

Ep #139: Goal Drama



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 139.

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.

Well hello everybody. All this month I have been talking about making September your new January. Why not? Make it your new January when it comes to changing your drinking. You don't have to wait until 2020.

Now, some of you out there are listening to this podcast right now and you're thinking, but Rachel, it's halfway through the month. I missed the boat. It's too late to take a break. What I am going to remind you is this; come on brain. Do not get caught up in this thinking. Do not get caught up in telling yourself oh, it's too late.

Too late is a lie that your lower brain is telling you so that you will delay change and keep the habit. You don't have to believe it. You can start today. You can start right after you finish this episode. You can start at 2:37 on a Tuesday or 7:42 on a Thursday. It doesn't matter. It doesn't need to be when the clock strikes midnight on January 1st. It doesn't need to be some magical date. You just have to decide to get started.

But because so many of you are using September as an opportunity for a fresh start, I have been talking about on the podcast these past couple weeks how to make good on your commitment if you decide you want to take a break from drinking.

We've talked about setting fool-proof resolutions. We have talked about ignoring some of the advice that people give us about how to change our drinking, and we've also talked about obstacle mirages. The things that we believe are standing in our way that really are not that at all.

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And today I want to talk to you guys about goal drama because goal drama is a real thing and I should know because I used to have it big time. So I know how to spot it and I have been seeing it pop up over and over again for some of the women who are working with me in the Take A Break program.

Now, goal drama is going to kill your dreams. It is going to prevent you from ever changing your relationship with alcohol, so you have to learn how to spot it, but more importantly, how to nip it in the bud. Just as a refresher, I've done two previous episodes on drama and its connection to the habit of drinking.

Episode 128 was all about is there drama behind your drinking and go back and listen to that one if you haven't already because the fact of the matter is for most people, the answer is yes. Episode 129 was all about how to start reducing the amount of drama in your life because the reason why you have to pay attention to this is that when it comes to the habit of drinking, you have to understand that this is a habit about finding relief from how you feel.

So if you are spending your days constantly putting out fires or overwhelmed or feeling as if you are responding from one crisis to the next, you are going to end your day looking for a way to feel better. And that is why most people struggle to change their drinking because what they end up focusing on is just saying no.

They're focused all on that action of did I pour the drink, did I drink the drink. But they're not understanding the thoughts and the feelings that are behind the action. They're not understanding how stress and overwhelm and anxiety is so connected.

It really is like trying to deal with a leaky faucet by focusing all of your energy on making sure that water doesn't spill over the sink. So you'll just endlessly fixate on trying to manage the water instead of getting to the root cause of the leaky faucet. You have to fix the faucet. You have to stop the leak. That's what you can do with this work.

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So drama is really just adding unnecessary or extreme emotion to a given situation. Everyone, I don't care who it is, everyone sometimes responds to situations in a way that is not in keeping with what's actually happening. And here's the thing; a lot of people really don't like to see themselves in this way. They don't like to think oh, I'm being dramatic or I'm adding unnecessary drama.

But I want you to know this; if this is something that you can relate to, the good news is that you are not a dramatic person. You're just having a lot of dramatic thoughts. Thought that sound like oh my god, everything is a nightmare, this is a disaster, it's going to be wreck. You know what that sounds like. You know what the dramatic thinking is like in your head.

Now, the good news is you can change it because your thoughts are always optional. You can always choose to start to think new thoughts on purpose. This is what you're learning with the think-feel-act cycle. Now, I'll tell you actually, this very morning I had a perfect example.

So I was getting ready to leave the house. I looked at my phone, it was 5:42 in the morning, the baby was asleep, my husband was asleep, everything was going perfect. And I had a text message from my nanny saying that she had a fever and she wouldn't be able to make it to work today.

Now, I knew my husband had a full day of meetings. I knew I had a full day of coaching. I don't have any relatives close by, we don't have easy childcare backup. But that text came in and there was just no drama in my brain. My brain was just like okay, let's problem solve this. We're not going to freak out. Let's just figure out a solution.

Now listen, that is not where I started. My brain used to be filled with drama all the time but the reason I had that moment this morning where it was just like, okay, no big deal, we're just going to problem solve this is because I have done this work.

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And that really is what I want you guys to see what's possible for you. You can be someone who right now has a lot of dramatic thinking and you can learn how to change them. That is the power of thought work.

So often, drama isn't about the circumstance. It's not about what's happening in your life. It's everything about what your brain anticipates is going to happen. It's your brain's prediction of how everything is going to go to pot. Drama is often catastrophizing and looking for the worst-case scenario.

When you panic over and over again, you will start looking for ways to numb yourself because your brain will not know what else to do. You will start turning to well, if today is this much of a mess, at least I have a bottle of wine to look forward to, or at least I have a bowl of ice cream or two or three to look forward to.

And the reason why this happens is because one, your brain doesn't know that it's creating its own drama with its thinking and two, it doesn't know how to deal with it other than to find relief, albeit temporary, from some external substance.

Listen, even if something does happen, even if you lose your job or a family member gets sick, drama is not about what has happened. It's about focusing on a fear of a negative future. That's really what you have to remember. You have to remember that it's coming from your brain anticipating something that's going to happen and that something is never good.

And the more that you are stuck in this habit cycle, and it's not just a habit of drinking, it's a habit around thinking, the more that you're going to consume things in an attempt to feel better. But guess what happens? You guys already know. The more you consume a drink to feel better or eat to feel better or spend to feel better, the more you start to rack up negative consequences from those actions.

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So now you've got all your negative thinking that you haven't changed, plus all these negative consequences. And you're just decreasing your ability to handle negative emotions on your own. Not only that, but just handle life on your own.

So that's how drama connects to the habit of drinking, but I want to talk to you today specifically about goal drama because goal drama is a little sneaky and it will creep up whenever you are trying to change anything in your life. Whenever you're trying to make a big change, goal drama is going to creep in if you are not onto it, if you're not looking out for it ahead of time.

It can sound a lot like oh my god, this is so hard, I can't do it, my brain is just exhausted, I think that my situation is worse than everyone else's, you know what, I've been drinking for decades and I'm pretty sure that I've fried my brain. I feel so stupid, I feel so silly, I feel like a moron, I'm never going to figure this out.

That's what goal drama sounds like. It's all the negative judgment that you are adding to your work of achieving your goal, of changing your relationship with drinking and changing your desire. It's anticipating failure ahead of time, especially the moment that something does not go perfectly or does not go the way you want.

Now, the way out of goal drama is actually really, really simple. All you have to do is decide do I have a problem or do I have a project? Now listen, problem is such a loaded word around the habit of drinking and I will tell you, I was always so afraid of thinking oh my god, maybe I have a problem with alcohol. It was such a scary question for me. It really terrified me.

And I remember my brain would just spin on this over and over. Oh my god, what if I have a problem? What if I have a problem? What would that mean? So you may have asked yourself this question too. Do I have a problem? And it's important for you to understand what the word problem in this context means for you.

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It might mean, does it mean I'm an alcoholic? Does it mean I'm powerless and that I can't control myself? Does it mean that I can never drink again and that I'm going to have to wear a label for the rest of my life? Does it mean that I won't be able to drink on my birthday or New Year's? Does it mean that I'll never be normal? I'll never fit in.

This is what most people are fearing about when they think to themselves do I have a problem with my drinking. It is fearing a label. It is being afraid of a future that is only bad, and that's why it's such a scary question for so many people. Because if you think you have a problem and what a problem means to you is only negative things, then there's never a good outlook.

And that's what terrified me so much. But here's the thing; we don't have to only think in the terms of do I have a problem. You can decide when it comes to your relationship with alcohol, when it comes to the habit of drinking, do I have a problem or do I have a project?

Let's just look at what the word problem means. It's an unwelcome situation that is difficult to overcome. Just that definition sounds heavy. Unwelcome situation, difficult to overcome. There's so much judgment in there, so much story about what's going on.

Your brain has built up all this drama about what it means to have a problem when it comes to drinking, and all that drama creates a lot of negative emotion that is not going to serve you. But what if instead of a problem, you just had a project to undertake?

Now listen, you can apply this to anything and everything. It doesn't just have to be the habit of drinking. You can ask yourself, do I have a problem or do I have a project? Because doesn't the word project just sound so much lighter and not so heavy? Because a project is just a planned undertaking designed to achieve a particular aim.

There's no drama in that definition. And if it's a project, all you need to decide is what is the next decision that I need to make. What do I need to do right now to keep moving forward, to keep moving towards my aim? It's

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so much cleaner when you think about changing the habit of drinking as a project rather than a problem.

So think about it. If you committed to taking a break and then you ended up drinking last night, do you have a problem? Well, if you ask yourself that question, your brain is going to go right to oh my god, what does this mean? I don't want to think about this, it's too much. But what happens if you ask yourself hey, do I have a project?

If it's a project, what is the next decision that I need to make? If I made the commitment not to drink and then I drank last night, what do I need to decide to do next? When you look at a habit, any habit as a project, you can stop hiding under the covers. You can stop stewing in shame. You can just figure out hey, where did my commitment break down last night and what do I need to do differently next time?

Same thing if an urge appears at 6pm. A lot of times my clients will say oh my god, it's just such a problem. I have this urge and it won't go away. When you're telling yourself it's a problem, you're just going to be focusing on this negative future. It's never going to go away. I'm always going to have urges. I'm always going to have this desire. It's never going to get any better.

But if you think about that urge as a project, okay, if it's a project, what do I need to do next? Do I need to practice letting the urge be there? Do I need to practice noticing my body and how that urge feels in it? What is my next step? That's what reframing whatever you're working on as a project can help you do. It can help you get out of goal drama because goal drama really lives in that space of I think I have a problem.

When you have a project, you can really clearly see that all you have to do is make your next decision. But if it's a problem, most of you guys are going to do what I did for so long, which is just hide under the covers and bury your head in the sand and be terrified of looking. You'll feel like it's too big, too scary, too daunting because of all of the BS attached to what a problem around your drinking means.

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This is why people have goal drama. Because they are so sure that they have a problem and they're so freaked out by the thought of having a problem. The way to fix that is really just to start seeing whatever you're working on as a project. And I love doing this with everything in life.

It's like you can step on the scale and see the number go up by five pounds and just see it as a project. It doesn't have to be a big problem and this is who you are and why do you keep doing this to yourself. Just a project. What do I need to do next?

You can get your credit card statement in the mail and see that you have 5K to pay off, and you can see that as a project. Not this big heavy problem. Why did I spend that money? What's wrong with me? You can be out of work for five months and decide that you're going to see it as a project rather than a problem. Why won't anybody hire me?

And you know what, you can decide that the fact that you taught your brain unknowingly to use alcohol to manage how you feel, you can decide that that's just a project. It's not a problem. You just need to figure out the next step you need to take. That is how you manage goal drama. You have to redefine the language that you are using so that you can really clearly see what do I need to do next.

Because when you are really in goal drama, when you are telling yourself this is terrible, it's too hard, I'm never going to figure it out, my situation is worse, when you're telling yourself all of that, it's impossible to spot the next decision you need to make because you're so busy beating yourself up. That's what goal drama is. It's beating yourself up and imagining only a negative future.

So this really is your challenge when you are working to change this habit or really any goal for that matter. You have to clear away all the goal drama by just asking yourself over and over again, do I have a problem or a project? Because a problem is all about your fears of the future, and a project is simply helping you identify the next step you need to take.

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Just figure out what is that one next thing I need to do to get a little bit closer to my goal. I'm going to tell you guys this; I have heard from so many of you who have decided to have a fresh start in September and take a break from drinking, and I am so proud of you guys. And I really want you to know, if you have not started, get started today. Never tell yourself that it's too late. Decide that you're going to treat taking a break from drinking as a project.

It's not some big problem that means something about you. Just ask yourself what is the next step that I need to do today to get closer to learn how to say no peacefully and learn what's really fueling my desire and how to change it. It always starts with cleaning up all that goal drama.

Alright, that's it for today. I will see you guys next week.

Hey, if you're a woman who enjoys this podcast and wants to have me as your coach, you have to join the Take a Break program. It's a 30-day break from drinking that will teach you how to say no to your urges without deprivation, the secret to not needing a drink in any situation, including not needing a drink to take the edge off and never again feeling like you can't trust yourself around alcohol. Join me over at rachelhart.com/join. Together, we're going to blow your mind.