

#93: Letting Emotions Come Along for the Ride



Full Episode Transcript

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, how is it going? For those of you who maybe are new to the podcast. Maybe this is your first episode, I'm so glad you're here. I'm Marissa, I help you get more rest which does not just mean sleeping in or vacation or spa days, which it can be. Listen, I'm all for a facial and massage. It means so much more than that. It means saying no, setting boundaries, feeling confident. It means having more time for the things that you truly love. It means not feeling overwhelmed or stressed. It means taking back control of your life and so, so much more.

So I'm so glad you're here, especially for today's episode. Those of you who are regular listeners you know I love you. I am so glad you're here. Thank you so much for sharing the podcast. I have seen so many of you share the podcast on LinkedIn, on Instagram, it means so much to me. Some of you have sent me messages of what other people have said, receiving it and how impactful it's been. So please continue to do that. If you find this episode helpful please share with a friend or a colleague who could also use a little bit of insight, help, support with feeling better, with getting more confident, being in control.

Before we get into the episode I have some exciting news happening. My one-on-one coaching program which has been closed, full since gosh, last October or something is opening up. It's open today for consults meaning you can sign up to meet with me and chat about the program. See if it's a good fit for you. It's a one-on-one program. We meet for 12 weeks for three months to change and transform your experience.

You will no longer be the go-getter public health professional that everyone thinks has it all figured out, who feels overwhelmed and exhausted and a

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little shame and maybe some guilt about what you're going through. You'll be the public health go-getter who feels confident and in control, who does feel like they have it all together, who has more time than they ever have before who's actually present and loving their life whether it's with your partner, your kids or doing a new hobby.

It's going to completely change how you approach your work and your life and achieving goals. I know right now for many of you, you went and got your MPH, you had that high, that glimmer in your eyes coming out of it. You were really hopeful and excited about your career and now however many years later you don't feel fulfilled, you feel constantly overwhelmed yet still have a to-do list that is basically down the street long and you're questioning things. You're wondering if you should quit. You're wondering if something else will make you feel happier.

And you're not present and you're not really fully enjoying your life. Listen, doesn't have to be that way. You don't have to quit your job. You don't have to leave public health. I am going to help you feel better. More in control. Have that hopefulness and optimism again. Feel confident. Feel excited about your life. So we have an open program, it's been full since last October. It opens today. So sign up for a consult. You meet with me one-on-one. We talk about what's going on. What you wish was different.

I share exactly how we'll make that happen and you get to decide if you want to join the program. So don't delay, sign up now. We'll leave a link in the show notes for you. With that in mind, with thinking about having more time for yourself. Doing things you love. I have been doing a lot of new things this week. When you build a rest-centered life, meaning you have the emotional and mental capacity, you have the confidence to say no, to set your schedule to what you want. To try new things. So much more opens up in your life.

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So much more exciting new things you can try, one of which this week I did, my partner and I went to a vegan cooking class. It was so much fun. It was chaotic. It was really chaotic but it was really fun and it was something new. We had never tried before. I cook a lot. He cooks a decent amount. We met some people. It was a good time. The other new thing I tried was with Omari Richins. I went on his YouTube Live. I've never done a YouTube Live. It was really fun. We talked about all things rest of course. Omari and I have collaborated several times and I'm sure we will.

If you don't know *The Public Health Millennial*, go check him out on Instagram, on LinkedIn. He's doing amazing things. We collaborate a lot. So that's been really fun. And I have some really exciting new things coming up. I'm going to see Adele in concert which I'm really excited about. Going to Europe for a couple of weeks. I'm actually taking the whole month of April off and I'm completely taking it off. Don't worry, the podcast will keep going. I'll have great episodes for you, of course, it won't stop the podcast. You'll still get the support.

But I'm really excited about that and so many other things. So I wanted to share a little bit of my rest-centered life right now, what I've been doing in addition to my baking and my reading and making friends. If you follow me on Instagram you know that's what I've been up to.

But today let's talk about one of the key, key things that in order to have a rest-centered life, in order to have less stress, in order to feel better and have more time you really, really have to build this skill and that's letting emotions come along for the ride. And in my coaching program, we do a lot of work around this. And so many of my clients my alumni who have come through the program say this is one of the most transformational pieces of it.

So last week we talked about a concept I created called the human emotion tank. And you can always go back and listen if you missed that

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one. It really is a visual representation of how to really understand and think about the way emotions work and the way they're supposed to work. And what's happening in most of your lives right now with your emotions that is contributing to your exhaustion, your overwhelm, not being present, not feeling confident, not feeling happiness not feeling fulfilled and many other things?

So you can go back. Listen to that but to quickly summarize, most of you are resisting your emotions and wishing they weren't there. And you're not processing your emotions. You're acknowledging them, you're like. "Hey, I see you." But then you ignore them. You're not actually processing them. And as a result, you create more of those emotions, you intensify them, you turn up the volume, more overwhelm, more anxiety, more fear and then there's no space left to allow enjoy or peace or calm and you think it has to be one or the other.

I only feel negative emotions or positive emotions. If I'm feeling negative emotions that's a problem they need to go away. But the truth is it's both. As humans, we will always feel both positive and negative emotions. And this is a good thing, it's not a bad thing. But right now you think it's a bad thing. You don't have space for both because you spend so much time resisting the 'negative emotions' that you're feeling that you don't want. So those emotions dial up their intensity and take up more space. So last week I talked about that.

Today we are talking about what it actually means to allow your emotions so that they don't stop you from moving forward and you can invite in other emotions that you want to feel. Again I'm sharing another visual learning tool. I find these really helpful but I know not everyone is a visual learner and I know some folks' brains don't really have that capacity. I promise you can still listen and learn from this episode. But I do want to say I'm not really going to talk in detail about processing emotions.

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So if you listened to the podcast last week we talked about the emotions tank. And right now many of you your emotions tank is full and clogged and overflowing. And what you need to do to start is to process some of those emotions to create space in your tank, to let them come out and move through you. This is when you spend time in your body feeling the emotions, feeling the sensations. For a lot of folks including me, this is letting yourself cry. I can't tell you how many clients I've had or consults where the tears start coming up.

And the public health professional I'm talking to is like, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe I'm crying. I'm so sorry." But to me as the coach, it makes so much sense. You haven't let yourself process your emotions. You haven't held space for it, of course, it's coming up, it's knocking on the door wanting to be processed and come out and you need to do that. You need to allow that. And that creates a space in your tank. And that's not just a one-time thing. That is a lifelong skill you need to learn and do because you'll always need to process your emotions.

The other piece to that is being able to allow the emotions to come along for the ride. So when it comes to processing emotions, if you have one of those emotion tanks that's full, that's clogged, that's overflowing, that's kind of breaking the glass.

I talk about in more detail how to process emotions in another episode, it's episode 44, Experiencing Intense Emotions. I use shame as an example which can be a very intense emotion. But you can use the examples in that episode for any emotion you want to process or need to process, whether it's fear or anxiety or overwhelm or anything else. And that is equally as important for this work. I really should have mentioned that last week in last week's episode, that that is part of the process too, to create space in your tank.

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And you can totally do that on your own, that episode can guide you. You can also do it with a coach, this is what I do a lot with my clients especially in the beginning of a program, if you sign up to chat with me, if you join my program we will definitely do this. If you have a therapist you can do it with them. There are some people who do it by listening to meditations and there is, of course, other ways like journaling. And maybe you already know a different way that works for you.

But today I'm talking about bringing emotions along for the ride because life is 50/50. We will always experience 'negative emotions' and they don't have to stop us from experiencing life, or other 'positive emotions'. And part of the skill that you learn in my program and that I really want you all listening to learn is how to let them come along for the ride. We're going to walk through this example using one emotion but this applies to any emotion you have. I just want to anchor it down to one for the sake of illustration.

So I want you to imagine you're in a car in a parking lot, you're in the driver's seat. And anxiety is in the front seat and it's saying. "No, no, you can't leave, it's too scary, we have to stay, don't drive, don't drive." And right now you either (a) believe it, listen and say, "Okay, we won't go anywhere until you feel better." And you end up sitting there in the parking lot for weeks, months because the anxiety doesn't feel better. And then you might start feeling frustrated and resentment. And you start to blame yourself or blame the anxiety or blame something else.

Or (b) you start trying to kick the anxiety out, push it out the door so you can leave. You're telling the anxiety it has to leave because you want to get going. And then the anxiety starts yelling and getting louder. You start telling the anxiety that it needs to get out, it doesn't belong. Then you get exhausted from that fight and it doesn't work and so then you have less energy to even leave and you start to blame and shame yourself or blame and shame the anxiety.

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And in both scenarios, you aren't moving forward at all. You don't even leave the parking lot. You think you can't go anywhere if anxiety's in the car and you're either waiting forever for anxiety to get out or you're exhausted from trying to kick the anxiety out. And eventually, over time the car gets full of other emotions like resentment or shame or frustration or blame or overwhelm or exhaustion. And then you have a full car and it's very loud.

What you don't know is what you're missing right now when that happens is all the other emotions that are waiting for you to pick them up, confidence, calm, peace, contentment, those are all waiting for you but you're late, you haven't arrived. You haven't even left. You think it's because of the anxiety but it's not. You can drive with anxiety in the car, it doesn't have to get out and you don't have to resist it.

Now, imagine this, the anxiety is telling you, you can't leave, it's too scary. And you say, "Okay, listen, I know you're scared, that's okay. I'm going to start driving and you'll be okay, you can feel anxious. That's not a problem." And you start the car and you leave the parking lot and some of you have tried this. But then the anxiety gets louder and freaks out as you're leaving. And again you go back immediately to get out of the car. You start resisting and fighting the anxiety. And you maybe pull over and tell the anxiety to get out.

You again miss picking up calm or confidence or presence. Or some of you start to believe what the anxiety is saying as you drive and you agree, I shouldn't have done this. This was a bad idea. That was stupid. You don't have to do that. Anxiety doesn't have to get out of the car for you to move forward to where you want to go. Anxiety doesn't have to be quiet for you to keep driving. It doesn't have to change for you to enjoy the drive. Anxiety can be there and you can still get to where you want to go and not be distracted and enjoy the journey.

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So picture this, you're driving, anxiety is starting to freak out and instead of resisting it, trying to kick it out, instead of believing it and getting off the freeway, you put anxiety in the back seat. It can still freak out if it wants. But you don't have to have it next to you in your ear. It can be in the back seat. It can be back there worried and you can drive confidently. The anxiety is in the back. We are worried playing out worst case scenario, freaking out but you're in the driver's seat paying attention to the road, noticing the beautiful scenery, picturing where you're going, feeling excited and hopeful.

You can hear the anxiety but you don't really have to respond. You can say, "Hey, I hear you, it's okay." And you can let it be there. You don't have to give in. You don't have to take it too seriously, it's a bit of background noise. You can acknowledge it and bring it along for the ride. Right now so many of you acknowledge it and then just try to shove it out of the car. You are in charge. You are driving, not your anxiety. When you do that you don't have to get off at the wrong exit because your anxiety's telling you to.

You don't have to yell at the anxiety or get frustrated you can just let it be back there. You have space in the car to pick up confidence or calm or peace. And if you have other emotions like guilt or sadness or fear, those can also be in the back of the car. You can choose where those emotions sit. If they sit in the back, in the middle, if they sit next to you, if they sit on your lap, if they drive. You can choose to be the driver and let the fear or the anxiety be in the back, let the presence be in the front seat, let's the calm be in the middle seat.

Wherever you want the emotions to go you get to choose. Right now you are choosing to let the anxiety or any other emotions try to drive the car when you don't have to. And when you do that, when the anxiety is in the back and maybe some other emotions, but you bring in calm and presence and confidence. Those emotions help balance out the anxiety and the

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anxiety, it doesn't feel quite as loud or intense or truthful. Maybe sometimes the anxiety yells from the back, that's okay. You keep going.

You aren't spending the whole time trying to convince the anxiety to change or to get out. You let it be. You don't resist it. You don't make it wrong. You don't make yourself wrong. You also don't completely ignore it and shove it down. You don't believe it the whole time. You accept the anxiety and its feeling without judgment or shame. And you choose not to take what the anxiety is offering and you keep driving. That's letting the emotions come along for the ride. And that is true whether it's anxiety or shame or guilt or anything else.

I can go to the front desk of a hotel and ask to switch rooms and guilt can be in the back seat of the car. I can finish my work after I messed up my presentation and shame can be in the back of the car. Those emotions can be there with you on the journey. They don't have to go anywhere. You don't have to kick them out. When you let them be in the car and choose to put them in the back you get to move forward. Have space between you and the emotion. Acknowledge the emotion without judgment.

Invite other emotions when you're ready, pick them up and still move towards your goal and enjoy the drive. You don't have to divert your route or change your plans or not start the car or delay. Emotions are a normal part of life, all of them and you get to decide, do I not drive to my goals and dreams because I'm waiting for my emotions to get out or I'm yelling at them to get out, or do I drive to my goals and dreams with those emotions in the car? Do I stay distracted by the emotions in the car as I'm driving missing the journey not enjoying it, not seeing the opportunities along the way?

Or do I let the emotions be in the car without trying to change them or attach them or react to them, accepting them and deciding instead to focus on the road? This is not about ignoring your emotions. Notice, I didn't say

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put the emotions in the trunk. No, I said in the back of the car. Many of you are already trying to ignore your emotions and it's not working because when you ignore them you're not accepting them.

Think of if you're at dinner and there is a family member there that you wish wasn't there. You ignoring them the whole night, not talking to them, giving them the cold shoulder, is not accepting them, is not accepting that they're there. That's what you're doing with your emotions right now, versus learning how to accept that they're there, not ignore them, not give them the cold shoulder. Decide when you want to engage with them, decide you can listen to them but not believe everything they say or not agree with everything they say. Hold that space. Accept they're there but still be the driver.

The problem with having 'negative emotions' isn't the emotion themselves. It's that you're using the experience of the emotion to stop yourself from experiencing your life, your goals, your dreams, where you want to go. It's stopping you from going after your next goal or inviting in positive emotions or trying new things. You're using those emotions to create resentment and frustration when you don't have to. You're making the emotions a problem when it doesn't have to be. Emotions can be in the car and it not be a problem at all. It doesn't have to distract or deter you.

So I want to leave you with this. This week I really want you to answer these questions. And I really encourage you to write these down and write your answers down. I've heard from so many of you, "I listen to the podcast but I don't really understand how to apply it." There are so many episodes where I give, and you know what's funny because in coaching we call these tools and they are tools but I find in public health we think of tools very differently.

We're thinking of an evaluation plan or we're thinking of assessment or a survey or something. In coaching, tools can be kind of like that. But tools

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are also just ways to engage with your brain. So this is a tool you can use. Write these questions down and answer them. How can I let this emotion come with me? How can I accept this emotion and not reject it? How can I let this emotion be in the back of the car without letting it distract me? How can I accept this emotion and invite other emotions in? How can I let this emotion be in the car with love and acceptance?

How can I let this feeling be in the car, put it in the back and keep going? How can I allow this feeling and still enjoy the drive? I really want you, if you listen to the podcast and you have found it helpful and you're not sure how to apply some of it, do this. Write it down and answer it. Pick an emotion you've been feeling a lot whether it's overwhelm or anxiety or guilt or shame and answer these questions and get curious about what comes up.

Alright you all, I'm going to leave you with that for today. If you want to join my coaching program which is opening up for consults today, go to the show notes. Click the link in the bio. Come sign up to chat with me. See if it's a good fit. And if it is and you decide yes, let's change your life, let's make 2023 the year that everything changes and you feel happy and peaceful and present, you feel confident and in control.

You keep moving forward in your career but you have more time for your personal life and you get to do all the things you've been wishing you can do without all the dread and the overwhelm and the exhaustion from your to-do list. Alright you all, let's go. 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.