

#87: Is Rest a Privilege?



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With Your Host

Marissa McKool, MPH

[Redefining Rest for Public Health Professionals Podcast
with Marissa McKool, MPH](#)

#87: Is Rest a Privilege?

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. How is it going? How are you doing? Are you getting some rest? Are you relaxing, or do you need a vacation from the holiday chaos? I generally find most people go into this time of year, especially if you celebrate the holidays around this time of year, whether it's Christmas, Hannukah, Kwanzaa, New Year's, anything else. Either expecting it to be really relaxing and then finding out that it's not, or expecting it to be chaos and overwhelming, and then making it even more overwhelming and exhausting by being worried about that, which one are you?

I'm recording this episode before we head out for the holidays. We are going to Gerard's family in LA to celebrate both Christmas and Hannukah. So as you're listening to this I'll be travelling back from that or either have already gotten back. Every year Gerard and I do our own traditions, we have started just the two of us which we've already done, which I love. We make gingerbread houses and by make I mean decorate. We buy the store bought kits. We also have a weekend day where I make vegan babka, and he makes latkes, and we watch a Christmas movie.

And that's just really fun and I'm really excited for in the future if we have children doing that with them. And I love having our little tradition before we spend time with our families. And this week as you're listening to it, it's coming upon the New Year. You're probably thinking about what do you want to be different this next year? If you aren't already on my email list, I want you to go get on it because I am sharing some of the questions I use to reflect on my last year and next year, the activities I do to really plan for next year.

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I've already shared some of them on TikTok. Yes, I'm on TikTok, figuring it out still, and they are some of the most saved videos. People can add them to their favorites. I'm going to share it directly to my email list, to all of you so you can have it in written format, easy, you can follow it. It's stuff you can do like half an hour, hour of your own time. It doesn't take a whole lot of time, but it has such an impact.

So I want you to get on my email list if you aren't already, and you're thinking about next year and what you want to be different, and you want some kind of reflection questions or a different way to think about it. I promise you, this way that I reflect on last year and think about next year is totally different than anything else. It's not New Year's resolution, I promise. It will really help you kind of shift and go into next year with momentum, feeling excited, optimistic, hopeful, and really being able to move forward to create what you want.

And for many of you I think one of the things you have been wanting for a long time is a variation of rest. Now, if you're new to this podcast, I'm so glad you're here. I just want to start off by saying my definition of rest, in this whole community, of this podcast community, and in public health. I'm really trying to change the definition of rest to be more than just sleeping in or taking a vacation although that absolutely can be rest, to mean giving your mind and body what it needs, when it needs it. To mean having more time for yourself. To mean doing the things you want to do.

To mean enjoying your life and having emotional capacity to feel all the emotions of life, and so, so many other things. But I think so many of you, what you've been wanting the past year is really a sense of rest from a place of having peace, not feeling overwhelmed, not overworking, not feeling rush. Instead, feeling peace, being able to be present in your life, to be able to do the things you want to do and enjoy it. And I think about this question a lot. Is rest a privilege? I've been asked that a few times too.

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I think some people react to the content I share and the work I'm doing from a place of, well, you can't just tell anyone they can get rest. That's not the way it works. Their job might not allow them. They might not have the money, how dare you say they can rest? And that's an exaggeration the way I explain that, but to illustrate that I think there is this idea, I think largely a questioned idea that rest is a privilege and not everyone can access it.

And me being in public health and in various social justice movements for a long time, constantly working to be anti-oppressive, I naturally think about this too. I know there's folks who listen to this who aren't in public health. If you're not in public health, or if you are, but not really embedded into the social justice movements. You might not be thinking about this in the same way that I have been.

But I do think you think about this as well, just in a different way because I think there is an assumption in our culture, in our society that rest is a privilege and not everyone can have it. But is that true? And who benefits when we believe that that is true?

One of the main reasons you are not resting, having more time for yourself, feeling peace, being able to be present, doing the things you want is because you believe you can't. And you believe you can't for a lot of reasons. One of them being that you believe it is a privilege you don't have, you don't have right now, you don't have yet, you can't have, you can't access. The goal of today's episode is for you to see that the only thing preventing you from resting is yourself and that rest is available to you no matter your circumstance.

But let's start with why do we believe rest is a privilege. Even if you believe it more on an unconscious, subconscious level, why? Many of you probably don't use that language of rest is a privilege to describe it. You might be thinking, well, I can't afford a massage, or I don't have the luxury to take a

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sabbatical. I remember being a staff in academia and being so upset faculty got to take sabbaticals, why can't staff? You dress up the idea of rest being a privilege in other clothes. But essentially you think that rest is a privilege, that you don't have access to.

And first I want to start off by being very clear that the term 'privilege' is a political analysis, not a moral one. We often mix the political analysis and the moral analysis up, when we talk about any type of privilege, whether it's 'rest privilege' or anything else. And systems of oppression want us, want you to mix the understanding up because when you believe it is a moral determiner of you, you won't question it or challenge it, or change it. Privilege means having your right, an ability and advantage that other people do not have.

You are given this, you are allowed this, sometimes whether you want it or not. For example, white privilege. I'm white, meaning I benefit in the world we live in from being white. I have privileges because I am white, that people of color do not. Not because I asked for it, not because I created it, because of the system and the structure we live in. Now, yes, as a white person who benefits under white privilege, I can be part of the problem for sure. But my having white privilege and having the privilege of that isn't because I deserve it and isn't because people of color don't, it's because how the system is set up.

So when I get pulled over by a cop I don't have to worry about being killed. I don't worry about that. That is a privilege. Where Black women being pulled over by a cop, does. When you believe rest is a privilege you are saying some people have the right, the ability, the advantage to take rest and other people do not. And it makes sense why we believe this. We are taught to, we are taught to believe that rest is a limited set of activities, a spa day, sleeping in, a vacation, sabbaticals. And when you're taught, here's the menu of rest activities, that's it.

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When you believe that those are the only forms of rest available then of course rest becomes a privilege for the few and not the many because some people can't afford a massage, or their jobs don't allow them or give them sabbaticals. The second thing we're taught is that rest is an action or inaction. We're told it's doing this specific thing or not doing this specific thing. Doing a social media detox, going on a 10 day silent meditation retreat, not doing work, laying on the couch, getting a pedicure, going to a beach.

So if rest is an action or inaction and a specific one at that, then some people, based on their circumstances may not be able to take that action or inaction, then it becomes a privilege. And the reason that those two beliefs we have been told, rest is a limited set of activities, and those activities are either an action or inaction. When we believe that that is true, the reason those things become a privilege in a sense is because they are dependent on circumstantial factors, whether it's income, or job title, or the amount of jobs you work and how much time you have, or the type of job you have.

Or these other structural factors that absolutely can be impacted by the systems we work in, we live in, we live under. However, rest is not an action or inaction. Rest is not an activity. Rest is created by your mindset. Why is it that one person can be on a beach on their vacation feeling calm and present and someone else on vacation on the same beach can be feeling annoyed and worried? They're both participating in the same activity, going on vacation. They are both taking the same action, sitting at the beach yet one feels stressed and the other feels relaxed.

If rest was determined by the activity or action they would both be feeling the same way, they would both be feeling rested and relaxed, but they don't. All of you listening every single one of you have participated in a form of 'traditional rest,' the types of rest we are sold and did not find it restful. One of them we all have experienced is the weekend, the idea that we work five days and have two days off.

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Most public health jobs, that's the way they're structured. Even if they're not, I have a client who's working kind of on crisis, I guess, response. So it's not structured the same way, but they still get time off. We're all of us, we've had a weekend and probably many, we've taken those two days every weekend and not worked, considered a traditional form of rest, yet have had that weekend and not felt rested, have actually felt stressed the whole weekend, the whole time.

You're doing the activity, you're taking two days, you're not opening your computer, you're not reading emails. You're not working, you're taking that inaction, maybe you're even taking the action of sleeping in and watching TV, but you don't feel relaxed and rested. And some weekends you do, doing the same exact actions. Why is that? How can you have a weekend that's supposed to be rest without working and feel stressed, and a weekend that's supposed to be rest without working and feel relaxed?

If it was the weekend, if it was the act of not reading emails, that maybe feel rested, you would feel rested every time you did that, but you don't. Because what creates your experience of rest is not the action or activity, it's what you are thinking, one person on the beach is worried about how much work they'll have when they get back, the emails piling up. They're thinking about that. They're worried about it so they're not resting, they're not present, they're not calm.

The other person on the same beach isn't thinking about any of that. They are just thinking about how happy they are to be with their family, how beautiful it is, how great the weather is, and they are relaxed. The same beach, the same activity, different mindsets, different thoughts. One is rested and one is not. Rest is not dependent on what you are doing or not doing. It is dependent on what you are thinking. What you think creates how you feel. This is why there are people in the world who find sitting in traffic relaxing. And I have spoken to many of them.

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Now, some of you hate sitting in traffic and it's hard for you to imagine that other people love it, but it's a 100% true. Now, let's take a step back from that. If you can't imagine the traffic example that's okay. Let's think about road trips, you all know both of these people. One person who loves road trips, finds them so fun and enjoyable and one person who hates road trips. You might be one of those people. It's not being in the car, it's not driving, it's not the distance that makes a road trip restful for one person and stressful for another.

It's not whether there are kids in the car or not, or you have service or not, it's their thoughts about it. Why is it, you could walk into a movie theater with a friend, see the same movie at the same time and one of you walks out and that you loved it, thought it was the best use of your time and the other walks out and hates it, thinks it was a waste of their time? Because you have different thoughts about it. All rest truly is, is an emotional experience. Now, for some of you, you might be resisting this. You might be saying, "Well, what about sleep? What about resting your muscles after you work out?"

Yes, physiological rest matters. When you sleep there's so much that happens that your body needs. Repairing muscles and tissues, and many other forms of physiological rest. However, if you do not have emotional rest you make it very, very hard to access the physiological rest. That's why extreme burnout results in potentially eczema outbreaks, or dehydration, or constant headaches. Because the emotional experience of being stressed all the time and overwhelmed is preventing your body from getting the physiological rest and repair it needs.

When you can't fall asleep because you're tossing and turning, worried about work, you are preventing your body from getting the physiological rest it needs when you sleep. When you want to experience rest or have a desire to experience rest, what you want is the emotional rest. Yes, physiological rest matters, absolutely. But what you want is the emotional

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rest and you need the emotional rest to even get the physiological rest. What you are wanting is to feel a certain way, to feel present, to feel calm, to feel content, to feel relaxed, to feel relief.

You want to not feel a certain way. You don't want to feel overwhelmed or resentful, or frustrated, or hopeless, or depleted. When you want rest, when you are seeking rest, what you are seeking is a feeling. And we have been tricked into believing that what delivers the feelings you want, calm, present, content, is a certain set of limited activities like vacations, spa days, sleeping in. But those activities do not deliver your feelings. And that's why two people can be on vacation together doing the same thing and one person feels relaxed and one person feels stressed.

You only feel present, and calm, and content, and relaxed because of the thoughts you are having that create those feelings. That's why if you go to a spa already worried, you're too busy, have a lot to do, this is taking up too much time. But you go there thinking, we'll all go and get relaxed and then I can get everything else done. When you lay on that massage table, your worries are not going to disappear. Your mind is not going to turn off.

You'll be laying there thinking about all the things you have to do when you get home, trying to mentally organize the best order of operations to get it done efficiently. You won't be present. You'll barely notice the sensations of the massage because what is creating your worry are your thoughts. What's going to eliminate your worry is not a massage. You have to change what you're thinking. Your thoughts haven't changed just because you're in a spa, they're the same. Rest being created by your thoughts, emotional rest being the result of what you're thinking means anyone can experience rest anywhere, anytime.

If your emotional experience of calm, presence, peace, relaxation, if your emotional experience of not feeling worried or overwhelmed is created by what you think then you can feel those ways whether you're washing the

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dishes, riding a bike, or sitting in traffic. Meaning feeling rested is not location dependent, income dependent, activity dependent. Feeling rested is just dependent on what you think. Meaning it is available and accessible to everyone.

Going from feeling stressed to rested only requires you to change your thoughts, no matter your income, your job title, the amount of money in the bank account, your work responsibilities, how many kids you have, how many jobs you work. You can access rest whenever you want. Rest is not a privilege but when you believe it is you deny yourself the privilege of rest. I'm going to say that again. Rest is not a privilege but when you believe it is you deny yourself the privilege of rest.

You keep chasing external things, finishing your to-do list, getting other people to like you, making more money to try to feel rested. That never works, not sustainably. You keep chasing it, you burn out. And systems of oppression, especially the patriarchy and toxic capitalism, know this. That's why they promote that, the idea that rest has to be earned and deserved, and it's a reward. They promote that productivity makes you feel good. They promote your value and worth is based on how much you do.

And when you believe that, you don't rest, you aren't happy, you keep yourself small, you don't show up fully or authentically. You don't make your big dreams and goals happen. You doubt yourself. You don't change the world which is exactly what they want. When you know that not only rest is not a privilege, and it is a right, and that it is created by what you think, you have a 100% control over whether or not you rest. Rest is a choice you get to make, an experience you create. You are in control over your life.

You are free when you finally realize the truth that emotional rest is created by you and only you. Then you get to feel confident, and happy, and empowered, and joyful, and present whenever you want. When you feel

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that way more often, when you rest more, not only do you feel better, but you show up exactly as you are and how you want to live. You start putting yourself first. You allow yourself to want what you want and have it. You experience true fulfillment and purpose in life.

So my answer to the question of, is rest a privilege? My answer is no, but when you do believe it's a privilege, when you believe the lies that rest is only a specific set of activities or actions, and that those actions will magically make you feel good, then you treat rest as a privilege that you are not allowed to have. You deny yourself the rest that's available to you right now no matter what you're doing, no matter where you are.

It's time you start allowing yourself to rest, which is a 100% controlled and determined by you, no matter the circumstances of your life, of your home life, of your job, of where you live, of how much money you have. This isn't denying any challenges you face at all, or any structural barriers that you have to taking certain actions or participating in certain activities. It's not denying that.

It's pointing out that even if you have those challenges and barriers, that does not prevent you from resting because emotional rest, the experience of peace, and relaxation, and presence is not determined by those things. It's determined by you and what you're thinking. And this is exactly what you're going to do in 2023. You're going to leave the belief that rest isn't for you, that you have to wait for it, that you have to earn it, that you can never really have it. You're going to leave that bullshit in 2022. In 2023 you're going to take rest, not just once, every day.

You're going to feel confident and certain, you're going to access relaxation, and peace, and presence. You're going to have more time and more control over your life. And you're going to start doing the things you actually want to do. And you're going to learn exactly how in the How the Patriarchy Robs you of Rest course. On this episode you learned that rest

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is not a privilege but you're denying yourself the privilege of rest. And you learned how rest is actually created which is through your thoughts.

You learned what rest really is, which is your emotional experience. In this course, in the How the Patriarchy Robs of You of Rest course, you're going to learn the how, how to create it without force, without discipline, without shame, without convincing yourself. It's easy. Once you learn it you'll never forget it. I designed this course in a way that would have given me my version of myself four years ago, where you are right now, everything I needed to do this.

I was so unaware of how much better my life could be without my job changing, without my income changing. It's not complicated. It's simple. You'll get concrete steps and a guide for applying this directly to your life. And one-on-one support from me each week in private coaching calls. It's a five week long course because truly that's all you need to learn the how of how to implement rest into your life and it is a private course just for you. You get all the materials directly to your inbox to do on your own time.

You meet with me on Zoom virtually every single week for five weeks to coach through all of it. And before February really starts, you'll have more energy, more time, more excitement, more confidence. You'll feel peace, and calm, and present in 2023, more than you ever did in 2022. And you'll know how to create that over, and over, and over, and over again for the rest of your life.

So head to mckoolcoaching.com/courses, click enroll, schedule your first coaching session with me for the week of January 9th, pay, you're in the course. You'll get everything you need sent to you via email. We start the week of January 9th. There are limited spots available. We close enrollment January 6th. So it's a little less than two weeks away. If you go and click enroll and there's no more coaching spots left, that means the course is

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already full. So go there right now, don't miss your chance, get one of the last spots and make sure that in 2023 you get control back over your life.

Alright, you all, hope you have a great New Year's, be safe. Love you. Talk to you next week.

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