

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life



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With Your Host

Marissa McKool, MPH

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#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

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.

Hello friends. I am so glad you're here. I have to tell you I was supposed to record this yesterday but yesterday in the morning I had a full day planned. I only had one coaching call. I had no other meetings so I had on my calendar a bunch of different things I was going to do, work on a research paper I'm on with some former colleagues at the CDC. Work on getting my tax documents together for my accountant, work on a new free course I have coming up, so many other things, and record this podcast.

And in the morning my anxiety, as many of you know I have chronic anxiety and it comes and goes and it's kind of a gentle buzz that's with me most days but there are some days, it's much rarer now and much fewer and far between than before I really did work on this where the anxiety gets really intense and heavy. And there's not really a trigger. There's not really a clear reason. My nervous system just gets overstimulated and activated and I feel it heavily in my body and that happened yesterday.

And years ago I would have tried to force myself to work. That's what hustle culture tells us, that you should always have to work, no excuses, there are only a few kinds of justifiable reasons. And it's so funny, we think being sick is one of them, like if you had a cold. But so many of you I coach you struggle taking a sick day when you have a cold or even COVID. And so of course things like anxiety or if you're having a depressive episode or if you're ADHD, you're really distracted. We struggle taking time for ourselves and taking time off work to really support our mental health in that way.

And so years ago I would have pushed myself and hustled through it. I would have been distracted, my output would have been really poor quality. My anxiety would have gotten worse and I would be shaming and judging

[Redefining Rest for Public Health Professionals Podcast
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#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

myself. Yesterday I decided to clear my calendar except for I think one email and my coaching call. And I just watched TV on the couch. And those of you who don't have chronic anxiety or maybe depression or other kind of mental health stuff, more ongoing and chronic, to you, you might be like, "That sounds great."

But those of you who have chronic anxiety know, if you're taking the day off to just watch TV because your anxiety is intense, it's not enjoyable. I'm not sitting on the couch having the best snow day there is. That anxiety is there and it's intense. But I really prioritized myself and my mind and my body and what it needed even though it was still uncomfortable. And that's why I'm recording today.

Because I took that time yesterday to really listen to what my body needed and my mind needed I am able to be here today recording this intentionally. And it's going to be so much better than if I had tried to force myself to record it yesterday. So that's what's going on with me. I hope that gives you an example of really ways we can challenge and push against hustle culture for ourselves because really hustle culture is ableist, whether it's we've internalized messages you have to work even if you have a cold or if you have anxiety or you only get three days of bereavement.

And if someone close to you passes away or you don't get any if your dog passes away and all these other ways that we have been socialized to believe that if our mind and body is not in the right place, it's not functioning at the highest level that we should just keep going which is ableism. And we have all internalized that no matter who you are, every single one of us. And it is work to undo that but that is part of this work of detaching from hustle culture and getting more rest. So that's a little mini lesson upfront from my real life that you're getting here at the top of the episode.

The other things happening with me, as many of you know I'm trying to make new friends, moved to a new city. And after I record this Jared and I

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

are going to meet another couple that we met at a cooking class to watch a soccer game. So hopefully that goes and we continue to get along and make more friends. I have also been reevaluating some friendships I've had for a while and if I really want to continue those relationships. I've been showing up more authentically than I have in the past and being more honest about certain things.

I think in society we talk a lot about romantic and sexual relationships changing or ending, there being conflict, the challenges being honest, all that but we don't really talk about it in the context of friendships. But friendships are just like any other relationships. They might not last forever and that's okay. We might outgrow them and that's okay. You might change your mind about that person and that's okay. You might become more honest about who you are and they might change their mind about you, that's okay.

So that's some of the work I've been doing in my own coaching and in my own life right now. And that piece really relates to this episode. One of the reasons I wanted to make this episode, well, there is a couple. This is really the sister, maybe not sister is the right word, the sibling episode, the cousin episode to Releasing Responsibility for Other People which is the most listened to podcast episode on here. If you haven't, you can go back and listen to it. This is the sibling episode. This is the other side of the coin.

It's really, really important, so many of my clients when we reflect throughout the process of my one-on-one coaching program we do a major reflection at the end and in the middle. And so many of what they share are the biggest takeaways, this is one of the biggest ones. This one and Releasing Responsibility for Other People. These two are kind of the core pillars that really help you get more rest, really help you create and live the life you actually want and be authentic. They're really, really important.

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

So it was about time I made this episode. And really all of the coaching work I do stems from taking full responsibility over your life. In my own personal coaching work I've done that in dating. That was probably one of the first areas I did this deeply as well as in my career and my burnout and money and family and lots of other areas. And now I am doing it a bit more with friends more consciously. This episode is really one of the core pieces to redefining rest and creating and living a rest centered life.

Some of you might have heard me use that term before. Really what that means, it doesn't mean you're always on the couch or sleeping in or on vacation. You all know I love those things. But really living a rest centered life is taking responsibility over your life and doing the things you truly want and showing up authentically. So I'm so glad you're here listening or reading this episode. If you're new here this is a perfect episode to start with. It might shake you up a bit. It might break your brain. That is good.

And if you've been listening for a while this is going to solidify a lot of what we have been talking about throughout this podcast. Most of you and this was me too and I still do this sometimes. Most humans blame our life, blame our emotions, blame our experiences on things outside of us. We blame our unhappiness on the job. We think we feel guilty because our partner makes us feel that way. We believe we don't have enough time because we have to work and go to school but that isn't true.

Your experience is 100% your responsibility. If you're happy it's because of what you think. If you feel guilty it's because of what you are thinking. If you don't have time for yoga it's because of the decisions you have made, meaning if you want to change something in your life from what you're feeling and your emotional experience to your decisions, your actions, what you get to create, experience, your outcomes.

You have to take responsibility for not just changing it. But you have to take responsibility for the life you have right now and take responsibility that you

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

have created it before you can create a different version of it or change things in it. So let's break that down. There are circumstances in your life. Circumstances are things outside of you and oftentimes outside of your control although not always, other people. People are always outside of your control. You can't control other people as much as I would like.

Those of you even if you're a parent, no, you can't control your kids. We can't control other people. The past is a circumstance, you can't change the past. We think these things outside of us, policies, other people, our past cause our feelings, our emotions but they don't, our thoughts do. Our thoughts create our emotions. Thoughts are just sentences in your mind. They are a string of words your brain offers to you. Often they're offering the sentence about a circumstance. But that thought, that sentence in your mind is not a fact, it's totally optional, you can change those.

And those sentences, those thoughts you think create your feelings. Feelings are emotions in the context in which I talk about them, they are the same, they're synonyms, and are physical sensations in your body. When you think a thought your body responds with sensations, maybe a tight throat or sweaty hands or a faster beating heart. Then you label that set of sensations with a one word emotion like anxiety or fear or happiness or joy or any other emotion. And your emotions drive your actions or inactions.

Actions are things you do or don't do, they are decisions, they are behaviors you engage in or decisions or behaviors you don't. Actions can also be the ways in which you're thinking, what you choose to think about, what you choose not to think about. These are driven by an emotion. That cumulation of those actions creates an overall outcome for you, a result you're creating in your life. The results in your life are an outcome of your actions. I'm not talking about the results of other people, just you.

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

Your outcomes, your results are the cumulative impact or effect of your actions. Your actions were driven by an emotion, that emotion was created by a thought, not a circumstance meaning if you want to have a different result in your life you have to take a different action. But in order to take a different action you actually have to feel a different feeling. I think this is the piece that's missed often in behavior change and habit change and goals. It's not just changing the action, you have to change how you feel because your feelings drive your actions.

And to change how you feel you have to change what you're thinking, not the circumstance. What I just walked you through, many, many people, thought leaders, educators, coaches talk about this in many different ways. Martha Beck, Eckhart Tolle, spiritual leaders, authors, so many others, psychologists. To think about this concept and put it into practice and use it in my life and my clients' life and now you can use it in your life. I use a tool called the model. This tool was created by The Life Coach School where I was certified.

If you're a coaching client of mine or you have in the past I coach you on this all the time. You learned how to use this tool or you are learning now so you can coach yourself. It is very simple. There are five parts to it, circumstances are the first part, circumstances are neutral and factual things that exist. The second part is thoughts. A thought is just a sentence in your mind. The third part is an emotion. An emotion, one emotion is created by each thought. That emotion drives the fourth part which is your actions or inactions.

And the cumulative effect of all your actions is your result which is the fifth part. And your result, what you're creating for yourself is an outcome of your thinking driven through your emotions and your actions.

So let's go through some examples. Here's a -related one. Let's say your circumstance is that you work full-time remotely, you have two kids, maybe

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

at this moment you can count and there's three toys on the floor. You have a meeting on your calendar at 2:00pm and there is a grant report due tomorrow. Those are all facts. We could take that, we could prove that in a court of law. You could take a picture of those toys and say, "Hey, look, there's three." Other people could count them and also see three. Other people could look at your calendar and see the 2:00pm.

These are facts. There is no drama here. These are just the neutral things happening. Then you have a thought about those things. Maybe your thought is, I have to get it all done. Now, I know you think this is a fact. It's just a thought. It's a sentence in your mind. So many of you think this, I have to get it all done. And that thought creates an emotion, creates overwhelm which is a feeling. You think your overwhelm is caused by the report being due tomorrow or your meeting at two or your kids or the toys on the ground. It's not.

The overwhelm you feel is created by your thought, I have to get it all done. That thought is not a fact. That's 100% optional to think. And when you think about it, you feel overwhelmed. When you feel overwhelmed, that emotion drives how you show up in your actions and inactions. When you're overwhelmed you're probably going to get distracted while you're working, not stay on task, switch tasks constantly. Your brain is constantly going to be reminding you all the things you 'have to do'. Maybe you skip lunch. You work late. You don't say no to the meeting. You get reactive when interrupted.

You end up taking longer to get things done and you start things but don't finish them. You're not really present in anything you're doing. All of those actions are driven by the feeling of overwhelm. Those actions aren't happening because of your report due date, because of your meeting. Those actions are happening because you are feeling overwhelmed. And your overwhelm only exists because of your thought, I have to get it all done. If you didn't feel overwhelmed you wouldn't be taking these actions.

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

And the cumulative effect of those actions and inactions are what? You don't get anything actually done. Your result is that you don't really complete anything fully. And that is a direct outcome of your thinking. When you think, I have to get it all done, the result you end up creating for yourself is that you actually don't get anything done because you're distracted, you're jumping from task to task. You're not staying present. You're not finishing things. It's not because of your deadline or your kids, it's because of your thoughts.

So let's do another one outside of work. Let's say your circumstance is on Monday you verbally ask your partner, "Can you take out the trash?" And then on Thursday the trash has not been taken out. Those are the circumstances, those are neutral. They don't mean anything until you give them a meaning. And you might be thinking when you see this, they never do anything. And when you think that thought you feel frustrated. And then from that frustration in your head you list out everything you do and you note everything they don't do.

And you create an argument in your head. You ignore anything they do. You stew. You become short with them. You don't talk to them about it. You don't find out why they didn't take it out or if there was a miscommunication. And then you take out the trash yourself for spite. The result you're creating for yourself (a) you don't let them take out the trash and (b) you don't let yourself let go of this chore. You're taking responsibility where you don't have to. When you have the thought, they never do anything, that's not a fact, that's just a thought.

And when you think about it, the result you create for yourself is both that you are frustrated, but also that you don't let yourself do less. You end up doing more. The result is not an outcome of your partner's choices or actions, only your thoughts. You could choose instead to think, they'll get to it eventually. And your result wouldn't be you taking out the trash. You could think, well, maybe they forgot. And your result might be figuring out a better

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

communication system. It has nothing to do with them, their choices or their actions, it's your thought about it.

When you truly take responsibility that your feelings, the actions you take and the results you create for yourself in your life are an outcome of your thoughts then you can change them. You can change your results. You can change how you feel. You can change your actions. But when you continue to believe that things outside of you control how you feel, what you do and what you create for yourself you are stuck.

Now, some of you might be saying, "Wait, wait, wait, Marissa, what about racism and sexism and ableism, what about being born into poverty, what about getting fired. Are you saying that's our fault? We caused our own firing? It's our fault we're being blamed for experiencing a microaggression?" No, this is why this episode is the other side of the coin to my other podcast episode Releasing responsibility for Other People. If your boss fires you, that was their choice. That action was their decision. They decided to take that, that was their choice not yours.

If someone discriminates against you because you're Asian, that was their action, their decision. You did not cause them to do that. If you as a child when you were growing up your parents couldn't make rent, that wasn't a result of you. That wasn't your fault. Those external factors, getting fired, someone saying something racist, your parents not affording rent. Those are circumstances. And let's take one of them.

Let's say the circumstance is someone at work said something like, "Shouldn't you know how to do this? Aren't all Asians good at math?" Which is a common stereotype and can be a microaggression, them saying that is a circumstance, what they said. You did not cause them to say that. But you get to decide what to think about that. You get to decide what to feel about that and what to do. And this is very, very important. You don't

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

have to think it's great and okay. That's not the purpose of taking responsibility over your life or over your thoughts.

It's not about always being happy or condoning things that go against your values. It's about being intentional about what you want and choose to think and feel. And what you choose to think will create your result, only yours, not someone else's. You can decide to think they're racist. Or you can think, I don't want to work here. Or you can think, I don't have to be good at math or anything else. That is your choice.

Here's another example. Let's say the circumstance is you have \$100 in your bank account. We can show that. We can prove that. That's factual. And you have zero dollars in your savings. You have \$100 in checking and zero in savings. Those are facts. What is your thought about that? Your automatic thought might be, I have no money. Now, I know for so many of you, if you had \$100 in your checking account you would believe that that thought is a fact, that I have no money is a fact but it's not. And when you think about it, how would you feel, panicked, anxious, fearful?

And when you feel that way what actions are driven by that emotion? How do you show up? What actions do you take when you're in panic? What do you choose to do or not do when you're feeling fearful or anxious? When you feel that way you probably don't take confident actions. You probably catastrophize in your head, think of worst case scenarios. Maybe you shame yourself. You don't think creatively about how to make more money. the result is you don't make more money. You think, I have no money. It drives a feeling that drives actions that creates a result.

You don't make more money. Now, I know you think I have no money is a fact but it's not. \$100 is money, you have it. So, I have no money isn't a fact, it's an optional thought that when you think it doesn't serve you, doesn't create a result that helps you, doesn't drive you to take confident action to get more money. If instead you thought, I can figure out how to

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

make more money or get more money, then how would you feel, hopeful, optimistic, certain, confident?

If you felt that way what actions would those feelings drive? How would you show up? They would probably drive more creative thinking, finding solutions, trying different things, getting curious. Maybe you'd sell something. Maybe you'd borrow money. Maybe you'd purchase it on debt. Maybe you'd apply for a job. You wouldn't be hiding and shrinking yourself. You'd be showing up and taking action that would help you. And the result you would create from those actions is that you'd figure out how to make more money.

When you think, I can figure out how to get more money, the feeling it creates, the action it drives creates a result of you figure out how to make more money. And then here's the ironic part. When you do that you get to change your circumstance. When you figure out how to make more money because you think that thought and you make more money as a result your circumstance changes. Maybe it's no longer \$100, maybe it's 200. We think our circumstance has to change first for us to feel different, to take different actions and get different results in our lives.

No, it's the other way, you have to change your thoughts first to change your result. If you want a different result, if you want to feel differently, if you want to take different actions you have to change your thought, not your circumstance. This is exactly what it means to create a rest centered life. This is what it means to create and live the life you want. This is how you change how you feel. This is how you start to feel better or less stressed. This is how you take more actions towards your goals.

For a lot of you listening, this might be going against a lot of what you have thought or been taught. And if that's you I want you to sit with this, listen to it again if you have to. Listen to it and write down the steps of the model, review it or download the transcript and highlight it and try one on your

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

own, use the model on your own. Some of you, this is really cliquing, you've been listening for a while, you've been taking some of my courses, you're starting to get it, join my coaching program, that's the next step.

You learn how to do the model in depth. You get direct feedback from me. You learn how to coach yourself and really take responsibility and change your experience. You get to see what your thinking is creating and practice changing that. Yesterday, one of my clients, it was their last session. As I said, we do reviews and reflections. I think it's such an important part of progress and transformation that is often sped past or just completely overlooked.

And so in the last session when you're in my coaching program we do a reflection and you share your biggest takeaways, what you're most proud of, what you want to take forward with you and so on and so forth. And this client said that their biggest takeaways are that they can change how they feel and they know how. That they no longer have to just accept where the chips fall. They get to decide. They get to have a say. One of the biggest changes was that they trust themselves to create what they want.

Where before they would just judge and blame themselves or get stuck in indecision. Believing the circumstances around them caused their feelings, caused their actions and the results and there is nothing they can do. They created self-trust to know that's not true and they can choose. They can trust themselves to make decisions and no matter the outcome, no matter what happens around them externally that they can't control, they have their own back. That's what this work is about.

And listen, signing up for a consult for a coaching program is the absolute hardest step of this work. I know some of you, some of you have been thinking about it for a while maybe. Your brain's been saying, "You should wait. It's not the right time. I don't know if it will help me." That's the hardest part. I've been there. Every time I sign up to a coach, every time even

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

though I'm a coach and I've been coaching for years, been getting coached for years. Every time I sign up for a coaching program or with a new coach my brain does this too.

It's the hardest fucking part of the process and that's what this client said too in their reflection. The thing they were number one most proud of was just signing up for coaching in the first place. And I'm going to tell you what I told them. That is the hardest part. I know when someone has signed up for a consult that they've already gone through the hardest part, that they are already moving through the most difficult part of change and it's only going to get easier, truly.

Signing up for a consult and then deciding to join the coaching program is the peak of the difficulty. That is the hardest part. It gets so much easier from there, so much more fun and enjoyable. That is really the hardest part. So some of you are struggling with it, ping pong in your head, I get it, I've been there. But I just want you to know when you make it over that hump it gets easier, it gets so much better. And you get to choose to get out of that. You get to take responsibility to get out of that difficult place by signing up for a consult, by signing up for the program.

That's what it means to take responsibility for your life. So as this is airing, if you're hearing this fresh off the tracks, there are only a few more weeks to sign up for a consult to join my coaching program before I go on my sabbatical in April. Taking the whole month of April off. So if you want to take responsibility for your life, if you want to change how you feel at work, with your partner, any areas of your life. If you don't like the results you have in your life right now, if you don't like the way you feel, this is how you're going to change it.

The consul is totally free. You come, we talk, I hear what you're struggling with. I share what needs to change, how the program can help you and then you get full autonomy to decide if you want to join or not. It's totally up

#97: Taking Responsibility for Your Life

to you. And in the program if you do join, I guide you, I coach you, I teach you how to coach yourself. So you're not always reliant on a coach. That's super important to me. That's a huge part of liberation I think. You get workbooks every week and you learn tools and you get private one-on-one coaching.

But listen, I know that first step is the hardest, signing up for a consult. I want you to take it. You're going to feel comfortable, you might not feel great. You might not feel elated the whole time and that's okay, normal, that's normal. Those feelings come up, don't take it as a sign it's the wrong time you should not do it, totally normal. I think it's very, very rare that people sign up including me and don't have that narrative in their head. That's the hardest part. Then you join me, we talk. You decide if it's a good fit and if you want to join, no obligation.

Okay, go to mckoolcoaching.com/coaching, scroll to the bottom of the page, schedule a time that works for you directly and I will see you there. Okay, 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.