

Ep #156: How to Have Your Own Back



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 156.

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.

Well hello everybody. We are going to be talking about how to have your own back today. It is something that I teach all of my women how to do in the *Take A Break* program. It is something that I have had to spend a lot of time teaching myself how to do. How to have my own back. It's so important and it's so important for you.

I think one of the reasons why it's kind of confusing is because we are taught to have people's back. We are taught to have our friends' backs, we're taught to have our family's back, but no one ever shows us how to have our own back, and that skill is so important and really can shift everything, especially when you're trying to change the habit.

Because when you are stuck in a habit like drinking, what you will find is that you don't have your own back. You are constantly berating yourself and beating yourself up and really just sticking it to yourself, treating yourself in a way that is not going to serve you to actually create change in your life.

I think about this a lot as it pertains to the belief that alcohol and drinking is basically like a friend. I was coaching someone recently who said that she saw alcohol as a reliable friend, even though she recognized that it treated her poorly. And when she said that, I remember just thinking, oh yeah of

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course, I get that so much because I also saw alcohol as a friend, even though I was able to say like, I don't think this friend is treating me so well. I don't think I'm getting a lot of positive many times out of this friendship.

But still, I also believed that alcohol was a reliable friend. I'm not going to go into this too much on this episode of the podcast because I did a whole episode of the podcast on this exact topic. It's episode number 51, Why Alcohol and Food Aren't Your Friends. Really, alcohol and food are terrible friends and I know a lot of you out there are using them interchangeably just like I did.

Alcohol and food just sit there. They don't care about you. They don't care about your feelings. They don't even care if you consume them. They're inanimate. Friends are something or someone with whom you have a mutual bond of affection. And the word that's really important there is mutual.

True friendship involves kindness, it involves honesty, presence, acceptance, growth. These are all really crucial. Friends, true friends push us to be kinder to ourselves, they are always telling us the truth no matter how difficult it may be, they support us through adversity because they're just present with us and listening to what we are talking about and what we're experiencing, and they accept us for who we are.

They teach us, that acceptance teaches us how to grow and evolve as a person. And the truth is you get none of this when you believe incorrectly that alcohol or food is a friend. It's not. Alcohol and food aren't ever doing you a kindness. And if you're trying to use them that way to feel better, they're just numbing you.

They aren't ever telling you the truth of what's happening in your life. In fact, they're doing the exact opposite. They're putting a veil over what is really happening in your life. They're intoxicating you and padding you so

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that you don't have to be present and look at the truth. But the truth isn't going away.

Alcohol and food aren't listening to you. They're of course, a distraction for you. Hey, look at me, look at this shiny object over here. Look at this frosty glass, look at what's on this plate. They're a distraction so that you don't have to hear yourself.

And certainly, alcohol and food do not help you grow and evolve. They are habits that have you stagnating and regressing in life. So here's the thing; if alcohol and food are such bad friends, why do you keep them around? Why do you keep pretending that they're your bestie?

For starters, I think this is because they create a sense of false comfort. So they're able to produce a chemical reaction in the brain, your brain is releasing dopamine that can make it seem like you're enjoying yourself. It can make it seem like you're feeling better, and the truth is you really aren't.

I like thinking about this false comfort almost like you're putting beer goggles, you know that term, you're putting beer goggles on your life. So you're looking through the beer goggles and life seems better than it really is, but it's just the beer goggles making it appear this way.

But more importantly, the reason why I think that we keep telling ourselves that alcohol and food are reliable friends, even when we know that they're not serving us is because in many ways, they help erase the need to be vulnerable. Now, vulnerability has nothing to do with being weak. It has to do with your full human expression.

Whatever is going on for you in that moment, acknowledging it, being open and aware, and recognizing and sharing what's happening for you, your full

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humanness, that's what it means to be vulnerable. To show up fully as yourself rather than putting on a mask.

Now I'll tell you this; when you pour a drink to deal with stress or boredom or deprivation, or when you fill your plate to deal with insecurity or frustration, or just that feeling of god, I don't I want to miss out, you are having a negative emotion in that moment that you are trying to erase.

This comes up a lot with the women that I coach because so many times they'll say to me, "Wow, wait a minute Rachel, I have a really good life. In fact, it's kind of amazing and I love my partner and I love my kids and I love my job. I'm not drinking because I'm miserable and life is terrible and I'm unhappy. And I think that's a big misconception about what I teach.

When I talk to you guys about how the habit of drinking is a habit that is in that moment, when you're pouring a drink, solving a problem for you, and that problem is always how you're feeling. That doesn't mean that you have to be feeling miserable and terrible and massively unhappy. That's not what I'm talking about here.

In fact, what I'm really helping you understand and to see is that there are a lot of subtle emotions that unless you're really tuned in, you will just miss. You will not even pay attention to. But all you have to do is really ask yourself okay, how do you feel in that moment when you say no? It's not about things being terrible in your life, it's not about you being massively unhappy. How do you feel in that moment when you say no?

And maybe you discover that you're feeling a little deprived, a little restricted, that sense of missing out, that feeling of a little annoyed that you're not getting the reward that you deserve. Whatever it is, when you ask yourself that question, how do I feel when I say no, you start to see how pouring yourself the drink and saying yes is a way to no longer have to

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feel that deprivation, the restriction, feeling like you're missing out, feeling like you're not getting your reward.

It doesn't mean that you're depressed or you hate your life. All that it can mean sometimes is that you've gotten into the habit of answering deprivation with a drink. Answering restriction or trying to solve restriction with a drink or with another round.

When you're having a negative emotion, big or small, drinking and eating erase in that moment the need to be vulnerable. They erase in the moment your need to actually show up as your full human self. They allow you to put a mask on. Instead of having to say I'm feeling kind of deprived right now, and I think it's kind of silly and I don't want to feel this way, you just get to have a drink.

Instead of acknowledging, I'm kind of bored, I'm kind of lonely, and being afraid of what that means, you just get to eat something. Instead of admitting, I feel kind of anxious and this anxiety kind of appears a lot, it's not a huge deal, but it's there and it's noticeable and I wonder what it means about my life, well, you just get to eat and drink over it.

So there's no need to show up as your full human self when you are in the habit of overdrinking or overeating because in that moment, you temporarily erase how you're feeling. You erase the emotion, except of course, it's not erased at all. It's of course going to come back and going to come back over and over again because you're never actually solving for it. You're never actually dealing with it.

You're just attempting to eat and drink or numb over top of it, and that's just going to create more suffering for you in the long run. You can't learn how to cope with your emotions differently until you practice allowing them to be there without pouring the drink or filling your plate or using something else to numb yourself. That's what your real practice is.

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And all of this really brings me back to what it means to have your own back. Because I thought for a long time that alcohol had my back, and food, both of them. When I was really stressed out from a day at work, I would think about, oh god, I can't wait to stop by the wine bar on the way home, have a glass of wine, stop by the liquor store, get myself the fixings for a cocktail.

When I needed some liquid confidence and was feeling really nervous about introducing myself to someone or being maybe at a networking event where I didn't really know very many people, I thought alcohol had my back. When I wanted to celebrate, when I wanted to dance, when I wanted to be silly, when I wanted to let my guard down, I thought that alcohol had my back.

I thought, "Hey, I'm covered. Alcohol is going to do the job for me." I didn't have to do any of the heavy lifting because I was always relying on alcohol to help me through the negative emotion that I was feeling in the moment. What did this mean? It just meant that my muscles were atrophying. My ability to be present and cope and deal with my own emotions was weakening.

Alcohol never had my back. It doesn't have your back. It was making me weaker. It was making me less able to deal with these situations and how I was feeling in the moment on my own. It was making me less able to actually acknowledge the full humanness of my experience, whatever that looked like in the moment.

Having your own back simply means that you make a conscious decision to show up with yourself the way you would with a dear friend. You show up with love and compassion and kindness. And I'll tell you, it sounds simple but it's easier said than done, especially after years of not having your own back and looking to alcohol, looking to food to do that heavy lifting for you. It takes practice.

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But listen, whenever you practice something, you grow, and you get stronger, and that is why taking a break can be so powerful. You can show up for yourself, you can learn how to have your own back at every step of the think-feel-act cycle. That's what is so amazing about this work because learning that your thoughts create your feelings and your feelings drive your actions, it's not only the work to learn how to manage your mind, it's the work of learning how to show up differently with yourself.

So I'm going to explain what that looks like so you can really get a sense for it. You can have your own back when it comes to whatever, and I mean whatever you are thinking. This work, learning how to start to identify, challenge, question your thoughts, it's more than just oh, I should think nice thoughts. I should just have positive pretty thoughts all the time.

I'll tell you this, and this happened for me as well when I first started learning the think-feel-act cycle, when I first started really understanding that my thoughts created my feelings. I remember thinking, "Oh god, but I've got all these really unhelpful thoughts. I've got all these really negative thoughts in here," and I judged myself very harshly for that, and that's what I notice so many of my own clients doing. They start judging the contents of their mind very harshly. They make it mean something negative about them.

But having your own back, making that conscious decision to show up for yourself and with yourself the way you would with a friend, with love and compassion and kindness means that you don't freak out no matter what is in there, no matter what you are thinking. Whatever thought you are having, you can practice love and kindness and curiosity towards that thought.

In fact, when you do that, that's when you learn so much. I cannot overstate this enough, but this work is not about scrubbing your brain clean. It is not about only having loving, pure, beautiful, lovely thoughts in

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your brain for the rest of your life because frankly, the brain doesn't work like that. It's not realistic.

Sometimes we all have unloving, unkind, cruel thoughts because guess what, we're human. We have the full emotional experience, which means we're also going to have the full thought experience as well. Having your own back means you allow the contrast of thoughts to be there.

Now, you can of course decide the ones that you want to practice more, the ones you want to incorporate more into your life because you see that they're helpful in terms of the feelings they create and how you show up in your life. And you can decide that there are others you want to practice less, but you don't ever have to beat yourself up for the contents of what is running through your brain. That piece is really important.

Because hating certain thoughts, whatever they are, it's not going to make them disappear. They will only start to fester. Because what happens when we hate the thought, when we tell ourselves, "Oh, I shouldn't think like this, a good person wouldn't have these kinds of thoughts," when you do that, what you end up doing is really giving them fuel.

Because then you don't even want to look that they're there. You don't even want to acknowledge them. And you guys hear me say this all the time. You cannot change what you can't see, or what you refuse to see. So you really can practice having your back when it comes to whatever you are thinking at any moment.

You can also have your back when it comes to how you are feeling, whatever emotion is coming up for you. I'm going to tell you this happened very vividly for me the other day. Pretty much every workday when my workday is over, I take over with my son, we go on a walk in the neighborhood and we do our daily errands, which means we go to probably four or five different stores.

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And I was rushing around trying to get everything in order, and as I was putting him in his stroller, I saw that he was chewing on something, but of course, I had not given him any food at that moment in time and I thought, oh god, here we go again, what did he put in his mouth?

And so I did something that by now, I maybe should have learned what happens when I do this, but I stuck my finger in his mouth to fish it out. Now, I have a 17-month-old. He has a lot of brand-new teeth that he very much likes using. So what did he do? Well, what would you do if someone stuck a finger in your mouth very unexpectedly? He chomped down on my finger really hard.

And he has done this many times before. I think this is part of being a parent. You get bitten a lot. But this time he broke the skin and I was not happy. That's putting it very mildly, by the way. I totally used a couple curse words with him.

And then of course what happens after you swear at a 17-month-old, he's just staring at me with the most pitiful face, like why mama? What did I do? Why are you so angry? Why are you yelling? So then what happened? I'm staring at my son, he's looking pitiful, I've just used a bunch of curse words with him, my finger is bleeding, and I was just so mad.

I was still kind of mad at him, I was mad at myself, and I was feeling a little bit of shame. I was telling myself, well you just really blew that parenting exercise. And I headed out the door and we headed out to our errands, and I could feel all these emotions running through me and I just kept silently saying to myself, "Rachel, you're angry. You're a little bit ashamed, but I still love you."

That's it. That's what it meant to have my back in that moment. I didn't try to make the feeling go away; I didn't try to even change the thoughts that I was having that were creating these feelings. I was too in it in the moment.

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It was too intense. But here's the thing; I was able to keep saying silently to myself, you're angry, you're feeling a little ashamed, but I still love you.

And I will tell you, that sentence, that thought alone, having my own back in that moment, it created the tiniest bit of relief. It didn't make my anger go away, it didn't make my shame go away immediately, but I could feel a little bit of expansion, a little bit of openness inside of me. Enough so that I wasn't heading to the grocery store and going straight to the junk food aisle or straight to the candy aisle and thinking about ugh, what can I eat right now? I really deserve it. Look at my finger, it's bleeding.

It was enough so that I was able to pause what would have in the past been a very automatic reaction for me, which is feel a negative emotion, go find some way to numb it, go find a reward in your environment. And you can always do this with any feeling that you're having. You don't have to change it. You don't have to shift it.

You can just say, you're here, you can just name that feeling, it's totally fine that you're here, and I still love you. It really did create so much relief for me in that moment, enough that I was able to change what would have been a long-standing habitual pattern of me of, yeah, I feel negative, find a reward.

So you can do that with your emotions, but you can also have your back with whatever you do or don't do in life. No matter what you create through your choices, you can always have your own back. You can always choose, you can always make the decision to show up for yourself with love and kindness and compassion.

And I will tell you, this comes up a lot around how much people drink. So I will work with clients all the time about practicing having your own back no matter how much you had to drink last night. How much you drank last night does not ever need to be used against you as a weapon. I don't care

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if you polished off a six-pack, if you polished off a bottle of wine, if you had so much to drink that you don't even remember how much you had.

It never needs to be used against you as a weapon. Never. I promise because it never works. It will always backfire. Having your own back doesn't mean you have to love what happened. It doesn't mean you have to turn a blind eye and say oh, it's not a big deal.

It just means that you don't have to immediately go into the language of I'm a screw up, I'm a failure, something is wrong with me, why can't I figure this out? Something must be broken. I must have a flaw in my brain or a flaw in my personality. You don't have to immediately go into labeling yourself and blaming yourself. No matter what you do or don't do.

And this is around drinking and eating, but it's also around anything and everything. Any action that you take in your life. You can use it as a moment to be curious rather than to berate yourself or bully yourself or shame yourself or go into hiding. You can still always love yourself regardless, no matter what you do or don't do.

I think this is really mind-blowing for a lot of you because it was really mind-blowing for me because I was sure that there were certain things that good people did and certain things that bad people did. I really equated my actions, that A-line of the think-feel-act cycle, I really equated that with my own value or worth or morality as a person.

And what I'm going to tell you is that it's not true and PS, it doesn't work. No matter what you do or have done, you can have your own back. And this doesn't mean you put on rose-colored glasses and walk around pretending that there are no problems and that you don't need to change.

It just means that you have the opportunity to ask yourself what can I be curious about? Why did I show up that way? What can I learn? What is this

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result here to teach me or show me or what can it reveal to me about my thought patterns or the tendencies that I have with how I show up with certain emotions?

That's what you can do and that's how can you learn to have your own back. Every step of the think-feel-act cycle is an opportunity for you to learn how to show up differently with yourself. Yeah, show up differently with alcohol, yeah, show up differently with food. But more importantly, show up differently with yourself.

Alcohol and food don't have your back. They don't have anyone's back. And the more that you rely on these things to have your back, you pretend that they do, the more that you try to trick yourself into believing that they're friends, the more suffering you will create for yourself in the long run because the more you will need them to cover up how you're feeling. The more you will need them to do the heavy lifting in life.

And the more that you will atrophy, the weaker you will get, the less capable you will become at dealing with whatever comes up for you. Because what happens when you rely on alcohol and food as something to be your friend, to have your back, you actually never learn how to deal with negative emotions on your own in a way that doesn't create more suffering in your life.

And truly, truly, the most important friendship you ever, ever need is always your own. Always. Across the board. Learning how to be your friend is so important. It can sound a little cheesy, but I'll tell you this, I didn't know how to be my friend for a very long time, and the learning how to show up that way with myself has changed everything and it can change everything for you too.

Commit to having your own back this year. It will change everything. Alright guys, that's it for today. I will see you next week.

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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.