but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be resting.

You will have the urge to do something when you sit down to rest, when you decide you want to read, that's normal, expect that. This is because you have been taught to believe productivity creates your feelings, that always doing, getting more done will make you feel better. That if you have anxiety or guilt that means you just must do more and then it will go away. If you get enough done then rest will feel good. That's a big fat lie. Your brain will always tell you there is more to do because the truth is there will always be more to do.

But the fact that you believe you have to do more to enjoy rest is a lie from the patriarchy, which keeps you hustling at home, at work, in your community, with your family, with your friends and not resting. You have to allow the discomfort, be with it. Don't make it mean anything about you. At first this is really hard. We're not lying here, we're not sugarcoating, it can feel really hard.

And this still happens to me sometimes, actually yesterday the story I told you. In the afternoon when I took a break and I was making cookies and watching Friends, my brain kept saying, "You need to go back to work." It kept coming up with ideas of things I need to do. I felt the anxiety in my body. But I allowed it, I let that feeling be there. Those thoughts could be there. I didn't have to react to them and neither do you know because those thoughts aren't true. They're just optional sentences your brain is offering you.

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And those feelings are just physical sensations in your body. And this is something that having support at first really, really changes the game, it really helps you. Having a coach, or a workbook, or a tool, some sort of support really changes your experience here and really helps you not give up and move through it. And know how to move through it and have support moving through it. And instead of just focusing on the discomfort, being able to see the progress, the benefits. That's part of the reason why I added one-on-one coaching to the How the Patriarchy Robs you of Rest course.

At first I wasn't going to have that, and I really was thinking about it, and I was like, "I'm designing this for folks who have never done life coaching, who don't know how to coach themselves, who really struggle to rest." This five week course is almost an introduction, the foundation, the true transformation and change that's going to totally change the trajectory of their experience in their life and career moving forward. Because now they're going to know how to integrate, create rest, protect rest.

They really need that one-on-one support in order to move through the beginning discomfort. So that's why I added the weekly one-on-one coaching, so that they could get that support directly, and not give up, and not quit and see the benefits and have momentum. Once you start this practice, momentum is what helps you take it forward. It's starting that's the hardest part.

I have a client who started their rest practice while we were one-on-one coaching with just allowing themselves when they got home from a work trip, not to rush around the house and think they have to unpack and do all the chores right away. They started with just allowing themselves to do nothing, maybe unpack and that's it, maybe feed their animal and that's it. And it was uncomfortable for them at first, but they did it, they moved through it, we coached on it. Then they were able to build momentum.

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They were able to start taking their flex days without working for the first time ever. They started taking sick leave when they were actually sick and were honest about it and felt not guilty for taking sick leave and didn't check their email. When you start this practice it can feel really hard at first. But when you move through that discomfort, especially when you have support to do that it gets so much easier, and it changes. The ball starts rolling.

It's like when you start working out after not going to the gym for months or even years. It's hard that first workout, or second, or third. Maybe the first three weeks but then three months in, three years in it gets easier, and easier, and easier. And the hardest part is starting especially if you're doing it on your own without support, which is why I created this course in the first place. I don't want anyone to have to go through the starting discomfort alone. Because I know most likely you're going to quit. That happened to me a bunch of times.

I had to do a lot of this on my own and I quit many times. And I had to fight tooth and nail to figure out how to do this. I don't want you to go through that. I want you to have the guidance, the tools, the knowledge, the skills that I had to figure out alone, that I had to do the trial and error. And I'm just going to give you the best ones that worked the best, so you don't have to do that. Because I want you to rest. I want you to have a practice of rest because I know firsthand how transformational this is.

And the last thing I want you to do is get the intention, and the desire, and the decision to start to rest. And then when the discomfort happens you quit because once you move through that discomfort, everything changes in your life. It's so much easier and better. You notice these impacts in your mind and body. You notice the benefits. You get incentives to keep doing it and then the ball keeps going. And then you start to really look forward to, and enjoy, and kind of bathe in the luxurious piece of planning rest, of doing rest, of putting yourself first.

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And then you get to feel pride, and accomplishment, and empowerment, and confidence with how you practice rest in your life. When you create and have a rest practice, this is what you get, to do things you enjoy without guilt, not second guessing the time you spend on yourself. Having mental space to take action towards your goals, being present in what you are doing without being stuck in the past or future in your head. Have more resilience to face any life challenge.

You're less reactive to those around you because you're less stressed. You don't shut down from overwhelm. You don't get stuck in overwhelm. You don't feel rushed with getting everything done. You don't forget as many things. You experience peace and calm. You wake up easier. You're not in dread every morning or panic. You feel happier. You have more time back in your mornings, and evenings, and weekends. You're more creative and so much more.

Here is what I have created with the rest practice in my life and how I currently practice rest, which again is everchanging. It will probably be different in three months, in a year, in five years but here's just where I am now as a snapshot of what you can see is possible for you when you implement a practice of rest. I typically only work four hours a week. I work hours that I know my brain and body is at its optimal peak, which for me is 7:30am to 3:00pm.

Now, this is not for everyone, but it is for me, and I really protect my time to do this. Because I know after about three o'clock, I'm not the most optimal. I don't have the most energy for being on the computer, of critical thinking. I can take a break at 2.00pm on a Wednesday and watch an episode of Friends and bake cookies when I know I need that.

I go to vegan restaurants by myself because I don't really have any vegan friends and I read. And I don't care what anyone else in the restaurant thinks of me. In fact I used to be worried if I'd eat alone that people would

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be looking at me and being like, “What a loser, she's alone.” But you know what I think now when I’m in there? I’m like, “Oh my gosh, these people wish they had my confidence.” Obviously they are looking at me and thinking, gosh, I wish I was so confident I could just go enjoy my lunch alone and read. I really do believe that.

I do multiple vacations a year where I don't work. Right now I've been using a rental clothing subscription which has been so fun, so much rest. I don't have to think about my wardrobe, but I get to feel fabulous and fun. And I get to wear luxurious clothes that I would never buy. It's so much fun. I spend money and love it, even high amounts of money. I'm so much more intentional with what I spend my money on, and I spend it on things for me that I love, that make me feel good.

I don't deny myself that. I used to do that all the time and that feels terrible, a lot of you are doing that. I have a lot of clients who did that with coaching for a long time. And one of the things once they get coaching is they're like, “Holy crap. I can't believe I denied this because this has made my life so much better.” And I'd spend this money on me and what I want without guilt.

One of the things, here's an example, I'm going to see Adele in February. Those tickets were fucking expensive, and I don't regret it. I'm so excited. I take random Thursdays off to go snowboarding. I meal prep my breakfast and lunch most Sundays, not every. So I have amazing, yummy meals to keep me energized and thinking, and moving through the week. Because I know, if I don't do that I'm just going to end up eating snacks for lunch. I know myself. I know what my body needs, and I give it to it.

I typically sleep at least eight hours or more a night because I have learned that is what my body needs. I really limit my time and interactions with friends, or colleagues, or family, or acquaintances who I don't really want to spend a lot of time with, and I don't feel bad about it. I cry during work

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hours when I need to process something and I'm not ashamed. And this might be the most important piece. I am having such a bigger impact on the world now that I have a rest practice. All of you in public health are so passionate about changing the world, about having an impact, about leaving your mark.

I will tell you I've done some amazing things in my career. The most impactful things I have done have actually been an outcome of practicing rest. Because what I can contribute when I'm energized, when I feel good about myself, when I'm confident, when I know I'm giving myself space and time. What I can give to the rest of the world and my community is so much more impactful. Creating a practice of rest in your life is so much bigger than getting more sleep. It is truly the key to creating and living the life you want to unapologetically.

A rest practice of giving your mind and body what it needs, having more time for yourself, putting yourself first, going after what you want is life transformative. A rest practice of doing what you want, being happy, not feeling bad for who you are or what you want in life is revolutionary. And you all as I said when I started this podcast, we are starting a revolution in public health, but it all starts with you. You have to do this work first. You have to change your life first. You have to have more mental, emotional capacity, more time.

You have to feel more confident, it starts with you. So come and join my course so you can create and continue a practice of rest. You don't have to do it alone. I promise this ensures you will not give up and quit on yourself because you'll have support. This will change your life, please do not wait, do not get stuck in the maybe hole. If you're on my email list or follow me on LinkedIn, you know about the maybe hole. Don't get stuck there.

There is no good reason to wait to change your life, I mean zero. I have yet to find a good reason to not change your life, not money because when you

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change your life, if you want more money you can get it. Not time because changing your life actually gives you more time back for what you truly want. Not ever not doing it before, not trying life coaching before because that is why you're not resting now. You have been waiting on the edge for your life to change. You want it to change, I know because you wouldn't be listening to this podcast if you didn't.

You are a dreamer, everyone in public health is a dreamer. You have dreams and desires you are denying yourself right now because you are not taking action to change your life. Whether those dreams and desires are to read more, to take a ceramics class, to go on vacation, or to start a business, be an executive director, build a foundation, give a certain amount money back to your community, anything. You have to start right now by learning how to create and have a practice of rest. There is no way around it.

You can do it in the best way possible with guidance, and teaching, and tools, and one-on-one support which I wish I had when I was doing this. You're not alone, you don't have to do this alone. You will get the change and transformation much faster and more effectively and feeling better when you don't do it alone. So I want you come join me. Starts January 9th, it's only a five week course. Remember, we're not trying to disrupt your life, we are integrating into your life. You get workbooks every week, short video lessons and one-on-one coaching with me every week. It's only \$500.

If you've ever wanted to try coaching now is the time. Head to mckoolcoaching.com/courses to find out more and enroll and I'll see you there. Alright, you all, bye everyone.

If you found this episode helpful then you have to check out my coaching program where I provide you individualized support to create a life centered

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around rest. Head on over to mckoolcoaching.com, that's M-C-K-O-O-L coaching.com to learn more.