

Ep #50: Choosing Discomfort



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 50. 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.

Happy New Year's everybody. It's 2018, it's a new year. What are you going to do? What are you going to create? What do you want to be different? I love the New Year's. I do. I think it's always a really exciting time. And you know what, it's not technically 2018 right now, it's a couple weeks before. I'm actually recording this podcast early because I want to have some time off for the holidays. But I do really want to talk to you about what you want to do differently this year, who you want to be, how you want your life to look and feel differently, and in order to do that, we're going to have to talk about discomfort because discomfort is the number one reason that people don't change. People try and keep things the same, they don't want to be uncomfortable. It's too much work, it's too hard.

And I want to show you that changing your view of discomfort will not only set you up to have an entirely different year, but it can set you up to have an entirely different life. This is something that I discovered myself. You know, discomfort for me was something that for the longest time I thought was a problem, and I think most people would agree with that. I think when most people hear the word discomfort, they think, "That's a problem. I don't want to be uncomfortable, I just want to be content. I want everything to be fine. I don't want everyone to worry", right? And all of that struggle against discomfort, it actually creates so many problems for us. And so if you can start to change your view of discomfort, you will be amazed how it will change what you're capable of doing because you'll no longer be hiding from it, you will no longer be avoiding it, but you can actually see that it's a really powerful tool to get you where you want to go.

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Now, of course this applies across the board with all different kinds of change. But I think it especially is really applicable to drinking because just think about it; I mean, how many of you are opening up that bottle of wine or grabbing a beer from the fridge or mixing yourself a drink to relieve the discomfort that you feel at the end of the day? How many of you are saying, "Oh god, I just need to take the edge off. It just was too stressful, you know, there was too much going on. I've got all this stuff happening at work, got all this stuff happening in my family, I just need a break from how I feel." Right?

So, so often, we get into the habit of using alcohol as a way to try to mitigate discomfort, and of course, it's only temporary. It can only temporarily make you feel differently. It can't actually change anything in your life. Pouring a drink is not going to magically fix your problems. And I know that some of you listening will say - because I do hear this a lot - "You know, I'm not drinking for that reason, Rachel. Yes, sometimes I want to take the edge off, but sometimes like, I just want to have a good time. Sometimes I just want to celebrate. I just really like the taste of it, I just want to have fun." And I get that, but I think it's so important for you to ask yourself, okay, so whatever that moment is, maybe it's you know, meeting up with your girlfriends, or going to a restaurant, or going to a party. How would you feel if you didn't have a glass in your hand? What would you be feeling then?

Because I then hear from so many people is, "Well, I don't know if it would be any fun, I might feel deprived, I might feel like I was missing out, maybe I'd feel like people are judging me or I'm not part of the group." Hey, guess what, you're attempting to mitigate discomfort. You may have started from the place of "I want to celebrate, I want to have fun, I like the way it tastes" but when I ask you what it would be like not to have it, the responses I always get are responses about mitigating discomfort. So think about that. Think about how often you are fixing yourself a drink as a way to change the discomfort, either that you are currently feeling or that you would anticipate feeling if you decided not to have it.

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So here's what I want to tell you, and this is really, really important. Discomfort in life is a given. We are supposed to be uncomfortable. We are supposed to be kind of pushed outside of our comfort zone, that's what we're here to do. We're here to evolve and grow and create. And all of those things, they don't just need discomfort, they require discomfort. It's mandatory. You cannot evolve and grow and create without being a little unsure and a little uneasy. You have to step outside of your comfort zone. I mean, really like, why else are we here? What are we supposed to be doing?

To me, just - it's so obvious. We're supposed to evolve, we're supposed to grow, we're supposed to create, we're supposed to discover. Like, that's the point. The point isn't to wake up and just go to a job and collect as much money as we can in our bank account. It's to figure stuff out, and in order to do that, in order to grow and evolve and create, we cannot just be comfortable all the time. It doesn't work that way. So when I think about it that way, I think it's important to see the value in discomfort, how it really is a gateway. It is a tool that allows us to grow and change and become something different.

So there is the discomfort of growing, the discomfort of stepping outside of your comfort zone, but there is also another type of discomfort, and that is the discomfort of stagnating. Now, this is very different. It's very different than the discomfort that you feel when you're stretching beyond what you think you're capable of, when you're challenging yourself, when you're seeing what's possible. The discomfort of stagnating is very different, and I think it's important to note that the opposite of growing is not staying in the same place. It's actually moving backwards. I want you to think about that. The opposite of growing is not staying the same place, it's actually moving backwards.

Because the truth is, you can't really stay still. You are creating your life each and every day. Each and every day you are making choices, you are making decisions, you are creating who you are, right? That is happening. You cannot actually just be still. And so I want you to think

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about it and apply this to drinking. If you pour yourself a glass of wine every day, for an entire year, you haven't stayed still. You are not the same person on day one as you are on day 365. Right? Those choices, those actions, the decision to pour yourself a glass of wine every day, that has strengthened a neural pathway in your brain and has strengthened the habit.

I always ask people who really want to change their drinking, I always ask them, you know, if nothing changes, where will they be? Who will they be in six months or a year? And always, almost always, I hear the same thing. "Well, I'll be right where I am right now, and I'll be exactly who I am right now." But you know, it's not entirely true. If nothing changes, and if you keep making the same decision over and over and over again, what you've done is one, you've made the habit stronger, because you've had six months or a year of practicing the same habit, and two, you will have further decreased your ability to cope with certain situations or certain emotions. So, you will have actually moved backwards. You will not be in the exact same place, you will not be exactly who you are. You will have actually regressed.

And you know, I think about this a lot because you know, I started drinking when I was 17, I started drinking right when I got to college, and you know, for a long time, I kind of thought that I was a 17-year-old girl who was just frozen in time because I just was repeating the same habits over and over again. But you know, I wasn't. I was actually moving backwards. I was actually regressing. Every year that I kept saying that I needed a drink to access the fun, carefree, outgoing, unafraid, unencumbered version of me, I was actually becoming a less capable version of myself. I was actually becoming even less capable than the day before I arrived at college because I was just making the habit stronger. I was engraining this idea that I needed a drink to get rid of certain emotions, that I needed a drink to be myself in certain situations, and so I was actually regressing.

I want you to think about that. I think that that is actually a really, really important thing for you to understand because I think a lot of people

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do understand the idea that if you don't change anything, if you don't make any changes in your life, they understand the concept of okay, I'll be the same, I'll be exactly where I am, nothing will have changed, but I rarely think that people understand the kind of next step beyond that is that you're actually regressing, that you're actually moving backwards. You're not standing still because you're making the habit stronger. You're making the neural pathway stronger. You are strengthening the beliefs, whatever your beliefs are around drinking, that life wouldn't be fun without it, you need it to relax, it's just what everybody does, it's what normal people do, you're strengthening it with every time that you practice those beliefs and you practice the action of drinking.

And so I want you to consider that. I mean, I really did think for a long time you know, that I was just that same 17-year-old girl but you know, I think back and I realize, not really, because you know, what she had maybe a year of practicing in habits was totally different ten years out. Right? Those habits were much more engrained, it had actually regressed me. And so think about how that applies for yourself. And then consider that there is discomfort that you will face in growing and there is a discomfort in stagnating, and then hiding from the dreams of who you want to be and what you want to do. So the question for you is which discomfort do you want to choose? Do you want to choose the discomfort that propels you forward, or do you want to choose the discomfort that send you backwards?

Now, all that discomfort really is is negative emotion, right? I mean, let's get real about what I'm talking about here. When we're talking about the discomfort that we experience, whether we're growing or we're stagnating, what we're really talking about when we boil it down is negative emotion, right? When I'm growing, the discomfort I'm feeling are the emotions of being unsure, uncertain, unsteady, nervous, apprehensive, right? These are all negative emotions, right? But that's the discomfort that I'm feeling. But here's the thing, I'll take these emotions any day over the discomfort that I feel when I'm stuck in place, when I'm stagnating, when

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I've moving backwards. Because those emotions, feeling unsure, uncertain, unsteady and nervous and apprehensive, they are helping me grow.

I know that if I am not pushing myself, if I'm not outside of my comfort zone, then I'm too comfortable. I have to be experiencing some of these emotions in order to actually grow and evolve and change. But when I'm stagnating, it's a very different set of emotions. They're still negative, but it's much more along the lines of feeling hopeless, powerless, ashamed, incapable, alone, right? Those emotions are not a pathway forward. Those emotions are emotions that you can just spiral downwards on. They are how you head backwards, and I would choose any day of the week, the discomfort and the negative emotions attached with growing and challenging myself and evolving than I would the negative emotions attached to stagnating and hiding, hiding from who I want to be, hiding from my dreams, hiding from what I think is possible.

As I was doing the research for this episode, it actually made me think a lot about a 40th anniversary present that I gave to my mom and dad. So if you've been listening to the podcast, you know that I grew up in Connecticut and our house, the backyard actually slopes downward to a river. I will tell you, it actually made for terrifying sledding as a child because if you went too far you would end up in the river. That's another story for another time. Anyway, the river in our backyard is a huge destination for fly fishing, and so during the season, you always see people fly fishing behind our house. And you know, we've lived there, my parents moved to that home when I was three years old, and for as long as I can remember, I just remember my parents talking about how they both wanted to learn how to do it, how to fly fish. I mean, the river was right there, all you had to do was step out our backdoor and walk you know, in our yard, and you would get right to the river.

And so I decided for their 40th wedding anniversary that I wanted to make this happen. So I hired a guide for the weekend and together, the three of us learned how to fly fish. It was actually so much fun, and I think probably one of the most fun weekends I've spent with my parents. But our

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guide was incredibly knowledgeable, I mean, he had been fly-fishing for his entire life, he knew this river you know, inside and out, and he also could not believe that we lived in this prime, prime fishing spot and no one in the family had ever walked down to the river and tried fly fishing for ourselves.

So you know he was showing us all the ins and out of what we needed to know, and our very first day when we headed to the river for the first time, the guide warned us that the water would probably feel a lot stronger than we expected, and that standing in one place with the current rushing past our legs could be pretty tiring. Now, this is probably one of those things that you know, you don't really believe until you do it yourself, and I didn't really believe it because you know, I had grown up next to that river, and it looked pretty peaceful. It's not terribly deep, you don't see a lot of rapids in it, I mean, it looks like a very, very slow moving peaceful river. And so it just seemed kind of crazy, this idea that it was going to be tiring just to stand in the water. It didn't make a lot of sense to me.

Of course, then, I got in. And I was in my full gear with my waders and all my equipment and he was totally right. It was, it was oddly tiring standing in the river just keeping myself upright while the current was pushing against my legs. And this memory came to mind while I was thinking about this topic because it reminded me of what it's like to stagnate. It takes energy not to change because the world is moving forward. Time is moving forward. Life is rushing past you, right? Like that current in the river, and you are trying to stand still. You are trying to stand still in this world that is changing, this world that is moving forward.

So it takes energy to try to stay in one place when everything around you is moving forward. And it takes energy to change. It takes energy to grow and evolve. And so the question for you becomes, well, you get to decide, where do you want to focus your energy? Do you want to focus your energy on moving forward, on growing, changing, evolving? Or do you want to try to stay in the same place? Because either way, you are going to expend energy, and either way, you will encounter discomfort. That I can promise. Discomfort is part of the process of growing. You are going to feel

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it if you decide that you want to grow and change and evolve, but it's also part of the process of stagnating and hiding. So which one do you want to choose? Do you want the discomfort with growing or do you want the discomfort with stagnating?

Because remember, all discomfort is negative emotion. And negative emotion is part of what we sign up for with this life. We're not here to just be content. We're not here to just be happy. We're here to feel the full spectrum of emotions. We need the light and the dark. Negative emotions are part of this human game, and so these are the questions for you to consider as you are sitting in the very beginning of a new year. Which one do you want to choose?

So I want you to think about the following questions, and I always remind you guys, do not try to answer this in your head, get a piece of paper. Write it out. It makes all the difference to get things on paper. But I want you to consider the following questions. Where in your life have you been trying to stand still? Where in your life have you been resisting change, resisting growing, resisting evolving? What discomfort have you been trying to avoid? And get really specific with this. Really enumerate the discomfort that your brain is so set on trying to avoid. Where do you want to go this year and who do you want to become? Think about that. It's 2018, it's a new year. Who do you want to become? Where do you want to go? You can choose anything.

I think that that's something I have learned more and more as I do the work with the think-feel-act cycle, you can choose anything. You really can. What will it take to do these things? What will it take to go where you want to go and become who you want to be? And why are you willing to feel the discomfort of growing and changing and evolving? Why is it worth it to you? Really spend some time with these questions. You know, so often, what we do when a new year comes around, we have all these goals, it's like, lose weight, drink less, find a new job, save more money, and it's not that there's anything wrong with these goals, but what we're not doing is looking

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at why we're not changing in the first place. What are we trying to avoid? What will it take to do what we want to do? What will we have to embrace?

And that's why I really want you to think and spend some time on today's topic. I really want you to consider that whatever you choose, you are going to encounter discomfort. There is discomfort in growing, and there is discomfort in stagnating. And that stagnating is not you in the exact same place. It's actually you regressing it's actually you moving backwards. If your drinking stays exactly the same this year as it was last year, you will not actually be in the same place. Do you see that? The habit will actually be stronger. Right? What you are telling yourself that you are capable of tolerating when it comes to negative emotions will actually be reduced. So I want you to consider that. I think that that's such an important way to see the distinction.

So, write down these questions and really spend some time answering them. Really go deep on this because I think that there is something really powerful here for you to uncover for yourself beyond just I want to change my drinking. Well, why haven't you? What's holding you back? And I think that this discomfort piece, if you can change how you view discomfort, you can change everything. I'm telling you, it really is for I think everyone, the missing piece of the puzzle.

So let me know how it goes. If you have any questions at all you can always email me at podcast@rachelhart.com. Otherwise, I will see you next week. Happy New Year.

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 and input your information there.

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