

## Ep #52: Compelling Reason 2.0



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**With Your Host**

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #52: Compelling Reason 2.0

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.

Hey guys, it's episode 52. That means it's been one full year of podcast episodes. One year. I can't believe it, I'm so happy. I was thinking about what I wanted to talk to you guys about to really mark this occasion, and I decided that I wanted to go deeper into one of my tools that I think is so important for all of you who want to change your drinking, but frankly who want to change anything in your life. And that is the tool of the compelling reason.

Now listen, I've talked about this previously on the podcast. I talked about in episode 22, the episode on why you need a compelling reason. And so, if you haven't listened to that, I want you to make sure that you go back and you have a listen. There's an exercise that you can do at the end of that episode as well. But I want to go deeper on the compelling reason because I find that so many people get stuck here. So many people say to me, "I don't know why I'm unwilling to change my drinking. I guess I haven't found a reason that's compelling enough."

I hear this time and time again, and I see how people get stuck in this idea that the reason that they haven't change is because they haven't found their compelling reason. It's not compelling enough. If it were compelling enough, they would have changed by now. So what I want to do in this podcast is just do a brief review of what a compelling reason is, and then I want to help you understand the most common stumbling block, and it is connected to the idea that the reason that you haven't changed your drinking yet, or frankly, anything you want to accomplish in your lives is because you haven't found a reason that's compelling enough.

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So I want to go through that stumbling block with you and then the last piece is how to connect with your compelling reason on a regular basis. Because you really do need to think of this as something that you are connecting with, and it's not just a one and done. Think of your compelling reason once and be done with it.

So just as a reminder and a refresher for all of you guys. A compelling reason is your rationale or your motive to go after change in the face of discomfort. It's why you're doing something. Now, this is really important because of course, change requires discomfort. You're asking your brain to do something that isn't easy, and your brain likes to do easy things. So you have to have a compelling rationale or motive in order to go after it.

Now, the mistake that a lot of people make when they're trying to identify their compelling reason is they don't actually ask themselves if the rationale that they've come up with is truly compelling. I know this sounds like such a basic step, but I tell you, a lot of people miss this step. A lot of people just stop with, "Well, I want to change my drinking because I don't like how I feel in the morning", "I want to change my drinking because I want to lose weight" or, "I want to change my drinking because I don't like that I'm doing it every evening."

And now here's the thing, that can be the starting point of your compelling reason, but you have to ask yourself, is this rationale, is it really exciting? Is it really motivating? Is it really something that in the face of discomfort is going to inspire you? A lot of people just stop with a reason that sounds good, never really asking themselves, is it actually compelling?

So don't forget that step. I talk about that all in episode 22, how you can really dig deep, how you can really determine if this is something that truly feels compelling. Most people just want to stop at, "I want to change my drinking to lose weight or to get healthy or to feel in control", which is fine, but rarely do these reasons excite anybody or compel people or create determination. A lot of these reasons just sound kind of nice. And I'll tell

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you that nice isn't going to cut it. So if you feel like you're there, make sure you go back to episode 22 and really dig in and do that exercise.

Now, here's the reason why nice isn't going to cut it: because change requires discomfort. You have to step outside of what is comfortable. You have to step outside of what is automatic. What is routine is not going to serve you when you're trying to change. You have to do something different, and your brain will resist that. Your brain will say, "Look, this is really easy. I don't have to think. It just happens. We don't have to expend a lot of energy. Habits are easy. They require very little effort." I mean, think about the habit of drinking and the effort involved. Very little. You have to obtain alcohol and then you have to drink it, right? There's very little effort, and keep in mind that your brain is also getting a big reward on the other end of expending very little effort.

If you want to change the habit, what you're going to have to do is deny your brain the reward it is expecting and invariably that will cause discomfort, and because of that, you need something compelling. You need a rationale or a motivation that feels like much better than just nice, right? Because you're going to run up against discomfort over and over again.

You know, in order to change, you have to be willing to keep taking action, you have to keep being willing to walk towards discomfort head on. Saying no to a glass of wine at the end of the day or going out to dinner and not ordering a cocktail, meeting up with friends for drinks and ordering something non-alcoholic, socializing at a party without a drink in your hand, all of this at first is going to require determination in the face of discomfort. Especially when we're talking about alcohol, because it is such a quick and easy fix. It's a quick and easy fix to change how you feel, and it gives your brain a big reward.

Now, the good news is that it's not always going to be like this, guys. It will require a lot of effort in the beginning, but after you keep practicing, after you keep teaching your brain that you don't need alcohol in certain situations, that you can handle whatever negative emotions come up, it doesn't require that amount of effort. And in fact, I don't expend any effort

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now not drinking because that's my new habit. Drinking really doesn't even cross my mind. I go out to dinner with everybody and I'm the one who isn't ordering wine or beer or a cocktail, and it's a non-event. Because I was willing to practice being uncomfortable over and over again, so now this is my new normal. This is my new habit now it's easy.

But when you are getting started, you really need that compelling reason. You need your rationale and your motivation for why you are doing this. A compelling reason is going to capture your attention, right? It's more than something that just sounds kind of nice. And it's something that if used properly can sustain you when you head first into discomfort. When you're asking yourself, "Why am I doing this again? Why am I being the only one at the restaurant or the only one at the party who's not drinking? Why am I doing this? Why am I not just taking the easy route?" Now, notice though that I said, "Used properly". You have to use the compelling reason properly and I'm going to talk a little bit later about how not to use a compelling reason.

So this is what a compelling reason is. It is a rationale or a motivation, your motive to go after change in the face of discomfort, and this is why you need it, because your brain will resist discomfort. It wants to know the reason. Why am I putting myself in these uncomfortable situations over and over again? So you need that reason there.

So I want to tell you, I want to give you a couple examples of what a compelling reason sounds like. And now listen, it's going to be different for everyone. But especially for those of you out there who are thinking like, "I just haven't found it yet. I'm still in that realm of having a reason that sounds nice but it doesn't really excite me." What I want to do is give you some examples. So when I started doing this work and what I mean by that is deciding that I was going to take a break from alcohol that was more than just saying no. I had done just saying no a lot in my 20s, but I was going to take a break where I was really going to understand the habit, I was really going to understand what I was running away from. It was always negative emotions, right? I was really going to learn how to no longer feel like I

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needed a drink to be in a social situation, or be on a first date, or you know, be open and funny and connect with people. I was really committed to taking a different kind of break where I could truly understand the habit.

I did start looking for a compelling reason, and I could have stopped with, "I just don't want to be hungover anymore", and I really didn't. My hangovers were just getting worse and worse. So I could have stopped with, "I don't want to be hungover anymore, I don't want to be regretful." But when I thought about it, it really didn't feel very compelling. It didn't feel kind of exciting. I wanted those things, but I didn't know that it had that kind of motivation that I needed. And so you know, I really worked on this for a while in tandem with taking a break. I didn't wait to find it before I started taking the break.

But what I finally landed on, and this was pretty early on, was the idea that I wanted to be a woman who was proud of herself. Now, I talk about this before, I've talked about this on the podcast before and in my book, *Why Can't I Drink Like Everyone Else*. I wanted to feel pride. At that point in my life, it seemed to be that the emotion of pride was almost completely absent. But I remembered feeling that way when I was younger. I remember wanting to show off my artwork, I remember feeling so excited for people to see me in the school play. I remember trying out for the basketball team in high school and making it and feeling proud of myself in all these situations. But you know, by the time I was in my early 30s, it was like moments of pride, they just weren't there.

I couldn't really remember a time that I felt proud about anything, about myself, especially not the person who I was when I was drinking. And so that idea, wanting to become a woman who was proud of herself, for me that turned out to be really motivating. That turned out to be a really important compelling reason.

Now, there are a couple other ones that I love and I'm going to share with you. I have a client who said to me that her compelling reason was that she wanted to be the captain of her own soul. I mean, as soon as she said that to me, I was like, "Yes, me too, can I steal that one?" It actually - it

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comes from a poem called Invictus by this English poet, William Ernest Henley. He was born in England during the Victorian period, and he actually wrote this poem with this amazing line, "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul", while he was in hospital undergoing treatment for tuberculosis. So if you can imagine that, he's recovering from this treatment where he actually had to have this left leg amputated from the knee down and he's in hospital and he pens this poem with this amazing line. And so you know, when she shared that with me, "I want to be the captain of my soul", I mean to me, what a great, compelling reason, right? It's so much deeper, so much bigger than just, "I want to feel healthy, I want to lose weight", right? There's some oomph to it.

Another one that I love is one that I actually came across on Twitter. I saw a tweet one day from this film director, Ava DuVernay, and she wrote, and I'm kind of paraphrasing this right now, but she wrote something along the lines of, "I am my ancestor's wildest dreams." I'll tell you, I don't know if you guys know who Ava DuVernay is. She's the first black woman to direct a film that was nominated for a Best Picture at the Oscars, that was Selma. She's also only the third woman ever to helm a live action film with a budget exceeding one hundred million dollars, and she was the first woman of color to do it. I mean, this woman is such a badass. And when I read that tweet, "I am my ancestor's wildest dreams", I just thought like, what a great, compelling reason to become your ancestor's wildest dreams.

I mean, I think about all the generations of women that came before me and the opportunities and the choices that were denied to them. And I think, "Yes, I want to be their wildest dreams." So those are three that I particularly like, but I'm going to give you a bunch of examples just to get you brainstorming and thinking about what could feel compelling for you.

"I want to be someone who always chooses me." "I want to be someone who can trust herself." Now I really like this one in large part because I think that so many of us when we're struggling with our drinking feel like trust, and trust in ourselves is really missing. "I want to be a role model for my kids." "I want to be an example of what is possible in this

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world, not a warning to others." "I want to achieve my fullest humanity." "I want to be in charge of who I am and how I show up." "I want a future that is better than my past." "I want to be someone who learns from her past rather than repeats it." "I want to be the best version of myself." "I want to be someone who is authentic and never hides who she is." "I want to dare greatly." "I want to create something meaningful with my life." "I want to be someone who never gives up on her dreams." "I want to be exceptional." "I want to be an adult", instead of feeling like you might be a stunted teenager. "I want to be an example of how my higher brain can run the show." "I want to wake up and never regret the night before." "I want to be someone who desires more from her life than a drink."

Okay, so those are just some for you to think about. If you're working on coming up with this compelling reason, you know, these are just some to give you an idea, and you can play with these. And the truth is, you can find your compelling reason anywhere. It might show up in a book or a poem or a song. You might spot it online, you might have heard it today. You might come up with it on your own when you're writing. And the truth is, it doesn't have to be original or unique. You can completely copy someone else. It just has to be something that sparks a little bit of excitement, that feels more than nice, that makes you think, "Yes, I want to do that, I want to become that person."

You know, because when you're heading out to a party or you're coming home from work, or you're meeting friends for dinner and the urge appears to drink, you can remind yourself, "Oh right, I'm practicing saying no, I'm practicing interrupting the habit because I want to be proud of myself, because I want to be exceptional. I want to be the captain of my own soul. I made a commitment that I would always dare greatly no matter what." You want to remind your brain of why you're choosing discomfort in that moment, the discomfort of saying no to an urge.

So okay, now you know what a compelling reason is, why you need it, and you've got a lot of examples of what it could sound like for you to start working with. But I want to really talk about the most common

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stumbling block: how people use compelling reasons in the wrong way. So what I hear from people a lot who are stuck is, "I don't know why I'm still unwilling to change my drinking. I guess I haven't found a reason that's compelling enough. I can't find that spark that will make me take action."

Alright, so the first mistake is this: a compelling reason never makes you take action. A compelling reason can capture your attention, it can give you inspiration, but it cannot do the work for you. You are still the one who has to take action, and I see this mistake over and over again. People believing that they just have to find a compelling reason and then it will make them take action. And that is a trap my friends that you have to be aware of. You are still the one that is going to have to take action.

The second mistake is believing that your compelling reason is some sort of panacea, that it is a cure all for discomfort, like you're going to find it and you're never going to feel uncomfortable again in the face of your desire to drink. A compelling reason is not a remedy for all your ills, or all your difficulties. It is just a reminder of why you are doing this work in the first place. But it doesn't make discomfort go away. It just reminds you of your underlying motivation to face discomfort head on. So that's the second mistake, believing that it's some sort of panacea.

And the third mistake is the idea that you can just connect with it once and be done, the idea that you just find your compelling reason and you think, "I want to be a woman who's proud of herself." And then you never really think of it again, that it gives you so much inspiration and so much determination that you're one and done. It has to become part of your life. It has to become part of you. You have to connect with it over and over again. Finding that compelling reason, it's not like waving a magic wand and then all your excitement and determination are just there. You have to keep generating it and you can only do it by connecting with your compelling reason on a regular basis.

So remember this: your compelling reason does not make you take action. You still have to take action. It is not a cure all for discomfort. It's not going to make discomfort go away, it's just going to help you have a reason

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for why you are putting yourself in the way of discomfort, and that is to learn a new habit. And you cannot connect with it once and be done. It has to be something that you reconnect with on a regular basis.

The very worst mistake I see if this, and please do not do this. Do not use the excuse, "Well, I haven't found my compelling reason yet so I guess I'm going to wait to do anything different." You can still take action, you can still decide not to drink and interrupt the habit cycle. You can still say no to an urge and do something different. Action is always an option, always. In fact, often it is taking action that will help you discover your compelling reason. Remember, I didn't sit around waiting for that compelling reason to come to me before I decided to take a different kind of break. I decided to take a different kind of break, one where I wasn't just saying no over and over and over again, but actually trying to understand the habit and while I was taking that break, that is when I discovered my compelling reason. So do not let the fact that you haven't found something that feels compelling yet be an excuse to not do something different, be an excuse to not interrupt the habit cycle.

Alright, so the last piece is how do you connect with your compelling reason on a regular basis. And this one is really important. What you have to do is you have to spend time right now, in the present, with your future self. Your future self is the person who already has the thing you want. Your future self has already climbed the mountain. They're at the summit looking down. Your future self is the one who goes out to a restaurant with a group of friends where everyone is drinking wine and you're drinking club soda, and your future self couldn't care less. Your future self doesn't desire that alcohol. It doesn't miss it. It doesn't feel like it needs it to connect or be at ease or to fit in.

In fact, your future self may actually think that everyone else at the table is kind of missing out on this amazing secret to the universe, right? The amazing secret that you know when you're sitting there not drinking alcohol. You have to right now in the present connect with her. Connect with that future self of yours. The idea that you don't need a drink to laugh

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or to connect or to relax or to celebrate. Your future self knows that the only thing you need is you.

So let your brain go to that future place. Let yourself envision what it would be like to be there. What would life be like if you knew, "I don't need a crutch. I don't need a drink in my hand to fit in or to relax or to be bubbly. I don't need it to feel less insecure, less awkward, I don't need it to take care of my anxiety. I do that all on my own." What would that be like? Paint a picture.

So here's how you're going to do it. Now, if you don't yet have a compelling reason that you're working with, for the sake of today's exercise, I want you to just pick one that I mentioned today. You know, you don't have to pick the perfect one. Just pick one that sounds good to you. And for the exercise, you're going to keep that compelling reason in mind. You're going to use that as kind of the starting point to think about your future self and what she's doing. So for the sake of running through the exercise right now, I'm going to use the compelling reason of, "I want to be someone who desires more from her life than a drink."

Now, let me tell you, as someone who has this, as someone for whom this is true, let me tell you, it is awesome. It is awesome to be in a place where I no longer have to think to myself, "I wish I didn't want to drink so much. I wish it didn't have such pull over me. I wish I didn't feel like I needed it." To have that, to be someone who desires so much more from her life than a drink, it's amazing.

Alright, so you're going to take your compelling reason, whatever it is, and you're going to think about that compelling reason from the stance of your future self, from the position of your future where that compelling reason is already true for you, it's already the reality that you're living. Now, once you have that in mind, I'm going to give you some questions to answer. Now, just don't think about them, write them out. You know I always say this. You got to get it on paper. If your compelling reason had already come true, if it was the reality that you were now living, what would your future self be doing? What would she spend her time thinking about?

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This is such an important one because so many of us spend so much time fixating and thinking about our drinking and wondering if we're going to figure it out, and feeling bad about it. But like, what if that was all gone? What would you be thinking about instead? If your future self had your compelling reason, she had accomplished it, how would she feel about herself? How would she feel in the mornings? How would she spend her mornings? What would she choose to do in the evening? What would she be like at a party? What would she be thinking when she saw other people drinking? Who would she choose to spend time with? How would she handle negative emotions like insecurity, awkwardness, stress, anxiety, loneliness? What would she desire from life right now, now that she no longer has alcohol on her brain?

Go through these questions. Really let yourself go there. You got to spend time in the present right now with that future self of yours. You got to really paint a picture. I want you to write this all out and once you have it written out, post it somewhere where you can see it, or keep it somewhere where you know you will go back to it. Maybe you put it on your phone, maybe if you write in a journal regularly you have a sheet of paper in there so every time you open it up you can go back to it. Read it at least once a week. Revisit it before you're headed out to a challenging event. Use your compelling reason to paint a picture of your future self that can keep you motivated. But you have to reconnect with it. It's not just a one and done, and that's why I want you to spend some time in this moment now visualizing your future self who has the compelling reason that you want.

So here's the thing, yes, in summary, I believe that everybody needs a compelling reason. I think it is incredibly important and there are so many out there to choose from. You just need to find one that feels exciting and motivating for you. But remember, your compelling reason does not take action for you. It can't make you do anything. It is not a cure all for discomfort, and you can't connect with it once and be done. You are still in charge. You are still the one that has to take action.

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Think of it this way. Think of it like you're a mountain climber and your future, the future that you want is the summit. The compelling reason is your rationale for climbing towards the summit. It's not an elevator that you can step into that's going to take you to the top. You can't just step in and push a button and be delivered to your destination without doing any work. You have got to climb. If you start climbing, your compelling reason is going to be incredibly helpful. You still have to do the work of hauling yourself up the mountain, but thankfully, when you're tired and exhausted and cold and ready to quit, you will have your compelling reason by your side reminding you why you're climbing in the first place, why are you headed to this different future that you want. But you are the one that has to choose to keep climbing.

Alright, that's it for today. That was compelling reason 2.0. I hope that it has helped you understand this concept better so that you can really start to use it in an effective way to change your drinking. As always, if you have any questions, if you'd like to see me cover a specific topic on the podcast, you can send me an email at [podcast@rachelhart.com](mailto:podcast@rachelhart.com), and I will see you guys 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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