

## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Marissa McKool, MPH

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with Marissa McKool, MPH](#)

## #100: 5 Tools to Change 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.

You all, it is episode 100, what? That is crazy. How did that happen? I started this podcast about two years ago and now we've hit episode 100. 100 free accessible teachings and coachings to help you and other professionals in public health, particularly women, reduce your stress, get more time, have more confidence, do more of what you want. Thousands and thousands of minutes. I didn't do the calculation. Well, maybe I'm exaggerating but lots, I mean two years. I am so beyond proud.

I'm not just proud of me, although I truly am so proud of me. I'm proud of my podcast team. I'm proud of all of you for listening every week and creating this amazing community. I started this podcast truly having no idea how to create a podcast. I had never done it before. I had no experience. I had no mentors. I didn't take class, literally Google. That was it. Isn't Google and the internet amazing when you think about it? You can learn so much.

I started with very low quality equipment recording in a closet, editing the episodes myself which took so many hours, truly so many hours. It's insane. Now I have a team that does my production, shout out to them, they are amazing. I don't have to record in my closet anymore. And there are 100 episodes, actually probably more with some of the bonuses out there in the world for you and other public health professionals, other women in public health, other people socialized as women to get more rest, have less stress, have more time, feel better, create the life you truly want.

And I'm doing something special to celebrate for you all. I really thought about how could we really honor this being the 100<sup>th</sup> episode, this big milestone and really give all of you the listeners some things to mark this

[Redefining Rest for Public Health Professionals Podcast  
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## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life

that will serve you and help you. So today I'm giving five concrete tools to change your life all in one episode. This might be one of the most impactful filled episodes I've created. I've been so excited. It's been on the calendar for a while and now I finally get to record it and share it with all of you.

And not just that, over the next month I'm going to be sharing some of the most important foundational tools, knowledge and skills in order to get more rest and reduce your stress. Now, these are going to be some of the episodes I did at the very beginning of my podcast. And most of you have probably missed them because you've come along through the journey and 100 episodes to go back through and dig. It's quite a lot.

But these episodes, when I really started the podcast I thought through if someone was going to start from the beginning with zero knowledge where would I want them to start? And it kind of mirrors when you're in my one-on-one coaching program. The work we do, the skills, the lessons, it mirrors that. And I don't want any of you to miss that just because we're now at 100. So you are going to get them over the next month, each week so you can get even more concrete tools that will help you feel better, create confidence, do more of what you want without apologizing, without guilt, without anxiety.

These are some of the most essential thought work self-coaching concepts that will truly change your life. I don't think there is a better way to celebrate this milestone than pulling the top actionable, doable concrete tools for you to walk away with not just today but every week in the month of April. Now, listen I would also love for you to celebrate this amazing milestone with me. I could not be at 100 episodes without you, without this amazing community, those of you who email me and tell me how helpful the podcast was or in our one-on-one coaching sessions you share your reflections or you post on LinkedIn or Instagram.

## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life

All of you have made this possible. And as a celebration gift, as a celebration action I would love for you to take some time to rate and review this podcast. It would mean so much to everyone else in this community, including myself and my incredible hardworking podcast production team and most importantly the people out there in the field, the women in public health who are suffering, who are struggling, who are exhausted and overwhelmed and don't feel like there's a way out.

It will mean so much to them because when they read your review it will help them click on the podcast and start getting help, free accessible help. All you have to do is go to Apple or anywhere else you listen that allows you to rate and review, give it five stars and write a sentence or two of how this podcast has helped you. Truly this will take no more than five minutes. Don't do it while you're driving but it would mean so much. It would be one of the best ways to celebrate this milestone. It will help so many other people know about this podcast and get the help. So thank you ahead of time for doing that.

And all of you who have already rated and reviewed, I see you. I read them all and they mean so much to me. So thank you, thank you, thank you.

Okay, so let's get into five tools to change your life. Now, I want to give a little, I don't know if framework is the right word, but a little foundation for this episode and actually in the next four that will follow. Because in public health when we say the word 'tools', we often think of something a bit different than coaching or thought work tools. In public health, tools are usually written, sometimes oral but mostly written guides or frameworks or instructions for the work you're doing.

So some examples might be an indicator database to help evaluators measure program change, an isolation time period calculator, a school based communication training kit. But in coaching, tools are not exactly the same thing. They sometimes can be but not always. In my one-on-one

## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life

coaching program you do get weekly workbooks and worksheets to learn coaching tools and apply them and that kind of mirrors a little bit, traditional tools in public health. But a lot of coaching tools are more approaches for you to interact with your brain and to engage with your emotions.

And there are going to be some, I think in this episode and definitely in a future one where I talk about the pride jar. The pride jar is an actual activity you can use, that will be more applied. But I don't want you to dismiss any of the tools that I offer that really have more to do with how you interact with your brain because they are so powerful. When you use these approaches especially ongoingly, you will see change. So I want you to open up your concept of tools over the next couple of weeks so you can get the most out of these episodes.

And I want to encourage you, maybe even challenge you to put each of these into practice. For today's episode just pick one because there's five and put it into practice this week. And then in April take each tool I'm giving you and put it into practice, make a conscious effort and notice the difference it makes. One of the biggest things I say, the difference between the podcast and the one-on-one coaching program is the applied work. This podcast is mostly didactic me talking to you, giving you insights and tools and skills and knowledge.

And in the one-on-one coaching program we have a back and forth discussion and you get to apply it in real time. And you get to take workbooks home and you get to practice and you get assignments. The closest thing you're going to get to that one-on-one coaching program experience is taking these tools I'm giving you today in the next month and actually doing the work to implement them. That can sometimes be the hardest part because you don't have me as your coach to hold you accountable when you come back to the session when I say, "Okay, what were your reflections?"

## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life

That's for me, I choose to go work out in a gym at a yoga studio even though there is a free gym in my apartment complex, because I want that accountability. It helps me show up. It helps me do the work. It helps me really apply it. Now, you can of course apply it on your own by taking this and implementing it which I really, really want you to do. But I just want you to know it needs to take intention and choice and you have to make that.

So with that, let's start. The first one which if you're on my email list you have heard me talk about this a lot because I think it's so important. It's to stop saying, "I have to." If there is one thing I could have everyone in public health do in order to stop feeling stressed and start feeling empowered this would be it. You don't even realize how much you say this but when you start to become aware you will notice you say this constantly. I have to do the dishes. I have to finish this report. I have to text them back. You believe this is a fact but it's not.

There is nothing you have to do in your life, nothing. You're an adult with free will. You don't have to pay your taxes or eat veggies. Now, I'm not saying don't do that. I'm just illustrating, you always have a choice. There are lots of people who don't take care of their kids, who don't show up to work on time, who don't get their oil changed in their car. When you say I have to about anything you are lying to yourself. And you're taking away all your power to make a choice. It is truly the most disempowering thought. I really don't say it anymore, rarely.

And if my brain offers it to me or I do say it, it has no power anymore. I know it's not true. Right now you believe it's true so it has so much power over you but it's not. You choose to do something or you choose not to. You want to do something or you don't want to, period. I promise, if you stop saying, "I have to" and replace it with "I choose or want", it will change your life but you have to practice this. You have to catch your brain or you saying, "I have to", notice it and intentionally say, "I'm choosing to, I'm choosing not to." You have to change the language. This is so powerful.



## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life

Number two, focus on what's in your control and not out of it. When something goes wrong, when you make a mistake, when your calendar's full of meetings, when a challenge comes up, when something unexpected, so many of you want to focus and fixate on what you cannot control. Your boss's behavior, your past decisions, what other people are doing, this does nothing to help you because there's nothing you can do about things you cannot control. You can't control other people, you can't change the past.

When you instead turn your intention to what's in your control then you get your power back. Then there's something you can do if you want. Then you have more control, you feel more empowered. Whether it is your control to say yes or no to a meeting or to make a different decision or to ask for help.

Recently in a coaching session I was working with a client who's in a leadership role. If you're in a leadership role you know that typically your calendar is more full with meetings than time to do the work. And her brain wanted to focus only on what was out of her control, on the meetings being requested of her, on what other people were doing. Her brain truly thought there was no way to get her work done without those external things changing, which basically meant waiting and wishing, which didn't help her.

And in our coaching session when I prompted her to think of all the options she had in her control, you know what she came up with in less than five minutes? Nine. Nine options of what she could do, not zero, nine. And this is why this tool is so important. You go from believing there's nothing you can do to nine options of what you can do for yourself. But again, you have to consciously shift your brain's focus from what's out of your control to what's in your control and prompt yourself with questions like, what can I do, what are my options.

And if your brain says, nothing, I don't know, challenge it. Let's just brainstorm. Let's just try.

## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life

Okay, number three, play out the worst case scenario. Often our brains, especially when we're feeling anxious or fearful, want to offer us the worst case scenario. It wants to show you a picture of the most terrible thing that can happen. And that typically freaks you out, panics us. And when that happens we lose our ability to engage our prefrontal cortex, to critically think, to problem solve, to manage our emotions. But our brain stops at the 'scariest part' and it doesn't play it out.

Now, listen, I'm not talking about when you are actually in physical danger. This actually isn't even an issue when you're in physical danger because your nervous system truly takes over to keep you alive. And your fight, flight or freeze mechanism turns on. This happens when you're not in physical danger and your brain just is freaking out. But when you play out the worst case scenario all the way, what you will see is you will figure it out, you will make it through. So I want to give you an example.

Let's say you're feeling anxious because you realized after you submitted your grantee report to your funder, that you made a mistake in the numbers. Let's just say you accidentally used some of last year's numbers or you calculated something wrong or you forgot to put something in. And your brain offers you the worst case option. You start to feel anxious and worried. And your brain starts offering you all these thoughts. And it says things like, "Fuck, they're going to see that. They're going to take away our funding, then I'm going to be out of a job. I'm going to be in so much trouble. My supervisor is going to be so mad at me."

That narrative, that's the worst case scenario your brain is offering you. But what happens is your brain stops there and it leaves you freaked out and frozen. But what would happen if you consciously play that out? This is what I do so much in my one-on-one sessions is I prompt my clients, women in public health struggling with this, to play it all the way out. And this is how it goes. You can say this to yourself, okay, so let's say that does happen. Let's just go there. Let's imagine that happens, what's next?



## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life

Your brain will probably want to resist answering that question but you need to prompt it, you need to push it. You need to answer that question. What would you do if that truly happened? You might think, well, I'd probably feel really bad and disappointed and embarrassed. Okay, yeah, what then? Okay, well, maybe I'd start looking for a job, use my savings to pay for things. Okay, then what? Well, maybe I would get a job but what if I didn't, then what? Okay, then what? Answer that. Well, maybe I'd ask for help from my family or maybe I'd have to move in with family.

I'd keep looking for a job. Okay, then what? Well, maybe I would get a job but maybe I wouldn't. Okay, what if you wouldn't? Well, maybe I'd start a side hustle or get a part-time job or a contract job. Do you see what I'm getting at here? The point being you would figure it out. When you do this practice, this activity and push yourself to play it all the way out, get past that panic section your brain wants to fixate on, you get out of the panic, you get out of the fear and out of the frozen place and you see whatever happens you'll be able to figure it out and move forward.

You have resourcefulness, it doesn't mean it won't suck but it means you can figure it out, so much more empowering than being stuck frozen, just thinking about the iceberg or the tip or the pinnacle. I don't know. But just thinking about that one moment where you're freaked out the most. Rather than playing it all the way out and seeing you'll figure it out no matter what.

Okay, number four, this honestly might be one of my most used personal tools. If this tool was a t-shirt I would have worn it so much it's got pit stains and holes in it but it's my tried and true. I cannot tell you how often I used this tool. The first two to three years I was learning thought work, self-coaching and getting coaching. I don't use it as often anymore because I have really gotten to a place where my anxiety is much more regulated, my brain is much more managed. But in the beginning this helped me so much. And this is what I have termed, anchor thoughts.

## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life

This tool really helps you especially when you're feeling anxiety or fear or even panic, worry. However, I will say this tool takes some discernment. I'll share an example a little later. But anchor thoughts are thoughts that you say to yourself that you think on purpose to help you anchor yourself down to Earth, to feel more grounded, to reduce your panic, to slow your stress cycle. They aren't fancy thoughts, they are simple yet powerful thoughts. They are thoughts like I'm okay, nothing has gone wrong, I am safe, I can figure this out, it's going to be okay.

I know these sound simplistic but they are so powerful. When your brain is telling you that you'll be fired because you made a typo in a report, repeating to yourself over and over, it's going to be okay, can create calm and that calm can help you move forward. When your brain is freaking out because the person you're dating hasn't texted you back for hours saying over and over again, nothing has gone wrong, it can help you slow your stress cycle and feel more present.

I used to use these thoughts all the time when I was stressed out about email, when I was worried about getting feedback, when I felt like I had too much to do, when my calendar was overwhelming. I would just repeat these to myself, do not underestimate the power of these thoughts. As you all know, I have chronic anxiety but it used to be way more intense before coaching. And when I started coaching I used these thoughts all the time because my brain was constantly thinking everything had gone wrong, that I was fucked.

And using these thoughts helped me calm my nervous system, to be more present, to be a little calmer, to be a little more rational, a little bit more reasonable, a little bit more logical. Now, again, this requires some discernment. So here's an example. I experience anxiety in the car when other people drive sometimes. And when I'm experiencing that in the car because my anxiety is around getting in an accident, telling myself, using

## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life

the anchor thought, I am safe in this context does not help me. It actually makes things worse.

So this is where the discernment comes in, that thought does not serve me in that context. And you have to practice that discernment. But this tool is so powerful, I promise, especially if you have anxiety this will serve you so much.

Okay, the last one, practice new thoughts. In order to believe something new you have to practice something new. To change what you think which will result in how you feel, and changing how you show up, you need to practice a new thought. You need to think a new thought which requires practice. It doesn't magically happen. At first it feels silly and inconsequential, maybe awkward, but this is the path to changing your experience, your beliefs, your mindset. There are some moments where maybe on a podcast or in a coaching session a thought is offered to you and it's the aha moment and just clicks and sticks.

That's great but that's actually very rare. All the work I have done, all my clients have done to change their experience whether it's in work stress or getting more done or getting a raise or leaving their job, starting a business, finding a partner, anything else is an outcome of practicing new thoughts. If you currently believe, I can't take my lunch away from my desk because I have too much to do and you want to change that so you can take your lunch away from your desk, you have to believe something new. But to believe something new you have to practice these thoughts.

And I'm going to give you a couple but there are a million thoughts you can choose. You have to check in with you of what resonates with you, what feels true to you and by true I mean you notice a shift in your body that indicates to you, you can start to believe it even if you just believe it 1% or 5% or 10%. That's a signal that you can continue to practice it and build that belief.

## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life

So here is an example. Practicing I get to decide when to step away, practicing I can step away even if all my work isn't done. You probably don't believe those fully right now. They're probably not thoughts your brain just offers to you just because. You have to consciously practice them and think about them over and over. Your current thoughts, the loud and strong ones that tell you, you can't or you shouldn't, you only think those and they only take up so much space because you have thought them over and over and over. They're very well-rehearsed.

To believe and think new thoughts, you have to think new thoughts over and over and over again. The difference is with new intentional thoughts you are doing it consciously. Put the thought in your phone as a reminder. This is my preferred way to do it. I have the reminders up on my phone. I always have my thoughts I'm practicing in there and I have a reminder that comes up every day. You can also put them on post-it notes or you can see them and repeat it.

You can write the thought down five times in the morning and five times at night. And there's so many other ways but the only way to believe something new is to actively decide to practice that belief until it becomes a habitual thought that your brain just feels like an old pair of jeans.

Okay, so those are five tools to change your life. I encourage you to pick one and practice it this week every day and see what you notice, see what it changes, see what it creates for you. Over the next month, here are some of the tools you're going to be learning in the future episodes, processing emotions which is one, if not, the most important skill for changing your life. You're also going to learn how to understand other people and your feelings, how to use awareness for your growth and change.

And how to create more pride in yourself to get what you want. So with that, lastly a reminder to please rate and review this podcast to help me celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> episode. I'm so proud you're here. I'm so thankful you're

## #100: 5 Tools to Change Your Life

here. It will only take a few minutes. It will mean a lot to me and my team but also all the other women in public health out there looking for this podcast who don't know it but they need just this to start to feel better and have less stress and more time and you can help them reach it.

So just take a few minutes, it would mean so much. Thank you so much. And with that I'm heading off to my sabbatical. I'll be gone for a month. I'm traveling Europe. Don't worry, the podcasts are not stopping, you're getting great tools over the next couple of weeks. My Instagram, my LinkedIn, my emails aren't stopping, all the teachings are going to keep going. Don't worry about it. I have prepped it all ahead of time.

And then when I get back I'll share my lessons from my sabbatical and at one point I want to do an episode of how you can also do this too, no matter what job you're in, take extra time for yourself just because. Alright you all, 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](http://mckoolcoaching.com), that's M-C-K-O-O-L coaching.com to learn more.