

Ep #100: Lessons from the Take a Break Podcast



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 100. Welcome to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart. If you are 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, hello, hello. It is episode 100. Can you believe it? It's kind of blowing my mind that I'm here because I remember very vividly when I made the decision to do this podcast and I really wanted to do it but I was also so scared. What if nobody listens? What if it's a flop? That's what my brain just kept wanting to tell me, but I took action anyway, despite the insecurity, despite the self-doubt, and here we are 100 episodes later.

And I can't even tell you how amazing this experience has been, how amazing it has been to connect with all of my listeners, and I want you to know, I think about you guys every week. I think about you all the time because I know how frustrating it is to feel stuck with your drinking, to feel like, why is this my problem, why can't I figure it out, why is this such a struggle for me.

I have been in your shoes. So if you are ever feeling frustrated or overwhelmed or hopeless, I want you to know that I'm on your side. I'm rooting for you. Just tune into the podcast. There's an episode here that is going to shift how you think about all of this work.

So listen, today I'm going to do something a little different. What I've decided to do because I reached 100 episodes was to go back through and really try to tease out lessons from all of my previous episodes. So if you're a long-time listener and you have listened to every episode, maybe multiple times, I know you guys are out there, this is actually the perfect time for you to sit back, listen to the lessons that I'm going to share with you, and think about where you need to go deeper in your own self-coaching. What is your next layer of work?

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And if you are brand new to this podcast, first off, welcome. This is going to be a great introduction to what my approach is all about because it is very different from really everything that is out there, everything that we are taught to believe about why some people drink more than they want. I'll tell you this; it's wrong.

So what I'm going to do is I'm going to go through each lesson in order of the episode number. So if you hear something that you want to learn more about, you want to dig deeper into, just note down the number and then look up that episode.

Alright, so let's get started. Number one, drinking too much is not a black and white issue. The world is not separated into "normal drinkers" and alcoholics with nothing in between the two. There are many shades of grey and many different degrees of struggle.

Number two, you were not born desiring alcohol. You taught your brain to want it. And because of this, you can also teach your brain how to change your desire by paying attention to the thoughts that are creating it.

Number three, when you tell yourself, "I just need a drink to take the edge off," what you're really saying is, "I need a drink to take the edge off of how I am feeling." Changing the habit of drinking requires that you learn new ways to cope with your emotions.

Number four, confidence is not a personality trait. It is a skill that you can cultivate. You don't need a drink to feel more confident in social situations. You need to learn a new way to deal with all the negative chatter in your mind that's making you feel anxious, awkward, and insecure. You can learn how to become more confident.

Number five, if you're worried about answering questions about why you're not drinking, it's because you're making the decision not to drink and someone's reaction mean something negative about you.

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Number six, anguishing over what you should do about your drinking might feel productive, but it only ever saps your energy. Indecision will never move you closer to feeling better.

Number seven, the biggest surprise for me was that life without alcohol was so much more than no longer having hangovers. It was actually more fun, more exciting, and more connected.

Number eight, the urge to drink is not a problem. The problem is that no one ever showed you how to handle an urge other than saying yes to it or resisting the urge with willpower. But if you're willing to look at an urge, you can discover why it's there so that you can change it.

Number nine, alcohol doesn't actually solve your anxiety, boredom, loneliness, insecurity. It just temporarily diverts your attention from the emotional discomfort that you're feeling.

Number 10, you've not always been the best version of yourself and you know what? That makes you just like everyone else. If you feel shame about your past, it's created by what you are thinking. Not by what happened. Your past is not powerful enough to create the pain you feel today. Only your thoughts can do that.

Number 11, feeling deprived is the reason most people are unable to change the habit of drinking, but deprivation isn't created by not consuming alcohol. It's created by what you're thinking.

Number 12, trying to be perfect and keep everybody happy is not only exhausting but it often leads to using a drink as a reward. Opening a bottle of wine might feel like you're doing something nice for yourself and putting your needs first, but really, it's just covering up how you feel.

Number 13, you already know perfectly well all the negative consequences of your drinking. What you need to understand now are the benefits of the habit because if there wasn't an upside, you wouldn't want to drink in the first place.

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Number 14, changing the habit requires a willingness to question your thoughts and beliefs about what you think life would be like without alcohol. And if left unquestioned, these thoughts and beliefs will hold you back from ever changing.

Number 15, drinking doesn't just happen. It is always a decision. When you tell yourself that you fell off the wagon, you're actually abdicating responsibility for the choice that you made.

Number 16, there is so much power in choosing to do hard things. It forces you to grow, to become something greater than you were before. Drinking, on the other hand, is easy. Your brain sees it as the path of least resistance even if it's causing a lot of negative consequences in your life. Choose the hard thing.

Number 17, all of your choices can be explained by one simple framework. Think, feel, act. Your thoughts create your feelings, your feelings drive your actions, and your actions create your results. In order to master the think-feel-act cycle, you must understand that the inner monologue in your mind is not an objective reflection of reality, but an interpretation of what is happening that you can always change.

Number 18, feelings are one-word emotional states. Happy, sad, mad. They are something that you experience in your body and they are always created by your thinking. In order to use the think-feel-act cycle as a tool to change how you feel, you must learn how to separate out what's happening in your mind from what's happening in your body.

Number 19, there is a reason for everything you do in life from drinking too much to procrastinating to snapping at your kids. If your focus is only on changing an action, you will miss the thoughts and the feelings that are fueling them.

Number 20, you create all the results you have in your life. If you don't like what you see, turning to something to drink, something to eat, turning on Netflix or scrolling through Facebook is never going to fix how you feel. The

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only thing that can change your results is changing the think-feel-act cycle creating them.

Number 21, stop telling yourself you can't drink. this thought only creates bitterness, resentment, anger, and powerlessness. Tell yourself the truth. You're an adult, you have free will. You can always choose to drink, but right now, you're choosing not to.

Number 22, changing your drinking will be uncomfortable, but you don't need to hit rock bottom. You just need to find a reason that feels compelling. Something that just sounds kind of nice isn't going to cut it when you come face to face with the discomfort of saying no.

Number 23, if you're afraid of failing, what you're really afraid of is how you think you will feel when you fail. But failure doesn't cause you to feel anything until you make the failure mean something. If you feel ashamed or hopeless or dejected when you don't reach your goal, it's only because you're making failure mean something terrible about you.

Number 24, if the party wouldn't be worth going to if there wasn't alcohol or if you weren't drinking, if it wouldn't be worth hanging out with certain people without a drink in your hand, if you keep telling yourself that you're no fun without booze, then you are doing something wrong.

Number 25, you can create fun or you can consume it. But when you consume fun, when you eat or drink to make your brain believe that it is having a good time, you will find yourself always wanting more. Consuming fun may be easy, but it always leaves you with consequences.

Number 26, chaos is the irrational, emotional place your mind goes to when you're melting down and can no longer think rationally or make sense of the world. It happens when you start catastrophizing or exaggerating the drama of a situation. This is what you're doing with the urge to drink. You're turning harmless discomfort into chaos in your mind.

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Number 27, it's totally normal to feel like you have a split personality when it comes to drinking, that part of you wants to say yes to a drink and part of you can see that the habit is not helping you. When you notice these competing desires, you are simply noticing the differing goals of your lower brain and your higher brain.

Number 28, trying to fix everything around you, your job, your spouse, your kids, your body, your house so that you can feel better doesn't work. It will only leave you in search of relief. But reaching for a drink to take the edge off of how you feel is never a long-term solution because it cannot change the underlying thoughts that are creating your stress.

Number 29, punishing yourself won't keep you in line. It will only ever make you feel ashamed and terrified of making mistakes. You cannot go from self-loathing to self-love. It's too big of a jump for your brain. The remedy is to go from self-loathing to curiosity.

Number 30, learning how to change your desire to drink requires practicing sitting with the emotions that you so desperately want to avoid, and this means understanding why your brain is telling you that certain emotions are wrong, irrational, or too strong to handle on your own.

Number 31, there is so much power in the willingness to look at whatever isn't working in your life. If you are drinking right now, you can start by just collecting data about how much precisely you are consuming. And if you're on a break and you're not drinking, you can start by facing up to whatever you have been avoiding.

Number 32, habits can feel so fast and so automatic that they seem as if they are outside of your control. But changing a habit like drinking requires bringing consciousness to the cues that your brain uses as a signal to start the habit. It's not out of your control. It just feels that way.

Number 33, figuring out what enough feels like in your body requires mindful attention. Otherwise, your brain will look for visual cues to signal

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when you're done. The problem is that alcohol servings have been super-sized right along with food.

Number 34, sitting back and waiting for alcohol to create connection with others leaves you dependent on a drink. Humans were built for connection, but it requires that you take action.

Number 35, alcohol is simply one oxygen, two carbon, and six hydrogen atoms. It isn't good or bad. Drinking isn't a vice, abstaining isn't a virtue. Alcohol doesn't reveal anything about you and drinking more than you want isn't a marker of your character.

Number 36, when you take a break from drinking, instead of focusing all of your energy on removing a substance, counting days, using willpower, isolating, feeling deprived, focus on becoming a person of substance, a person who uses her life the way she wants, let's go of what is easy and embraces what is hard. And most of us, shows up for herself no matter what.

Number 37, the human brain evolved to find easy rewards. Doing so helped humans survive in a dangerous world. But in today's modern environment, humans are in a reward-saturated environment. Your brain will continue to seek out easy rewards like alcohol unless you direct it otherwise.

Number 38, the relationships standing in the way of change is not the relationship you have with your husband, your family, your best friend, or your colleagues. It's the relationship you have with yourself.

Number 39, alcohol acts like a veneer on reality. It disguises the true nature of your life. If you take a break from drinking and you don't like what you see, you can either go back to pretending that your life is better than it is by drinking, or you can set about upgrading your life.

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Number 40, it doesn't matter what you have in life or how blessed you are. If your inner dialogue is all about how you aren't measuring up, you aren't good enough or successful enough, you will still be unhappy.

Number 41, the single biggest indicator of the quality of thoughts running through your mind is your ability to be alone. Undisturbed, just you and your thoughts. If you have poor quality thoughts, you will always look for an escape to quiet your mind.

Number 42, you can start learning now how to celebrate yourself or you can be forever dependent on others for their approval. No matter how much validation you get from other people, you will always be in search of more until you learn how to generate approval from within.

Number 43, where does your mind wander to when you're engaged in the mundane tasks of life? Doing laundry, cleaning, grocery shopping, are you in that present moment? Or is your brain stuck in the negative past or predicting a negative future? Hanging out in these two places all day long contributes to why you are searching for relief at the end of the day.

Number 44, there is a huge difference between hoping and planning. If every year you hope that the holidays turn out differently, but you make no effort to actually show up differently, you will never create change.

Number 45, the ways in which you describe your emotions and your urges matters more than you think because the language you use can lead to either believing that how you're feeling is unbearable and must be fixed immediately, or tolerable and something that will eventually pass.

Number 46, the think-feel-act cycle is not only a framework that explains why you do or don't do everything in life, including the decisions you make to drink, but a tool that you can master to understand your urges and feel better overall.

Number 47, perfectionists and people-pleasers so often rebel with a drink. Think about it. If you're spending all of your time fixated on never making a

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mistake and saying yes to things when deep down you want to say no, you will end your day in search of relief.

Number 48, if you continually ask yourself negative questions - what's wrong with me? Why am I such a screw up? Why can't I figure this out? - you will send your brain on a mission to find negative answers. You have to change the types of questions you're asking yourself.

Number 49, are you settling when it comes to your health? Are you chalking up disturbed sleep, weight gain, puffiness, indigestion to growing old when in reality, your body is working overtime every night to deal with the habit of drinking?

Number 50, discomfort is not a problem. It's a mandatory part of being human. Resisting discomfort and believing that you should always be content, that's what causes so many problems. Do you want to choose the discomfort of challenging yourself and evolving or the discomfort of stagnating? Either way, you have to choose.

Number 51, alcohol is not your friend. There is no bond of mutual affection. Alcohol just sits there waiting to be consumed. Pouring a drink won't ever show you how to be kinder, more compassionate, or more accepting of yourself. It will only ever teach you how to hide how you feel and to bury your problems.

Number 52, your compelling reason inspires you to take action even when things are hard. But it's not a cure all for discomfort. It's a reminder of why you are choosing to do the uncomfortable thing of saying no.

Number 53, if you want to change your drinking but you aren't taking action, it's because your brain is weighing another option, and that's the option of keeping things just the same as they are. As long as that option of keeping things the same is on the table, your commitment will always waiver. You might start and stop, but you will never fully commit because your brain knows there's a way out.

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Number 54, alcoholic is a label that reduces a complex multi-faceted person into a single behavior. It perceives the person as the problem when the real problem is that no one has ever taught us how the brain works or the skills you need to cope with negative emotions and manage your desire.

Number 55, alcohol doesn't create your desire, which is good news. It means you don't need to isolate yourself from it in order to change the habit. You can actually practice being around alcohol on purpose so that you can notice the thoughts fueling the habit.

Number 56, trying to control everyone's opinion of you is both exhausting and impossible, but that's exactly what you're doing when you decide to drink because you're worried what people will think. You're so focused on other people's opinion of you that you completely neglect to change the one opinion that matters the most, and that is actually the opinion within your control. Your own opinion of yourself

Number 57, enjoyment is always available to you if you are willing to examine the thoughts getting in the way.

Number 58, past results are not an indicator of future successes. Until you've successfully changed the habit, you will always have evidence that it's not going to work. What matters isn't what hasn't worked, but your willingness to keep trying. If you look to your past to predict your future, you will only ever repeat the past.

Number 59, what are you really after when you think to yourself, I deserve it, and then go pour yourself a drink? Is there something deeper that you truly want that a drink is never going to satisfy?

Number 60, when you are able to truly savor a positive emotion, ask yourself, why does it feel incomplete without a drink? What exactly is missing or lacking from that emotion that you need a drink to improve?

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Number 61, taking a break from drinking is an exercise in paying attention and listening to your body. Your body has a story to tell you and it always tells the truth when you listen.

Number 62, it's so easy to get stuck in self-pity, even though self-pity feels terrible because self-pity requires nothing of you. When you focus on the questions, why me? Why is this my problem? Why do I have to struggle with my drinking? You spend all your energy on complaining and decrying now unfair all of this is rather than taking action.

Number 63, if you want to create something wonderful in life, if you truly want to make a big change, you've got to learn to tolerate the in between time. The period in which you let go of who you know yourself to be, in order to allow the possibility of who you might become.

Number 64, saying no to the urge to drink is easy. The difficult part is dealing with the tantrum the lower brain throws when it doesn't get the reward it's expecting. But giving in to the toddler's tantrum will only teach your brain that throwing a fit is a good way to get a drink. If, however, you don't give in to the pleas of the lower brain, eventually you will learn how to extinguish the urge, and this is how you change the habit. By teaching your brain that an urge doesn't have to be obeyed.

Number 65, if you're not being honest with yourself about your drinking, if you're burying your head in the sand, it's because you think that looking at the truth will be too painful. But taking your blinders off doesn't make the habit real. It just makes it visible, and you cannot change something unless you can see it.

Number 66, your thoughts are not you. If there is a part of you that can observe your thinking, then there is a part of you that is separate from your thoughts, which means there's a part of you that can change your thinking. But if you believe that you are your thoughts and your thoughts are just who you are, you will always feel helpless to change when confronted with your negative thinking.

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Number 67, you've been programmed to see drinking as special and fancy and sophisticated and adult because these messages help sell alcohol.

Number 68, if you're saying yes to a drink because you perceive that saying no will make someone feel uncomfortable, you're a people-pleaser. Changing your drinking requires that you start practicing putting your needs first.

Number 69, most people will change almost everything in their life in an attempt to feel better. They'll change their appearance, their job, their spouse, where they live. But when it comes to changing and questioning their thoughts, most people freak out. But changing how you think is the only path that works.

Number 70, people don't trigger your emotions. And listen, that's a good thing because if people created how you felt, then the only way to feel better would be to avoid being around them or to get them to change their behavior, neither of which is very sustainable.

Number 71, the past is over. The only place it exists is as thoughts in your mind. If you are suffering, it's because of a thought you are having right now in the present moment. You don't need to build a time machine and go back and change the past in order to feel better. You just need to examine what you are thinking about the past right now.

Number 72, there is nothing magical about Monday. When you tell yourself, "I'll start Monday," it's just a way for your brain to delay the discomfort of change.

Number 73, enthusiasm doesn't just fade. You run into discomfort, unexpected obstacles, and failure, and you make these things mean something negative about you and your success. Slowly, the thoughts that you had that were creating excitement turn into thoughts that are creating defeat.

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Number 74, be really honest when you say that it's hard to change the habit because you just love the taste of wine. If alcohol wasn't intoxicating, if it didn't create a buzz or a sense of relaxation or quieting your mind, would you really freak out at the prospect of not having that taste in your life?

Number 75, the more you tell yourself you need a drink when you get home to take the edge off of how you feel, the more you will prove this thought true. Because taking the edge off won't ever teach your brain how to cope with an emotion. It only teaches you how to numb what you're feeling.

Number 76, you might discover a connection between drinking and your to-do list. Pouring a drink can be the permission you give yourself to stop working or it can be the means by which you push through doing the things that you don't want to do.

Number 77, a drink can become the marker of the end of the day when you're routinely ending your day with negative emotions.

Number 78, when your brain wants a reward, it will spin through all the justifications and excuses it can come up with. That is not a problem. The problem is when you believe one of the excuses, pick up a drink, and reward that thought with dopamine.

Number 79, alcohol is a quick and easy way to temporarily mask how you're feeling. The problem is that turning to a drink won't ever do anything to solve the root of the problem. Alcohol is a problem staller, not a problem solver.

Number 80, you can use the think-feel-act cycle to turn the critic on your shoulder into the coach on your shoulder.

Number 81, the ability to let any urge go unanswered matters. That can be the urge to look at your phone, the urge to check your inbox, the urge to go on Facebook. Your ability to focus, to not respond to a desire teaches your

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brain that yes, you can want something but wanting something doesn't mean you have to act on that desire.

Number 82, you cannot change the habit of drinking without practicing something different again and again. The question is are you actually practicing not drinking or are you just thinking about how hard it is to say no to your desire?

Number 83, change doesn't have to be about fixing yourself so that you can feel good. It can be about evolving as a person. The point is not to become some perfect person, but to constantly grow and evolve into the next version about yourself.

Number 84, it will always be easier to blame someone else for your decision to drink. As soon as it becomes someone else's fault, you don't have to take any responsibility for having made the choice. But when you make it someone else's fault, you put yourself at their mercy.

Number 85, all or nothing thinking is fueled by perfectionism. Getting off this seesaw is not about constantly trying to improve and be better. It's questioning why you think you need to be perfect in the first place.

Number 86, notice your judgments about people who do drink and people who don't drink because it's always safer to judge another person's choices instead of looking at the judgments you have about your own choices.

Number 87, struggle is part of the human condition. Some people struggle at drinking, some people struggle with food or money or their selves, whatever your struggle is, you can make it mean that something is wrong with you and that you're broken, or you can make it mean that you're human and that struggle is how you become a more evolved version of yourself.

Number 88, the stories you have about your personality are getting in the way of change. Notice how often you tell yourself you can't change

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because that's just who you are. No matter your personality, change is available.

Number 89, stop trying to find motivation and start creating motivation. Motivation is not a force that is generated outside of you. It's not bestowed upon you by something external. It's created by your mind. Motivation is always created by your thoughts.

Number 90, drinking too much is just an example of the many, many ways that people unconsciously and unknowingly teach themselves to numb how they feel. There are a million ways to numb a feeling. You can fill up your life with things you don't need, you can eat too much and too fast, you can sit in front of a TV for hours on end, or you can turn to a drink.

Number 91, anxiety is a normal human emotion. It's not a problem. The problem is how you respond to anxiety. When you freak out, when you spin, when you catastrophize or you try to drink, eat, or shop your way out of it, that's the problem.

Number 92, taking a break from drinking brings into sharp focus what's not working in your life. This is the magic of taking a break. It opens up space to discover what you actually want.

Number 93, your brain will search for evidence to support your thoughts. If you tell yourself, "I never finish anything," your brain will try to find evidence proving this thought true. Once you know how this reflex works, you can see how important it is to always question your thinking.

Number 94, the length of time required to change your desire is in direct proportion to your willingness to experience that desire and not act on it.

Number 95, the only thing that is truly impeding your progress when it comes to changing the habit of drinking is you.

Number 96, if all your beliefs about drinking were negative, you wouldn't be drinking in the first place. If you want to change, you have to examine the positive stories you have about alcohol.

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Number 97, your thoughts are the lens through which you see the world. You see what you believe. If you believe that the world is a terrible place, you will find lots of evidence supporting that belief. If you believe the world is a magical place, you'll find lots of evidence in support of that.

Number 98, when it comes to changing your drinking, are you willing to keep taking action no matter what? Because commitment requires action, even when it isn't easy. When you feel anxious, stressed, awkward, insecure, uptight, and your brain wants a drink, are you willing to keep going?

Number 99, you are not powerless. You are not at the mercy of your habits. You have the gift of consciousness. You can use mindfulness to choose to focus your attention and awareness to everything that you do, including the decision to drink.

Alright everybody, that was 99 lessons from the *Take A Break from Drinking Podcast*. I'm so excited to be with you here on episode 100. And just to tell you, what's the 100th lesson that I want to share with you guys? It really is going before you feel ready. Taking action even when you're not sure if that action is going to work, taking action even when you feel insecure and you have doubt and you just wish that you had more confidence.

That really is what will change everything. If you are waiting until you can feel totally confident and totally secure and not have any doubts or any worries before you decide to change your drinking, you will be waiting a long time. The way that you teach your brain how to do something different is by taking action before you feel ready.

Alright everybody, thank you so much for joining me on today's episode. 100 in the bag. I love it. I will be back next week with episode 101. In the meantime, if you have any questions, if you want to hear me talk about certain topics on the podcast, feel free to send an email to podcast@rachelhart.com. See you next week.

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Have you changed your drinking but still feel like something is missing in life? Then you are ready to go in pursuit of a life that blows your mind. I am accepting applications now for an exclusive year-long coaching program that will give you the blueprint to let go of insecurity, anxiety, self-doubt, and to once and for all stop feeling like you need to fix yourself because it is so worth it to create a life that is way bigger and way better than what's in your glass. If you're interested, head on over to rachelhart.com/inpursuit to apply.

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 www.rachelhart.com where you can sign up for weekly updates to learn more about the tools that will help you take a break.