

Ep #59: I Deserve It



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Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 59. 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.

Alright guys, I've got a good one for you today. But I have to tell you, I've been dying to share something with you. So you know I always say at the end of my podcast episodes, if you have a question, if you want to reach out, you can always email me, and I love hearing from you guys. A lot of you do reach out to me.

But a couple weeks ago, I got an email from a woman in Australia named Sarah, and I have to tell you that it still blows my mind that this podcast that I do here in San Francisco, sitting in my office, that the podcast and my message is reaching people all over the world, and in places and countries that I have never been to.

So anyway, here is what Sarah wrote. She wrote to me, "Your podcast has helped me overcome a lifelong struggle with drinking. Never addiction, but a strong and guilt-inducing habit. Your teaching on compelling reasons have been formative for me, and I thought you'd find it amusing that I've gone as far as to have my compelling reason tattooed on my shoulder so I can see it in the mirror every day. It's a beacon that calls me home."

What? That was my brain when I read this email for the first time. What? And then she attached a picture so I could actually see it. And so, I could see the tattoo and her compelling reason was a quote, "There is no real excellence in all this world, which can be separated from right living."

And you know what, this happened a couple weeks ago, and still, all I can say is like, "Wow." This is what your compelling reason can be. It can be a

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beacon to guide you home. I love the way she put that. "A beacon to guide you home."

And you know, you've heard me say this before, you have got to connect with a compelling reason to change your drinking in a meaningful way. You have to weave it into your life. It's not something that's one and done. You find that compelling reason and you read it to yourself once and then that's it. You've got to keep seeing it as a beacon that you can keep moving towards.

So I just want to say, Sarah, thank you so much for that email. It made my day. It was such an incredible surprise to find your message in my inbox. And you know what, all the messages that I get from each and every one of you, sharing your stories, asking questions, wanting help with your obstacles, I love them all and I love you guys. So thank you, Sarah, and I still - I still am thinking, what? So incredible.

Alright, so today I'm going to talk to you about one very specific thought that I see gets in the way of changing your drinking, taking a break, learning how not to desire alcohol. And that thought is, "I deserve it."

Now, I know - I know that all of you can relate. I've yet to come across a person who has not on occasion, used the thought, "I deserve it." And, "I deserve it," it sounds like such a good thought. "Yeah, I deserve this thing. I deserve it." But what I like to call it is a thought, and a thought is just a thought that your brain thinks that creates the feeling of being entitled to drink.

"I have the right to do this. I have permission." And, "I deserve it," when it comes to permission-giving thoughts, it is usually right at the top for most people, and that's why I wanted to devote an entire episode to it. So now listen, I know you guys have a laundry list of reasons for why you deserve it, why you deserve that drink, right? I did too. I had a long day, a long week, I'm lonely, I'm unhappy, I'm miserable, I'm bored, my boyfriend dumped me, my best friend stabbed me in the back, my boss is driving me nuts.

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Right? I deserve it. We have all of these reasons and I want you to consider this: I want you to consider that the thought, "I deserve it," which so many of you are not only thinking unconsciously, but habitually, all the time, thinking, "I deserve it," and then going and getting yourself a drink. This thought is fuel for the habit of drinking. It keeps the habit going.

Because every time you think the thought, "I deserve it," and then act on it by pouring a drink, your brain gets a reward. Your brain gets dopamine. It is rewarded for thinking this thought. So your brain is like, "Listen, this is a great thought. Let's think, I deserve it, more often because the more I think I deserve it, the more reward I am getting for myself. This is great."

So that thought is really fuel for the habit of drinking. You know, and we use the thought for so many different reasons, right? I deserve it because it's the end of the day, I deserve it because I need to take the edge off, I need relief from how I feel, or I deserve it because it's a celebration and everybody else is drinking.

Your brain is always finding reasons for why you deserve a drink because your brain loves those rewards, right? So like, there's no shortage of reasons to come up with. Your brain's like, "How else can I get a reward? What else is happening? It's five, it's a party, I don't like my boss. I'm so stressed out." Your brain is just going to come up with reasons to think the thought, "I deserve it" to fuel this habit, which keeps giving it a reward.

But now here's what I want you to consider. So many of us, we all have the same thought, "I deserve it, I deserve it, I deserve it." And my question to you is this: what is the it in "I deserve it?"

Now listen, the brain loves to be vague. So I really want to challenge you to get specific here. Do not let yourself off the hook. Do not say, "I don't know." Get really, really specific. What is the it in, "I deserve it," that your brain is really after? Is it a drink itself? Or is it relief from how you feel? Something to numb an emotion? Is it the drink or is it happiness and pleasure? Is it a drink or is it fun and laughter? Is it a drink or is it

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confidence and ease? What is your it when it comes to the thought, "I deserve it?"

So I'll tell you, I think about this a lot, and in large part, when I first started to consider this thought in my own life, my understanding of what people deserve, it was slightly different because I had worked in human rights for over a decade. And so the way I used to think about what people deserve was in the context of a human rights framework.

So I was thinking about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Now you may not be, but I just want to tell you where my brain went and the protections that were outlined within it. So I was thinking about the right to equality and a fair trial, and a safe place to live, freedom from discrimination, from torture, from unlawful detainment. I was thinking about this document that was adopted by the UN in 1948, and the reason that it was adopted was because the international community had just come out of World War Two, and they wanted to try to do something to ensure that the atrocities of that war would never happen again.

But of course, this is an interesting way to think about it because this is a legal document that was drafted to protect individual rights from government bodies. So when I'm talking about what you deserve, I'm not talking about your rights under the law. Even though that was - when I first tried to unpack this thought from myself, that was where my brain initially went. Like, what are my rights under the law? What do I deserve as a human being?

What I want you to really start to understand for yourself is what you are telling yourself you believe, you are deserving of. Really understand that concept and how it applies to yourself. Now here's the thing: this usually stumps a lot of people when I ask them, "Okay, so what are you deserving of?"

But usually, after a while, most people come up with some pretty similar answers, and they'll say, "Well, I deserve to be treated fairly, and I deserve respect, and I deserve to be treated politely." And I always say, "Alright, so

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who determines whether or not this happens? Who determines if you're treated fairly? Who determines if you are respected, or if you're treated in a polite manner?"

And of course, you may have guessed it already by now. The answer is usually the same. "Well, other people do. It's how other people treat me that determines what I deserve." But you know I'm not going to let your brain off the hook here. Because we're never focused on other people. We're always focused on ourselves. We're focused on our own think-feel-act cycle.

Because here's the thing. If you spend all your energy and all your effort in the world making sure that other people treat you fairly and are respectful and polite, I'm going to tell you, you're going to spend a huge amount of energy, and invariably, you'll be disappointed. Because of course, you can't control other people. You're not in charge of how their think-feel-act cycle works.

I cannot guarantee much in this world, but I can guarantee that at some point in the future, you will encounter someone who will be unfair, or disrespectful, or impolite. And then what? Is your brain just going to spin on how you don't deserve to be treated that way? I hope not. I hope that's not where your brain goes.

But yet, you are telling yourself that you deserve something, right? "I deserve it. I deserve it." You're telling yourself that you deserve something all the time and, "I deserve it," for many of you, has become your go-to thought for pouring a glass of wine, right? It is that thought that is fueling the habit. But when pressed, almost none of you can spell out what you actually deserve in life from yourself.

Not from other people, not from government bodies, which is where my brain went the very first time I tried to understand this thought. What do you deserve in life from yourself? And in fact, when you start to look closely at what you see at the other end of the thought, "I deserve it," most often, what you find when you pay attention is a glass of wine or a bowl of ice

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cream, right? That's what is at the other end of the thought, "I deserve it." It's not usually a whole lot deeper than that.

And it's important to really think about this thought and really unpack it and really understand it. Because if it's fueling the habit of drinking and you're not questioning it, you're just letting your brain think, "I deserve it, I deserve it, I deserve it," and then reaching for the wine or reaching for the bowl of ice cream, you're just giving your brain a quick jolt of dopamine.

You're just teaching your brain that this is a powerful and effective thought to think to get a reward. What you're not actually doing is spelling out or going after what you truly deserve in life, which, let me tell you, I can promise is way more than dopamine. I promise that.

So here's what I think. I think you deserve love. And I'm not talking about love from other people. I'm talking about love from yourself. I think you deserve kindness and compassion. I've talked about this before, but how many of you have internal chatter, or talk to yourself in a way that you would never ever dream of talking to a friend that way?

We use language like, "You're a screw-up," "So stupid," "An idiot," "Lazy," "So undisciplined." We don't talk to ourselves in a way that shows that we're deserving of kindness or compassion. You deserve curiosity. You guys know this is my favorite emotion. You deserve to be curious about yourself and the world around you. You deserve to discover new things and explore the world, and seek meaning out of life.

And you deserve to go after your dreams. But you also deserve time to rest. But here's the thing: if dopamine from a drink is all you keep teaching your brain that you are entitled to when it comes to what you deserve, you will never actually go after the things in life you truly do deserve. You'll never go after that love. You'll never go after kindness and compassion, or curiosity, or your dreams, or time to rest. You'll just keep going back to dopamine over and over and over again.

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Let me tell you, if you felt as strongly about being deserving of love, and kindness, and compassion, and curiosity, and your dreams, and rest, you would not habitually look to a glass of wine to give yourself what you deserve. This is really the truth.

You have to understand this thought, "I deserve it." It sounds so simple but what is the it? What are you teaching your brain that you are entitled to? And if all you are teaching your brain is that you are entitled to dopamine, then the question for you is do you want to show your brain a different way? Do you want to teach your brain something else?

So I have an exercise that I want you guys to do today so that you can really dig into this thought. And I don't want you to skip it because this really is the thought that just catches so many people. It's so hard for so many people to shake this idea of, "Yeah, but I deserve it." But once you really dig into it, that's how you can start to loosen its grip.

You have to show your brain that you are actually deserving of more than just dopamine, more than just a quick fix in life. You have to show your brain that there is a different way. Otherwise, this thought will continually fuel the habit and make it stronger, and your brain will love thinking it. It will keep going back to it because it's like, "Yeah, this is how I get rewarded. I'm just going to tell myself I deserve it a million times a day."

Alright, so here is the exercise I want you to do. First, I want you to think about and define what you believe you deserve from other people. Write it out. Whatever it is, whatever comes to mind. The things that you think you deserve from other people. And then ask yourself, once you have a list, "Okay, do I give those things to myself? Everything that I believe that I deserve from other people, am I giving those things to myself?"

Next, I want you to define, what do you believe you deserve out of life? Whatever it is. It can be anything. Define what you think that is, and then again, ask yourself, "Okay, am I going after these things myself? Am I going after what I believe I deserve out of life? Or am I expecting that life should just bring these things to me?"

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And then finally, I want you to really focus in, I want you to really pinpoint this thought, "I deserve it." This thought that is a permission-giving thought, it is making you feel entitled, it is the thought that is triggering the decision to pour yourself a drink. I want you to really dig in here and define what is the it for you? What is the it in, "I deserve it?"

Maybe it's ease, maybe it's relaxation, maybe it's celebration, maybe it's relief from a negative emotion. Whatever it is, there's no right or wrong answer here. But again, once you have that defined, then I want you to ask yourself, do you know how to give this thing to yourself or are you just waiting for the dopamine to kick in?

If left unchecked, this thought, "I deserve it," it will keep fueling the habit of drinking. It will make that habit more entrenched. It will get stronger that thought, and more compelling every time you think it, and then reward your brain with something to drink that gives it dopamine. So your challenge today is to find out what you really deserve in life and start going after that. That's what Sarah is doing, and that's what you can do too.

Alright everybody, you know how to reach me. Podcast@rachelhart.com, you can send me anything. Let me know how you're doing, let me know about your progress, any questions, anything you'd like me to talk about on the podcast. Otherwise, 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 and input your information there.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Take a Break from Drinking*. If you like what was offered in today's show and want more, please come over to

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