

#91: Consistency is Overrated



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With Your Host

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with Marissa McKool, MPH](#)

#91: Consistency is Overrated

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.

Well, hello there. I am so glad you're here. If you are new around here, welcome. My name is Marissa and I help you feel better, have more time, have less stress, and get rest, and redefine rest. And I'm so glad you're here. For those of you who are weekly listeners, I see you. I appreciate you. I'm so glad you're back. How are you doing? And I have to be honest for me, I am fatigued. I am tired. My sleep schedule's been a little messed up, my schedule's been a little messed up and I've been drinking more caffeine than normally is good for my body.

And it's the end of the day, it's a Friday, the day I'm recording. I've had four coaching sessions today with clients and one meeting. So it's been a lot of on Zoom, all good stuff though. I'm very, very excited. One of the things that I looked at, at the end of 2022, is how many organizations in public health I've worked with. I've worked with a lot of individuals one-on-one, which I love. But I've started working more with public health organizations. And last year I did about, I think eight or nine. And the meeting I had today was with an organization to facilitate a session around rest for their staff.

I've submitted a proposal for an organization that I've been in discussions with to do a whole training and coaching. So I have been loving doing that. I think it's so awesome, organizations putting up the resources so their staff can get the support, I love that. So if you're listening and you're a supervisor or a leader and you think this could be helpful for your staff, reach out.

Or if you're not a supervisor or leader but think this would be helpful for your colleagues and organization and you want to pitch it to them, by all means, I would love to work with your organization and help everyone

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whether it's your team, or the division or whoever gets more support. And even though I'm tired, the coaching sessions have been amazing. Today specifically some of them were students from the How the Patriarchy Robs You of Your Rest course. In that course, everyone gets a coaching session every single week.

And some of them were from my private one-on-one six-month coaching program which is a bit more intensive and in-depth. And I just want to share something that came up a lot today before we get into the episode. So much of the conversations, the coaching, the teaching I was giving today in these one-on-one sessions with public health professionals just like you, researchers, program managers, parents, leaders, people working at health departments, people working for government, for non-profit, for academia, all over.

Was giving yourself permission to want what you want. For so many of us, I think almost every person is socialized to some degree not to want what you want. And these messages come from all over, whether it's religion or school or media. And then there is an additional layer for folks who are socialized as women from the patriarchy that you're not allowed to want what you want, it's selfish, self-centered. And then if you work in a helping profession because our whole purpose and mission is to help others, not ourselves.

So acknowledging what you want is not okay, it's frowned upon. And I think what can be tricky is we also live in a culture with toxic capitalism that really promotes getting exactly what you want, getting rich, getting there fast, doing it all. So there are these dual messages of go for it all but also don't let yourself want what you want. And for so many people in public health, so many of you that leaves you just denying what you want, pretending you don't want it and suppressing it and judging yourself for it.

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And so many of the things I discussed today with my clients and coaching them on was just opening up the space to give themselves permission to want what they want. Whether what they want is to make more money, to start a business or what they want is to spend their money on travel, or what they want is more acknowledgement at work, whatever it may be. And when we did this what happened was a sense of relief, a breath of fresh air, because you're connecting with yourself. You're being honest with yourself. You're building integrity and relationship with yourself.

And when you deny yourself the ability to just want what you want, which by the way wanting is different than going after or having, when you just let yourself feel the want of, feel it in your body, be honest about it. There is relief in that. There is empowerment in that. There is connection in that. And so I really want you to think about this and ask yourself where this is showing up in your life. This just came up so much today, I had to share it with all of you.

And if you're interested in the course or any of my future courses on one-on-one coaching, go ahead and go on to mkcoolcoaching.com/coaching. Sign up for my waitlist. You'll get notified about any one-on-one slots that open or new courses or any other resources, so get on that if you're curious or interested.

With that, let's start the episode because today we're talking about consistency. And really this whole month on the podcast we have been talking about things related to goals or creating the life you want. And if you've missed any of those past episodes of how to dream, 10-minute goals, or my life update where I kind of share my lived experience of what it's like actually creating the life you want. You can always go back after this episode and take a listen.

But when we talk about goals or new year's resolutions or anything else you often hear the advice to be consistent. Want to run a marathon? Well,

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you have to be consistent with your training plan. Want to get a job? Well, you have to be consistent with applying every day. Want to have less stress? Well, then you have to be consistent with meditating every single morning. And I am here to offer a very controversial belief in the coaching habits, goals arena which is that consistency is overrated.

Now, for many of you, this is going to be relief and that breath of fresh air. This is going to be the permission to want what you want ultimately in a different way. There is this idea that in order to be successful, to be a better person, to achieve what you want you 'have to' be consistent. And not only do I believe that not to be true, but I think believing that actually prevents you from achieving a lot of your goals or whatever you want.

Because what happens when you believe you 'have to' be consistent, you put a lot of pressure on yourself. You shame yourself if you are not consistent. You start to doubt if you can even do it. You force yourself to double down sometimes to prove that you're wrong. Well, I didn't do it yesterday, so I have to do it twice as long today. And often you quit because you believe since I haven't been consistent I'm failing, or I will fail and it's not worth it. You don't set yourself up for success. And not only that, you don't set yourself up to actually enjoy the journey, to learn, to be present.

The point of any goal is that you are doing it for you because you want to. When you set the goal of a marathon it's because you wanted to. This is why I will never have the goal of running a marathon because I don't want to. But if that's your goal you set it because you want to. Maybe you like the idea of the specific challenge. Maybe you want to get out more. Maybe you want to move your body more, whatever the reason is. If you have a goal to get a new job you set that goal for you, whether to find a job you love or that fits your life more.

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If you have a goal of experiencing less stress and meditating more, you did that for you because you want to have more peace or more calm. But when you put pressure on yourself to be consistent you lose all of that. Your goal becomes a measure of your worth and value, how perfectly you follow through on your plan becomes the goal more than the goal itself. You take yourself out of the reasons you started the goal in the first place. And you put yourself more into using your consistency as a determiner of if you can or should be proud of yourself, or disappointed in yourself.

You don't get to enjoy any of it. You don't get to enjoy going on a run outside because you're too busy telling yourself you didn't run far enough. You don't get to feel excited about finding a job you like and imagining what it would be like because you're too busy beating yourself up for missing a full day of applying. You don't get to be proud you meditated for 10 minutes because you're spending so much time in your head telling yourself you could have done it longer, you should do it every day, you should do it more often.

You end up chasing the perfection of consistency rather than experiencing the journey of your goal itself. And then we use this to label ourselves. I'm an inconsistent person, I'm a consistent person as if those are real things that exist in the world. It's not, there's no such thing as an inconsistent and consistent person. Those are just labels. Those are just thoughts. And we use those labels as a way to communicate what we think our worth or value is and keep us in a box.

When you label yourself as I'm an inconsistent person and take that on as an identity you keep yourself stuck there. And not in the inconsistency, in the shame of it because you're using that label to tell yourself you're not good enough, you're not worthy, you're not valuable, you're not capable. You are neither a consistent or inconsistent person. It's not a thing. You are a person who has a thought that you're consistent or inconsistent. Part of

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the reason we know consistency is 100% subjective. One person might define taking a shower every single day as being consistent.

But another person could define taking a shower every other day as being consistent. Yet the measures are completely different. They both say that they're consistent but the amount they shower, the frequency, the cadence are completely different. One person might say well, "I've only read once this week, twice last week and zero the week before," and say, "That means I am inconsistent." Someone else could see them and be like, "No, I think that's pretty consistent of you." It's completely subjective. There is no universal measure of consistency or inconsistency.

It's all made up, we just attach these ideas to these random measures so it's not a thing to be a consistent or inconsistent person. That's not an identity. We are all both, if you think about human behavior, not as an identity but as behavior. There are things you do 'consistently,' again this is totally subjective and there are things you don't do 'consistently' no matter who you are. You might work out one week and not the next, but you might brush your teeth every single day in the morning.

You might walk your dog every single day but only cook homemade meals twice a week. What's consistent and what's inconsistent depends who you ask. We all have behaviors. We all take actions. We all do things at different frequencies, different cadence, different amounts. It's all subjective whether it's 'consistent or inconsistent.' And there is no human on the planet who does every single behavior and action every single day 'consistently' or 'inconsistently,' it's impossible. We all have a mix, some things we do more often than others. Some things we do less often than others.

But we have taken this advice around habits and goals, and success around being consistent to decide, to interpret, to make meaning that consistency equals good, and inconsistency equals bad. And this is 100%

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false, both are neutral meaning they are neither good or bad. The only thing that makes them good or bad is your thoughts. You might think it's 'bad' to shower inconsistently. Someone else might not, they might think it's good, you're saving water. Someone might think it's bad to eat ice cream consistently every night. A dairy farmer might think it's great. It's all subjective.

And then we take this label, this determination of good or bad and apply it to ourselves, being a good human, a bad human, good enough, not good enough. And then we apply it to our potential, our future, our success. And this unconscious labeling of consistent, inconsistent, of making that mean good or bad is what's creating your suffering. Consistency or doing something a certain measured amount doesn't determine your success. It's not a measure of your worth or value or abilities or potential.

Inconsistency however you are defining that right now does not mean you are lazy or incapable. It's not a measure of your worth or value, or abilities or potential. You are human, whether you do an activity regularly however you define that or irregularly, however you define that, it's both human. They are both being human. That's a part of your humanness. When you hold on to these labels of good and bad, consistent, inconsistent you end up being an asshole to yourself.

You tell yourself you didn't do enough, or you'll never succeed or you're a failure. And you take it on as an identity when the truth is you are just a human. The problem with inconsistency is not being inconsistent. It's that you're using that term or however you're defining that term to mean you aren't good enough, you are lazy. You're using it to quit on yourself or to stop dreaming. You are using it against yourself, to judge yourself, to put yourself down. You don't have to.

The truth is you don't even have to use the terms consistent and inconsistent. And if you do use them you don't have to make them mean

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anything about you or your worth or your potential. I am inconsistent all the time, it doesn't bother me. I don't make it mean I don't have potential or I'm not worthy or I'm lazy. There are some things I'm more consistent about. I don't make those things better. I don't think that makes me a better person. I just know I'm human either way. Me drinking my coffee every single day is very human of me.

Me reading one week and not reading for three others is very human of me. I don't judge myself. Me watching TV every morning when I wake up for a couple of weeks and then maybe for a week doing some journaling instead, very human of me. Me brushing my teeth every day, very human of me. The frequency or amount or consistency or inconsistency or cadence or whatever else you want to call it of doing a behavior, of taking an action doesn't mean anything about you or your ability to be successful.

What is causing so much stress and suffering is using how often you do something against yourself, to judge yourself and put yourself down. And that's what's preventing you from moving, not just from creating the life you want and achieving your goal but enjoying the journey along the way, being present and actually feeling good, you set this goal for you, when you judge yourself for how often you work towards it, how often you practice, how often you do it, you don't even get to enjoy the journey or the goal itself or the reason you're doing it in the first place.

If you dropped all of that judgment, all of that labeling, all the shame and just let yourself be human you would have so much more joy and fulfillment in the things you do every single day, in the goals you work towards, in the journey. And that's ultimately what matters.

Alright, you all, I think that's all I have for you today, a little bit of a soapbox but I hope it was helpful. And last thing before we go, I would really, really, really love it if you could share this podcast with one person in your life who hasn't heard of it yet. Maybe post it on your LinkedIn and share you've

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been listening. Who knows in your network who this could help? There are people who haven't been told it's okay to be inconsistent, there are people who haven't been told you can rest.

You could share it with a friend or a colleague or a family member, put it on your Instagram stories, anywhere you're comfortable. But if you can share this with one person you might change that person's life. Together we can change their life and it can be because of you. And it would mean so much to me, it is my mission, our mission here on the Redefining Rest podcast to get this message, these tools, these resources to as many people as possible in public health. So we can change not only your experience and their experience but the field as a whole.

The more individually each of us do this work to detach from toxic productivity, to give ourselves permission to want what we want, to enjoy our life and have less stress, the better off the whole field is going to be because what creates norms, what creates the norm to overwork? People, all of us individually, but if we all individually change our behaviors, our experience, our feelings, our beliefs then we're going to change the system, the structure, the norms, the policies.

So if you can just share this with one person then you are helping with that mission to change the whole field and it would mean so much to me and everyone who listens, and all your public health colleagues in the field as a whole. So thank you in advance, I love you all. I'll talk to you next week. 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 around rest. Head on over to mckoolcoaching.com, that's M-C-K-O-O-L coaching.com to learn more.