

## Ep #43: Be Where You Are



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**Rachel Hart**

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You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 43. Welcome to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart. If you're an alcoholic or an addict, this is not the show for you, but if you are someone who has a highly functioning life, doing very well but just drinking a bit too much and wants to take a break, then welcome to the show. Let's get started.

Hello everybody, how are you? Listen, I have a question for you today. Do you live with someone else? Is there another person or multiple people in your home? So I live with my husband, and this is a fairly new thing. I have much more practice living on my own. I spent a decade in New York City living by myself, and it is an adjustment to all of a sudden have someone in your space. It's very different.

Now, we have a lot of funny things that happen all the time as we figure out how to live with each other. My husband actually lived by himself for a very long time too. And one of the things that has happened is that my husband gets to see parts of me that I didn't share with anyone else because there are things you really only do when you're home by yourself and when you live alone nobody is around to see it.

And one of these things is what I call super efficient tidying mode. This is a real thing that I do. I don't always do it, but there are certain times, certain points where I get into super efficient tidying mode, which means I just kind of put my head down and I'm on a mission, and I'm crazy efficient. I am just zooming from task to task, getting stuff done around our home.

So you know, I kind of knew that I would sometimes go into super efficient tidying mode, but I never had an outside perspective on it until I started living with my husband, and I would start going into super efficient tidying mode, which really means like going from the laundry room to the kitchen to the bedroom, and I'm folding and I'm unloading the dishwasher and I'm going through the mail, right? I'm just like doing everything very fast.

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And early on when we were living together, my husband started kind of looking at me funny while I was doing this. You know when someone gets that kind of head cock, like what's going on? And finally, he asked me, "You know, are you okay? Are you alright? Are you upset? Are you annoyed?" Okay, so you can imagine what happened when he asked me these things. I got annoyed that he was asking me if I was annoyed. Right?

So now, remember we all know the think-feel-act cycle. My husband did not create my annoyance; his question did not make me annoyed. I was annoyed because I was thinking to myself, "Why is he asking me if I'm annoyed? I'm just trying to get everything done. Why is he bothering me? I'm trying to be efficient." My thinking, that's what annoyed me. I could have thought, "Hey, isn't it nice that my husband thinks that something might be wrong and is checking in to see if I'm okay." But that is not where my brain automatically went.

But even though he was asking me that, I just kept insisting, "No, I'm not annoyed. Nothing's going on, this is just what your wife looks like when she's really, really efficient. This is just what I do." But you know, it kept happening, and he would say like, "You really don't look happy. I feel like I need to get out of your way. It just - it does feel like something is wrong." And I was like, "Listen, honey, I am fine. Nothing is wrong. I swear I'm not mad. This is called super efficient tidying mode. It's very effective. This is just what I do. You don't do it, that's why it seems strange to you."

So we kind of dropped it after a while, but you know, I'm a coach, I'm curious about myself, I'm curious about my brain, I'm curious about the things that I do. And the truth is that my husband is actually pretty intuitive about noticing when something is wrong. And so I thought, "You know, maybe he's onto something. I mean, I really do not feel annoyed. I really do not feel a negative emotion." And I do this for a living, I'm pretty tuned in to my emotions. But I thought, "Well, maybe there's something to discover here, so let's just see if I can find something."

Now remember, my work is all about the think-feel-act cycle, and so the first thing that I did is I started looking in my brain and I said, "Okay,

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when I was in the process of doing super efficient tidying mode, I started to see like, are there thoughts?" But there were no thoughts in there. I couldn't recognize any thoughts. It was like, nothing going on. Just seemed like I was working efficiently.

So then I thought, "Alright, well, maybe I can identify a feeling." So as I was in the process, moments when I'd be in super efficient tidying mode, I would remember to ask myself, "You know, Rachel, how are you feeling right now?" Didn't notice a feeling. I thought I felt fine. I couldn't find a thought, I couldn't find a feeling. But remember, there are three parts to the cycle, and there was one thing I could identify; an action, and the action I could identify was rushing. Super efficient tidying mode is very fast. I am rushing around, and it's actually kind of funny because I often do it in my socks, and so sometimes I'm actually kind of sliding around the apartment because I'm going so fast.

So I did notice this. This super efficient tidying mode was fast, I was zooming from the kitchen to the bedroom to the laundry room to the bathroom, and that was an action, and I knew, "Well, my actions are generated by how I'm feeling, and my feelings are created by what I'm thinking." The think-feel-act cycle is always at work. It's always working behind the scenes, even if you can't notice it at first.

And so I did what I always tell anyone that I'm working with, I say, "If you want to know why you are doing anything, and that can be overdrinking, overeating, overworking, but it can just be anything at all. It doesn't have to be something that you're overdoing. What you need to do if you want to know the reason why is to either stop doing the action all together, or change the action in some significant way and once you do that, you will quickly discover why you are doing what you are doing."

And listen, changing the action in a significant way or stopping doing the action all together, why that works is because you're interrupting the habit cycle. You're interrupting the loop, and so when you change it, all of a sudden your brain starts to give you some awareness because remember, it just wants to keep the habit. And so I knew I couldn't identify a thought, I

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couldn't identify a feeling, but I could identify an action, and the action was moving very, very quickly.

So I decided, "Alright, I'm going to change it in some significant way. I'm going to slow down. I can still clean up, I can still be efficient, but I don't have to zoom around the house. It doesn't have to be fast. I'm going to try to slow it down." Now, guess what. Guess what happened. As soon as I slowed down my pace, I tried it out and I immediately got access to what I was thinking because my brain was like, "This is not what we do. This is not what super efficient tidying mode looks like. This is fast, why are we going slow? Slow is a problem, what's going on?"

My brain was like, "Rachel, hurry up, you got to get this done, you got to do this. Go, go, go, go, go." All my thoughts, right? "You got to do this, you got to get this done, go, quicker." I think you got to get this done was one of the main thoughts that I noticed. I immediately - as soon as I slowed it down, I had access to my thinking. And as soon as I had access to those thoughts, because I was interrupting the habit loop, as soon as I could do that, I had the ability to start to see, "Okay, so how am I feeling when I'm thinking, 'you got to get this done, you got to do this, go, go, go'?"

And the feeling I identified - because remember, there's always a feeling. Your actions are always motivated by how you are feeling. The feeling that I could identify when I finally was able to look at those thoughts, "You got to get this done, you got to do this, go, go go", was frantic. When I was thinking the thoughts, "You got to get this done", I was feeling frantic, and then that feeling was creating the action of me rushing around.

But here's the thing. I had practiced super efficient tidying mode so much, it was such a long-standing habit that the thoughts were unconscious and the feeling was unconscious. I wasn't even noticing that I was feeling a negative emotion. I wasn't even noticing that I was feeling this kind of low-level franticness. It wasn't until I interrupted the habit by slowing down. And this is the other crazy thing that I realized, I could slow down and still be incredibly efficient. I was actually getting the same amount done.

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I wasn't going at a snail's pace, I just wasn't rushing. And when I would end my super efficient tidying mode periods, when I slowed down, I noticed I felt better. Oh, fascinating, right? I felt better because I wasn't being motivated by the feeling of frantic. I had practiced this habit for so long I wasn't even aware, I didn't have consciousness that frantic - I was feeling frantic, that franticness - I don't know if that's a word, but it was there. I wasn't even aware of that, but of course it was still affecting me. Even if I don't have awareness of an emotion, my body is still feeling it, right?

So because emotions are always creating different, subtle changes in our body. Sometimes very extreme changes in our body, but sometimes like this, it was much more of a subtle change. And this is what I want to talk to you about today. I want you to notice the subtle emotions that you are experiencing during the day that contribute to how you feel. But I also want to show you that you can learn to cultivate the skill of being where you are, and being where you are, cultivating this skill actually is something that will help interrupt if you are finding yourself also in any of these unconscious habits, where you can't identify the thought, you can't identify the feeling.

So being where you are is a really important skill to develop to interrupt these moments that feel incredibly unconscious but are affecting how you feel. And remember, this work is incredibly important because how you feel over the course of a day, all those emotions that your thoughts are creating are contributing, if by the end of the day you feel like, "I just really need to take the edge off, I really need a reward, I really need some relief", that's why you want to have awareness around this.

Now, here's the thing. Being where you are, the concept of this sounds simple. So right now I'm in my office, I'm recording this podcast, I'm fully present in the recording, my mind isn't elsewhere. I am practicing the skill of being where you are. So I talk about this with my clients all the time, especially when it comes to mundane tasks, because when we are doing things like laundry or cleaning, or unloading the dishwasher, or grocery

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shopping, or commuting, you know, these kind of repetitive tasks that we have to do, our brain is often not practiced at being present in that moment. It's not practiced at being present in the task, and this is because you know, the human brain is incredibly efficient. We can do all these things, we can fold clothes and we can think about something else, right? We can unload the dishwasher and think about what's going on at work.

So this is a skill, it's a skill that we possess that we can be doing something and thinking about something entirely different. But the problem is most often, what we'll find ourselves doing is we might be thinking about something that happened in the past, and that could be yesterday or it could be ten years ago, or we're thinking about the future. We're thinking about something that's going to happen tomorrow or something that's going to happen a year from now. We're not in that present moment and the problem is most people when they notice this, what they notice is that their brain is focused on the past or the future in a negative way.

When you're thinking about what happened at work yesterday, or you're thinking about what's going to happen at that upcoming parent teacher conference, you're thinking about it in a negative way. And of course, this makes a lot of sense because if you don't supervise your brain, your brain loves to go to the negative. Your brain thinks it's being incredibly helpful. Being able to spot the negative, being able to spot danger in our environment was an incredibly important survival skill, it kept humans safe, it helped humans survive when we lived in an environment that was incredibly dangerous.

So if we were walking by a bush, it was really helpful back in the day to think, "What's in the bush? Something in the bush? Is there a tiger in the bush?" Right? That was a really helpful skill. The problem is now, most of us live in an incredibly safe environment. It often doesn't seem that way, right? But it is so much safer than it was thousands of years ago. Survival is so much easier, but our brain has not caught up. And so your brain will go to what I call the negative past or the negative future, and what you

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have to do is bring it back to where you are and I mean exactly where you are.

So if you're in the grocery store buying groceries, bring it back to purchasing groceries. You don't need to replay the fight that you had with your sister or your husband, right? If you're in your bedroom folding laundry, bring your brain back to folding laundry. Pay attention; be present with folding laundry. You don't need to be worrying about the holidays. Be where you are.

This will feel awkward and foreign at first because your brain loves hanging out in the negative past and the negative future. Your brain is totally comfortable there. It's like, "I'm spotting danger, this is great. This is what I'm supposed to do." Right? Except the problem is that in this very moment, you are safe. You are just washing dishes or cooking a meal or folding laundry or going grocery shopping. Nothing has gone wrong, and your brain, the brain that loves to spot the negative is like, "Everything seems to be okay here, what if I spot the negative in the past or the future? Maybe that will be helpful."

But of course it's not helpful because when you are in the negative past or in the negative future, all you are doing is thinking negative thoughts, which are creating negative emotions. So if you notice your mind drifting, which will happen. This will be - this will not come naturally, this will be a practice. You can interrupt it with that simple thought, "Come back." And when I was learning how to do this, I practiced that thought over and over again. I would try to focus on being where I was, I would try to focus on being in this current moment and that I would notice my brain going off into the negative past or the negative future, and I would say, "Come back."

And at first I would have to do that over and over and over again, but soon it started to become second nature. I would just bring my brain back to this present moment. And the reason that it matters if you want to work on changing your drinking is that when you're in the negative past or when you're in the negative future, you're thinking negative thoughts, you're creating negative emotions. They might be worry or anxiety or annoyance

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or confusion, and they might be very subtle in the moment, but trust me, they add up over time.

And if you're doing that all day long, imagine if you were doing that all day long, if your brain is living in the negative past and the negative future, if you're doing that all day long thinking negative thoughts all day long about the past and the future, of course by the end of the day your brain's going to be like, "I need some relief. This day was hard. I need to take the edge off." Part of what you're trying to take the edge off is existing not in this present moment, but hanging out in this negative past and the negative future.

Now, keep in mind this is not what was happening for me when I was in super efficient tidying mode because I had done a lot of work, I'd really done this practice of bringing my brain back. Come back, come back, come back. I had done that practice. But what happened is I wasn't hanging out in the negative past or the negative future, I actually didn't notice anything happening in there, and you might be in this position too. You might say like, "I'm not really thinking anything. I don't think there's anything there, I don't think I'm feeling anything."

Now, I had the benefit of a husband who was like, "Is everything okay? You don't look like everything's okay." Because think about it, for the decade that I lived on my own, I never saw my own face in super efficient tidying mode. No one was around to be like, "Hey Rachel, what's going on? You look kind of pissed off." Right? I wasn't noticing a thought, I wasn't noticing a feeling, but I did notice an action.

And so what I want you to do, if you don't find that your brain is going to the negative past or the negative future and you're just kind of thinking to yourself, "I just think it's not really doing either of those things, I don't notice anything", what I want you to do is notice your action as you go about the daily tasks of life. Notice how you are going about these tasks. Is there a speed? Do you feel tense? Are you rushing? Has anyone in your life ever said to you, "Hey, is everything okay?" while you're just washing the dishes or folding the laundry, or driving the car? Right? Has anyone ever said like,

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"Are you alright? What's going on?" Maybe like me, you felt annoyed that they were asking that question because you had thoughts like, "Why are they asking me if everything's alright? I'm fine, obviously."

Right? I mean, I think that that is such an amazing thing when I notice my brain being so annoyed that someone's asking me if I'm okay. So here's the thing, pay attention to how you are doing these tasks. Pay attention if there's a speed, if you feel tense, if there's rushing. Start to notice that, and one thing I will tell you is that most of my clients notice that there is speed. And so slowing down is a great way, just like what I did, slowing down is a really great way to interrupt that habit.

You can also, if you think, "I'm not really going fast, I don't think there's any speed to it", what you can do is that when you notice your brain wants to do something like fold laundry or clean the sink or you know, pick up, don't do it. I'm not saying forever, just as an experiment. Don't do it. When you look at that rug and you think like, "I should vacuum it", don't do it.

Interrupt it, interrupt what your brain wants to do and then see what happens. I guarantee if you either change the action or don't do it at all, you will start to notice your thoughts. So no matter if you find that your brain is hanging out in the negative past or the negative future, or you are just rushing around and telling yourself, "I'm not thinking anything, I'm not feeling anything, I'm just being super efficient", you have your own version of super efficient tidying mode. No matter what camp you're in, and you may be in both, you're going to discover that you're creating a lot of very subtle negative emotions, and those subtle negative emotions are contributing to how you feel and what you are looking for and the relief that you want at the end of the day.

And think about this: I didn't even have awareness until I started slowing down that I was feeling frantic during super efficient tidying mode. I really had zero awareness of a negative emotion. I just thought, "This is what being efficient feels like." Just feels terrible. No, but really, I think

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that's such an important thing. I really just told myself, "No, this is normal. Nothing's wrong, I don't feel anything."

But of course, when I interrupted, when I started slowing down, I did notice that what I was feeling in those moments was the feeling of frantic. And not only that, but that I could actually be really efficient and get things done and do things slower but still get everything that I needed to do, check it all off my list, but not have all those actions, all those tasks fueled by this negative emotion.

So I want you to start thinking about this for yourself. Think about how often your brain does this all day long, goes into the negative past or the negative future, or you're just so rushing around and you tell yourself, "I'm not noticing any thinking or any feeling". I want you to think about how both of these things are going to contribute to your desire at the end of the day to just pour yourself some relief, to at the end of the day just take the edge off of how you're feeling. But you're taking the edge off of all these little, subtle negative emotions that you're creating for yourself during the day.

And I'll tell you that for a while now I have been practicing turning super efficient tidying mode into a slow practice, and I will still catch myself rushing. It's still a habit that I'm working to change, but that rushing now is a sign for me to slow down. It's a sign for me that once I start rushing, what has kicked back in is that thought, "You got to get this done. Go, go, go. You got to get this all done."

So every time I notice that rushing, I use that as a sign. "Slow yourself down." And I've discovered that I can get a lot done, and I am amazed that by the end of it, I don't feel like I need to sit down and put my feet up and be like, "Thank god that's over" because the entire process of super efficient tidying mode wasn't driven by a negative emotion.

So think about how you can incorporate this into your life. Practice being where you are. Bring your brain back to the present moment. Just every time you see it off in the negative past or the negative future, tell it to come back. You may have to do that over and over again. That's okay,

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you're just building that muscle. And more than anything, slow yourself down. You can get a lot done, you can be very efficient and you don't have to be zooming around the house, sliding around in socks like I was doing.

If you start practicing this, you are going to be amazed to discover how it impacts the amount of relief that you feel like you need or are searching for at the end of the day, because if you can start to create less negative emotions, less subtle, negative emotions during the day, if you can start to change that, then by the end of the day when six o'clock rolls around, you're not going to have all this negative emotions that then you need to take the edge off of.

So that's it for today. I want you to really think about how you can start to implement this work in your life. Think about if you have your own version of super efficient tidying mode. Think about where you might be rushing, or where you're just not in the present moment, and work on introducing these skills so that you can start to change that. It will make a big difference in your desire to pour a drink at the end of the day.

Alright, if you have any questions, if you want to reach out, you can always shoot me an email at [podcast@rachelhart.com](mailto:podcast@rachelhart.com). Otherwise, I'll see you next week.

Hey guys, if you want to go over to iTunes and leave a review about the podcast if you're enjoying it, I would love it. But not only that; I am giving everyone who does a free urge meditation. I will tell you, this meditation, it is super simple. All it takes is five minutes and a pair of headphones. If you are having an urge and you want a different way to handle it, just pop those headphones in, find a place where you can sit down undisturbed and teach your brain, retrain your brain a very simple method to make urges more tolerable. All you need to do is head on over to [rachelhart.com/urge](http://rachelhart.com/urge) and input your information there.

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