

Ep #118: Commitment



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Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 118.

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.

Alright everybody, we are going to talk about commitment today. And if you want to change your drinking, you are going to have to get very familiar with commitment. You are going to have to really understand this concept inside and out because changing your drinking means having your own back, no matter what.

I see my clients struggle with this all the time. I struggled with this for a long time. Why am I so good at meeting my commitments for other people but kind of wishy-washy when it comes to showing up for myself? Understanding the answer to that question was everything for me, and it's what I teach my clients to understand. It really is the cornerstone to unlocking how to change the habit of drinking.

So that's what we're going to be talking about today. What are commitments, why do they matter, why it's easier to follow through right now on commitments to other people and why you struggle to follow through on the commitments that you make to yourself.

So a commitment is just a pledge to do something, and we make them all the time. And you know what, you follow through on them all the time. I want you to just think of your calendar. Your calendar is filled with commitments, it's filled with pledges to see someone or something or to show up somewhere. The dentist, the trainer, a friend, work.

And a lot of you have an amazing follow through rate. If it's in your calendar, barring sickness, you're going to be there. So how is it that you have such a good follow through rate with other people but not yourself?

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So while commitment is the pledge to do something, there are two really important components to it.

One is the reason why you made that pledge and the other component is the ramification. What will happen if you don't follow through? Now, many times the ramifications are things that we don't actually know will happen. We just fear that they will. But you have to understand both of these components, your reason and your ramification.

Now, most people go through life haphazardly practicing commitment and developing their commitment muscle. This is what I did for a really long time. So I was really strong at practicing commitments when they were commitments for other people, but I was pretty weak when it came to practicing commitment for myself.

But here's the thing; either way, whether it's a commitment to someone else or commitment to you, you are teaching your brain how to respond to a pledge to do something or to not do something. And when you are loosey-goosey with your commitments, it is going to bleed into the results that you get in life. You're going to get loosey-goosey results.

Now, I can hear some of you right now who are saying, well, I'm actually not that great at following through on commitments with others. I cancel appointments all the time. Or, you know what, I don't really schedule a lot of things Rachel, for this very reason because I'm convinced that I'm not going to follow through so it's easier just not to make the commitment. It's easier not to put it in my calendar.

Here's what I want you to know. There is an area where you are good at following through. I want you to find it. Now, you may immediately dismiss it as not counting. Maybe it's showing up to work, maybe it's paying your cellphone bill, maybe it's feeding your kids. You may dismiss these things as not counting, but there are areas in your life right now where you are good at following through.

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If you're able to listen to this podcast, you got a phone, you got a computer, you've got cell service or internet service, there is an area where you are good at following through. I know some of you are thinking right now, I'm actually really good at the commitments that I make to myself, except when it comes to commitments around my drinking or my eating or spending money.

I used to think this for a very long time, so if you are thinking this, hello to all your perfectionists out there. I understand what this is like, where you feel like you're very good in some areas and then your commitments totally fall apart in others.

When it comes to the commitments that you make and keep, you have to pay attention to the ramifications. This piece is really key. When you are saying I'm really good at the commitments I make for myself except in these couple areas, except when it comes to my drinking or my eating, I want you to look at the areas where you're really good. Maybe it is having a spotless house, or never missing a deadline.

You have to ask yourself, well what are the ramifications if the house is messy, or if I didn't finish work on time, if I missed a deadline for something. I guarantee that if you really spend time looking at this, you will see that the ramification for not following through is almost always you thinking poorly of yourself.

It's the self-talk you have about what it means about you if you don't follow through. And I will tell you, when people start really paying attention to the language that they use, the words that they use to talk to themselves, start to recognize that if we ever heard another person direct these words and sentences that we directed ourselves, if we ever heard someone else saying it to another person, we would immediately recognize that language as really nasty.

But when it comes to how we talk to ourselves, when we use that language, nine times out of 10, people are just not so bothered by it. You have to pay attention to that language. Your commitment is not just a

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pledge to do something. It is the reason why you made that pledge and it's the ramification of what will happen if you don't follow through.

And for a lot of you, the ramification is a lot of self-talk. You have to be aware of that. But there is really an important reason why you need the skill of following through on your commitments if you're going to change your drinking. Because listen, you have to decide on purpose the choices you're going to make around alcohol.

And right now, you're not deciding on purpose. The habit is just running the show, so you feel the urge and you answer it, and you feel the urge and you answer it, and you're doing it without a lot of thought. And the more that goes on, the more you are in this cycle, the stronger the habit gets. And so change, changing your drinking means committing to do something else when the urge appears. It means committing to a different choice.

Now, most people when we think about the commitments that we have made around drinking, it looks a lot like this. So you wake up after a night out where you had one too many and you feel sick and you roll over and you think, "Oh my god, I'm never going to do that again."

So you make a commitment in that moment, or you're making commitments when you're headed to the bar or you're headed to the restaurant, and you think to yourself, "I'm only going to have two, I'm going to be good tonight."

That's what commitment for a lot of you right now looks like in these areas. It's that oh my god, never again, or I'll just have two. It is that kind of thinking on the way to the bar. This is what I did for years. 90% of the time, this is what my commitments looked like. They were always totally in my head, I was always just thinking about it.

And if I ever did write it down, and that was on a rare occasion, then my brain was like okay, we're being really serious here. But the reason and the ramification weren't spelled out. I would write down what I wanted to do but not why I was doing it and or what would happen if I didn't follow through. It was just all in my head.

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So the reason kind of in my head that I was never spelling out was I don't want to feel so bad about myself. Yeah, there are the hangovers, yeah, there's the next day regret, but mostly I just don't want my drinking to be an issue. I just don't want the shame and the embarrassment and the guilt. I don't want to feel so bad about myself.

And then there was the ramification piece, which I definitely never wrote down. But there was of course a ramification because I wouldn't follow through on my commitment and then I would just dive head first into my negative self-talk.

So the ramification was there. It was if you fail again, it's just going to be more proof that you're a screw up, Rachel. The ramification for me was always beating myself up. And we know that beating yourself up does not work. If it worked, it would have worked by now. But you don't even need to take my word for it. You just need to understand how the think-feel-act cycle works.

The more negative thoughts you have, the more negative emotion you create, and you cannot create positive actions and positive results through negative thoughts and negative feelings. I was beating myself up all the time. I was creating more and more negative emotion, and guess how I had trained my brain how to respond to negative emotion? By finding something to numb how I was feeling, by turning to a drink or turning to food or turning to anything that would allow me to temporarily hide from myself.

Changing the habit of drinking requires being conscious about the choice to drink and why you want to change and what will happen if you don't. Because the real ramification, it's not feeling bad about yourself. The real ramification is that the habit will become more and more entrenched every time you don't follow through on your commitment.

The more you say yes to an urge, the more your brain will desire a drink. It's as simple as that. That is the real ramification. And you have to pay attention to that, you have to really not just be aware of it but you have to

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be thinking about that ramification all the time. You have to be really understanding what actually happens when you say yes.

You have to decide how you want to go about changing the habit, how you want to start intervening with the program that is running in your brain right now when it comes to the desire to drink. Now, I always recommend starting with a break. Breaks don't have to be forever. Breaks are about giving yourself, your brain a period where you're not constantly saying yes. You're not constantly obeying the urge or obeying the desire.

You can use that time to really understand how the habit is working because here's what I know; no matter where you want to end up, if you're in a place where you're saying I just really don't think I want to drink anymore, or if you're in a place where you're saying I just want to drink less, either way, you are going to have to get used to saying no.

You are going to have to get used to having desire, having an urge and saying no. People hear me talk all the time about reducing the desire to drink and the fact that I don't desire alcohol anymore. And they'll say, "I want that. I want to not want it as much." But what they miss is that that requires practicing saying no.

You don't get to just go find the volume knob on your desire and just turn it down without any work. The way that you turn it down is by the work of saying no, by teaching your brain that just because you have a desire, just because you have an urge doesn't mean it's going to be rewarded.

Commitments, making commitments and practicing following through on your commitments is essential for habit change because that is how you learn how to change how you respond to your desire and that is how you learn how to reduce your desire.

So let's think about this. Why are you good at making commitments to others but not so good at making commitments to yourself? I think about this a lot. I think going to see a trainer is a great example and it's an

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example that I thought about in my own life a lot, having gone to see many trainers.

So why is it that I would wake up early to see the trainer but I would hit snooze on my alarm clock when I was waking up for myself or to work out on my own? Because they are plans either way. One set of plans my brain was like, oh my god, you must not flake, you must show up. And the other set of plans, the plans for myself, the commitment to myself, the alarm would go off and my brain was like, yeah, it's okay to flake, you can snooze. That commitment doesn't really matter.

A lot of people don't miss appointments. A lot of you out there would never miss an appointment. You don't like to be late. You don't want to be rude. And it's so fascinating to think about why it is you don't want to miss an appointment or be late, because if you're saying I don't really want to be rude, if it's rude to miss an appointment, if it's rude to show up late for someone else, is it rude when you do the same thing to yourself?

Is it rude when you show up late for yourself or you miss an appointment for yourself? Really think about this. A lot of people will say like, it's not a big deal, it's not a big deal when I don't show up for myself. That's what you're telling yourself in the moment. But when you made the commitment, when you wrote it in your calendar, when you decided the night before, you thought it was a big deal. You thought it was important.

I always push people on this. I always want people to really understand why if there is a discrepancy between how you show up for commitments in one area of your life and how you show up for commitments when it comes to you, why that discrepancy exists. And when I push people on this, what I hear a lot is, "Well, I guess I'm more concerned about what someone else thinks of me and my actions than what I think of myself."

So it's more important for me to fulfill a commitment to another person than it is for me to fulfill a commitment to myself because I'm more concerned with what they think of me, what they think of my actions, than what I think of myself and what I think of my actions. I want you to really sit with that.

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Why does someone else's opinion of you matter more than your own opinion of yourself? It's so crazy, especially when you understand the think-feel-act cycle. When you understand that your thoughts create your feelings and your feelings create your actions, and you start thinking about how much you focus on other people's opinions of you, you start to realize you don't control them at all. Even if you do all the things, even if you always show up.

How they feel about you is based on their think-feel-act cycle and you trying to control that is trying to control something that's entirely outside of your control. Meanwhile, the thing that you actually have agency over, your mind and your thoughts and your thoughts about you, we dismiss. Oh, that doesn't matter as much, when that's the thing that you actually have the power to change.

What if your opinion of you was the most important thing in the world? Do you think it would change how you respond to your commitments? Just think about that think-feel-act cycle. If you have a negative opinion of yourself, that's a lot of negative thoughts. Create negative feelings, drive negative actions, and produce a lot of negative results.

You cannot possibly create the life that you want and get the results that you want when you're telling yourself that your opinion doesn't matter or doesn't matter as much as someone else's. Telling yourself that you'll sleep a little later when you said you wouldn't, or say yes to a drink when you committed not to, both of these things as tantamount to saying my commitment doesn't matter, but even more than that, I don't matter. My opinion of me doesn't matter.

Showing up for others, not missing appointments, fulfilling your commitments, it seems like I'm just about being polite, I don't want to be rude. But really, when you really look at it, it is valuing what other people think of you more than what you think of you. You are chasing approval by fulfilling your commitments when they're for other people.

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Now listen, I know that some of you are like, you're being a little overblown here, Rachel. I'm not. You are always teaching your brain, always. Your brain is always learning. And when it comes to commitments, it is learning how to respond to them. And commitments that you make, your pledged to do or not do something are the stuff of how you change anything that is not working in your life and how you accomplish anything in your life.

It's not just something that matters if you want to change your drinking. So when you're telling yourself who cares, who cares when I wake up, who cares if I work out, who cares if I drink when I said I wouldn't, who cares if I had a third when I said I would only have two, it all adds up. It's like death by a thousand paper cuts.

One paper cut is annoying, two is a little more annoying, but you get a thousand paper cuts, you're not going to be able to move your finger. You're not going to be able to use it. That's what happens when over and over and over again we make a commitment and then we don't have our own back.

Commitments are about practicing the belief that you matter. Your words, your wants, your desire for a life where you don't have to worry about your drinking, all of these things matter because you matter, which is why you cannot do it from a place of hate. You can't sustainably change your drinking; you cannot be practicing teaching your brain that you matter from a place of self-loathing.

And people will tell me, "I don't know, it's not entirely true, my uncle was a miserable drunk and now he's a miserable sober person." But that's because the underlying hasn't changed. The habit has just shifted from one thing to another. That's why not drinking isn't the key to being happy or changing the habit.

Saying no is only one part of it. The key is learning how to manage your mind. Learning how to have a life that's not run by your urges and learning how to feel your feelings. That is the stuff that makes up commitment. You have to pay attention to your reason why you made the pledge to do

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something or not do something and the ramification. What will happen if you don't follow through?

Right now, too many of you don't really pay a lot of attention to the reason. You're not connecting with it. And the ramification is always beating yourself up. The problem is that beating yourself up, self-loathing cannot teach you that your opinion matters the most. All it teaches you is not to like yourself.

If you want to have your own back, if you want to make good on your commitments, if you want to show up for yourself, not just to change your drinking but to change anything, you have got to really believe that your opinion of you is the most important thing in the world. And you have got to examine why it is that you keep some commitments and keep commitments for other people and not for yourself.

This stuff matters. Think about your commitments and start thinking about them differently. It will change everything. Alright, that's it for today. See you guys next week.

Are you tired of worrying about your drinking and ready to create a life that blows your mind? Then you'll want to check out In Pursuit, my year-long coaching program for women like you who want to learn how to top overdrinking so that you can create a life that you love, no matter what's in your glass. Head on over to rachelhart.com/inpursuit to apply.

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