

#92: The Human Emotion Tank



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With Your Host

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.

Happy Monday everyone. I'm so glad you're here. I'm so glad you hit play. Maybe it's not Monday for you. Whatever day it is I'm so happy you're here. If you're new to the podcast or newer, I am excited to have you, welcome, my name's Marissa. I worked in public health, gosh, over 10 years in so many different positions, different sectors, leadership roles. I found myself burnt out and coaching was the thing that brought me out and has changed every piece of my life. I am so much more fulfilled, happy, content, excited, confident.

And that's what we're doing on this podcast for you, for you to get the coaching and the teaching and the support so you can have that change too whether or not you're burnt out or whether or not you recognize or know you're burnt out because that's a big problem. Most folks in public health don't actually know they're burnt out because they think it's this, frontlines, clinicians kind of problem. Or they think it means you're passing out all these ideas of what burnout is.

And actually, burnout is so much more than that. And so I'm glad you're here no matter who you are, no matter what you're experiencing. This is going to be a great episode for you to start with. Now, if you're a regular weekly episode listener I see you, I appreciate you, I love your messages when you write me and tell me which episodes you loved or helped you. I love you all so much. I'm so glad you're here. That is part of the keys of really having a podcast, a free resource that's accessible for you to listen to anywhere anytime which is why I do this.

Part of the key of having this resource really help you is to listen regularly. That was what I did in the beginning. Years ago I listened to a podcast that

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was really providing similar type tools and resources every single week. And I was able to change some of the work on my own before I hired a coach which was so, so helpful. And so whether you're not ready to hire a coach or financially you're not in the right place or you're just not sure, just listen to the episodes every single week will help you make incremental changes to feel better to feel more confident.

And even listen to some of the episodes more than once. There are certain podcast episodes that helped me so much because I repeat listened to them. And I know so many of you already do that, you have told me. I just finished, as I'm recording this week two of How the Patriarchy Robs You of Rest course. If you're new here this is a course that I launched, a one-time course to help women in public health reduce their stress, get more time back, feel confident and rest. It's a five-week course, so we're not even halfway through and it's been so amazing.

Just after the first week participants were already telling me they felt more present, they were being more intentional of how to use their time. They felt more empowered. They're excited to keep it going. So I'm not offering this course again. So if you missed the signups, I don't want you to worry because my one-on-one coaching program as you're listening to this has either already opened up or is about to open up. Because I record these podcasts ahead of time I'm not quite sure.

But this is my one-on-one private weekly coaching for women. So listen if this is you, for women in public health who are go-getters. You've gotten your master's. You've been moving up in your career, maybe not as fast as you want. That's okay. But you're not as happy as you wish you were. You don't feel fulfilled you feel like you've kind of lost your purpose. You're wondering if you should quit public health or your job. You want to stay in the field but you want to be happier. You want to have more free time. You want to feel better right now.

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You're running on empty, you feel like there's not enough time for yourself. You always feel behind. You're overwhelmed, yet somehow still have so much to do. If that is you, this coaching is designed for you to help you change that. Because one of the things you're struggling with and one of the reasons you're having this experience is not your job, is not your boss. It's your struggle to say no because you're worried what other people will think. You don't set or hold boundaries. You feel guilty burdening others by delegating. You feel shame for not being able to get enough done.

Now, listen, that was me and that's all my clients. So we have all been there but you don't have to stay there, things can change. You can trust yourself. Have internal authority to do what you want. Feel confident in your decisions. You can delegate without worrying what other people will think. You can feel empowered to leave work on time. You can feel confident to say no so you get more time back for what you want without it hindering your career.

When I did this work for myself it actually helped make my career. After I got out of that running on empty, never have enough time, exhaustion phase through coaching and got out of that, I actually got a promotion to an executive director with a \$10,000 raise. It helped me in my career move forward. Part of the reason you're feeling stuck and not fulfilled and you don't have a purpose or maybe you're frustrated that you haven't moved up, gotten a promotion or raise is because of these pieces, not saying no, not setting boundaries, not delegating, not feeling empowered, not feeling confident.

So my one-on-one program, I work with you one-on-one every single week. And over the course of 12 weeks all that is going to change. It is an intimate, I hesitate to say intensive. It's not intensive in the sense of you're going to go on an ultra marathon. It's intensive in the sense that we take 12 weeks to change your life. That's amazing. Every week you meet with me

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one-on-one on Zoom. You have workbooks to apply it. A lot of you have shared from the podcast, you listen and you love it but it's hard to apply.

So in the program, you get application tools. You get workbooks and tools to practice so you can apply it and it's only 12 weeks. And you walk away with not only everything changing but having the skills and tools to continue this work no matter the challenge. Because you might, well, one, you'll always have challenges in your life, whether it's a shitty boss, whether it's struggles in your relationships at home, whether it's being asked to do so many more things than you have time for. All those external things are going to continue to happen.

Right now you've been trying to solve that by trying to change the external environment, advocating for less work, maybe trying to switch jobs, maybe trying to nag your partner to do more at home. And that shit hasn't worked and it's not going to. Those challenges are going to continue. You don't have control over that. What you have control over is you and how you show up, what you think, what you believe, how you feel and the actions and decisions you take.

So this 12-week coaching program we dive into all of that and change all of that so you're confident and empowered and certain. And you're not in doubt and you're not feeling guilt and you're not feeling shame. And it changes everything in your life. It's truly, it's like magic, it's so amazing. So anyways, I'm not sure at the time of this release if it's available. Check out mckoolcoaching.com/coaching to check out. Or sign up for my email list, that's the best way to find out.

Alright, let's talk about the human emotion tank. This is a concept I have created over the past, I don't know, six to eight months. I have really only taught this concept in my one-on-one coaching programs. And this is a really powerful way to, one, understand what resisting emotion is, two, identify if you are doing that and how it is impacting you, and three, see the

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benefits of allowing emotions. There are a lot of ways to understand and think about emotions and relate to them from a very scientific and factual way to a more abstract, spiritual way.

And this concept I created is a visual way of understanding our experience in relationship to our emotions. So if you're a visual person this is going to really help you. Now, I know not everyone is a visual person, that actually creating visuals might be very difficult for some of you or might not resonate as much. That's okay you can still listen and take away the pieces I'm sharing throughout this episode about the purpose of emotions and what resisting emotions is and why it's important to allow them.

So I want you to imagine that in the center of your body in your chest area, your torso, there is a vertical cylinder type of tank. You could almost imagine it as a clear glass cylinder vase almost or fish tank if you want, not a gas tank, not that analogy. And that tank is where your emotions are held. Now, of course, from a scientific point of view, this isn't 'accurate'. Emotions are sensations you experience all over your body, anywhere from hot cheeks to sweaty palms to butterflies in your stomach and a million other sensations but just go with me on this visual tool journey.

Now, this emotion tank has a capacity, it only has so much space and right now for so many of you, that tank is not only full but bursting at the seams. And it's full with resentment or anxiety or fear or overwhelm and there's no room for joy and excitement and confidence, calm or peace. And you think the solution to making room for other emotions or to get that overwhelm, anxiety, fear to go away is to clog the tank, to close it off, to stop the resentment or anxiety, fear, overwhelm, whatever else. You have to stop those from coming in.

But when you do that you don't allow those emotions that are already bursting at the seams inside your emotion tank to release, to let go of and then to make space. You end up with a tank full of those, quote, and I'm

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putting this in quotes, 'negative emotions'. And then you plug the whole thing so nothing else can get in but also nothing else can get out. And then the internal pressure starts to weigh on the tank. This is resisting, avoiding and suppressing your emotions. Now, I know most if not all of you think you are allowing your emotions but you aren't.

I can't tell you how many of my clients, especially in the beginning of us working together who think they allow their emotions. In the sessions the emotion starts to come up, the tears start to come up, the hot cheek, the fast beating heart. And really it's because it's the only space that they let themselves be in and be held for them where they let the emotions come to the surface. And part of the work we do together is bringing those up, allowing them space and processing them.

If you find that there are times when you start to cry, maybe it seems randomly or the reaction to a trigger, this used to happen to me where I'd get an email on the weekend and I'd start to cry immediately. That's kind of a disproportionate response. The email wasn't negative or someone saying hateful things. It was just asking me to do something and I would cry.

Or if you find that there are certain things that happen during the day or the week that you suddenly start to feel teared up or your throat tightens and then you just move on with your day. You're probably resisting and suppressing your emotion and that's why when many of you and we start coaching it starts to come up and some of you are very shocked, like, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe I'm crying. Why am I crying?" It's because you haven't allowed the emotions in your tank to come up and move through you.

Because you believe that anxiety shouldn't be there. You want the doubt to disappear. You hold your breath until the fear has gone. You end up ignoring the maintenance of your emotion tank. You look away, you don't listen to it. You shove it down if it comes up. You duct tape over any cracks

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until it bursts and maybe you end up completely exhausted and having to take time off of work or having physical symptoms like chronic headaches or trouble sleeping. Part of this is because you think it's a problem to have negative emotions.

And you've been socialized to believe that having any negative emotions is bad and the goal is always to feel good so you neglect and ignore those emotions which just compounds the negative emotions and the impact on you. Now, compare that to this image. Your emotional tank has a reserved compartment for emotions that are about 70% of the tank's space. And in that compartment half of it is 'negative emotions', half of it is in 'positive emotions'. There is space for both. They take up equal amounts of space.

And the remaining 30% of open space in the tank that sits at the top allows space for the emotions to flow. They can flow in and out. They can flow within the tank. There is space for the emotions to change, for them to come up and go, for them to evolve, for you to invite in positive emotions and experience them, for you to allow the negative emotions without it being a problem and moving through it. There are no cracks, there is no pressure there is no clogged top, there's no duct tape.

How different are those two images? One tank is full of compounded negative emotion that cannot go anywhere because you've clogged the hole and put pressure on the tank and it's causing cracks. The other tank has 30% open space for fluidity and the other portion of the tank has equal parts negative and positive emotions. There's no pressure. There's not a closure to the hole, it flows in and out.

Now, for some of you, your thought might have been, well, how do I get my tank to have all positive emotions? The answer is you don't, that is impossible and this version of human life we live on Earth right now. Negative emotions are a healthy and normal part of life. And you don't want to live a life without any negative emotions. If my dog dies I want to be sad.

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If your partnership ends you want to grieve. If you don't get the job offer you really wanted you want to feel disappointed.

Those emotions are important. They give our life character and color, they make our life rich. They make us connected to things we care about. If you don't know what feeling angry is like you wouldn't know what feeling joy is like. If you never feel grief you wouldn't really feel the full capacity of love. The 'positive' and 'negative' emotions are a pair that go together. They bring out the best in one another. They bring color to life. So many of you tell me, "I don't feel fulfilled and I don't feel like I have a purpose."

So much of that comes from you not allowing yourself to experience both positive and negative emotions in equal measure. That's what brings fulfillment and enrichment and purpose in life. And you haven't experienced it. You can't see it because your tank has been clogged with no room for any movement. And in fact, if we stick with the fish tank example, it hasn't been cleaned out. There's stuff growing in it. That doesn't need to grow in it, making it harder for anything in there to breathe.

You haven't experienced a beneficial interaction or contrast of different emotions. You've been suppressing or resisting your emotions, creating more stress and overwhelm for you. When you have a tank that is clean and clear you have space for movement and fluidity. You get to experience the privilege that we have as humans compared to other mammals and that is to feel, to feel intentionally, to feel the contrast, to see it with your prefrontal cortex, the part of your brain that we have developed for critical thinking, strategic thinking.

Examination is the third-party researcher of your experience and that is the ability to not just feel because there are animals that can feel. But to feel emotions and understand them, to embrace them, to choose them consciously, to appreciate them. What is your emotional tank filled with right now? Think about it. I want you to imagine it in your chest. What's

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filled in and there? What isn't able to get in, what's stuck inside? Is it overflowing with resentment and righteousness? Is peace and calm waiting on the outside trying to get in but there's no space?

Is overwhelm stuck at the bottom unable to get out? Is confidence at the end of the line waiting to get into the tank but it's so far back in the line of emotions trying to get in? Answer this for yourself and then you need to de-clog your tank and process the emotions that are clogging it, the resistance, the shame, the resentment, the anxiety or anything else. Processing or allowing emotions is not the same thing as resisting, avoiding and suppressing. For many of you, you think you allow and process your emotions but actually, you are just resisting them.

You are waiting for them to go away. You are shunning them. For many of you and I've actually had a client say this to me this week, "I thought I was processing them because I acknowledged it, I named it but then I just moved on." Naming is just one step of processing. there is a whole step afterwards of allowing the emotion.

And next week in next week's podcast episode I'll be talking more about the allowing the emotions. So if you're like how do I do that? I don't understand that. That's okay. Next week I'm going to talk about what it looks like and what it doesn't. And I'm going to give another visual tool to help you really understand it better. But for this week I want you to imagine your human emotion tank, what does it look like? Is it dirty or clean What's in it? Which emotions are in it? Which ones are not? Does it have a filtration system, is that nonexistent?

Is there space for movement? I want to leave you with that, I really want you to stick with this visual and think about it, just get curious with yourself.

The last thing before we go really, really quick. I want to ask you to review the podcast. One of the core values of my business that I brought from

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being in the public health field that I really wanted to bring to business, is to make this more accessible, make coaching more accessible. Coaching is not accessible to everyone, especially not antiracist, feminist culturally responsive consent-based coaching.

A lot of the coaching field although it's changing is very male-dominated as far as the top, think of Tony Robbins the most famous coach, one of them and very white and not really thinking about things like sexism and racism and ageism and neurodiversity and so many other things. And it's also not accessible to everyone whether it's because of finances of power dynamics or circumstances or other resources or anything else. So this podcast is the number one way I aim to make these coaching tools, teachings and resources more accessible.

It's free, it's provided weekly. They're short episodes available to folks who have a smartphone or who don't, who just have internet access. It's available on my website to listen to or read the transcripts. These teachings are really designed every week with learning objectives. So anyone who just listens to the podcast and maybe never hires a coach can still walk away with knowledge, skills, perspective, activities, ideas to change their life.

The more people in the public health field or any helping profession we can help get this resource to share with, the more accessible coaching is which means more people this podcast can help to feel less stressed, to feel more empowered, to have more time, to feel confident without having to pay a dime which means that the field will change. It won't be a field that people with passion go into, burn out and have to quit.

It will change. People with passion will come into, be able to sustain, have a full life, have a life outside of work. And those changes will create momentum for structural and policy changes around benefits, around pay, around workload and so many other things. When you rate and review this

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podcast that immensely helps with serving and achieving this mission. It truly only takes two to three minutes of your time, it's totally anonymous and it helps make sure other public health professionals who are struggling can find this resource and get the help they need.

So please, I would love it if you took a few minutes of your time right now, stop, unless you're driving, if you're not driving, stop what you're doing, rate and review. Thank you so much in advance. I'll see you all next week to talk about processing emotions and what that has to do with driving and being in a car. Alright, 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.