

Ep #178: Unexpected Discoveries



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Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 178.

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.

Hello, my friends. So the past couple episodes, I've been doing a deep dive into my work and what sets it apart, and how to know if it's right for you and what really makes it different from everything else that's out there that talks about why people drink and why people drink more than they want, and how to go about changing that.

So today, what I want to do is actually talk to you about what you're going to discover when you start doing the work to understand the habit and respond really differently to the desire and the deprivation that you feel. And the reason why I wanted to do this is because so often, I think when you feel kind of stuck and you don't know how to move forward and you're thinking about changing your drinking and changing your relationship with alcohol, you're not kind of able yet to envision what the future is going to look like.

And when you envision a future and what it's going to look like, all you see is life saying no, or life turning down a drink, or life not drinking. And you know what, that doesn't inspire a lot of people with the possibility of what's waiting for them. It certainly didn't inspire me.

I really wished that someone would have been there to tell me, "Hey Rachel, you know what, you think right now that this work is all about drinking and it's all about alcohol, but it's not. There's so much that you're going to discover in the process that is just going to have unbelievable positive influences on your life moving forward."

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And so that's what I want to do today. I want you to join me to kind of let your brain go to this place of possibility. And possibility for what you will learn in the work of changing the habit and in the work and the practice of responding differently to your desire and your deprivation, what you will learn along that way and how that will transform you.

Because most people assume that you're just going to discover things about alcohol, and you will, there is a lot to be discovered there, but there's so much more. I'll tell you, a lot of the women that I work with will say, "I discovered that I don't actually need it to unwind after a long day. Not only don't I need to pour myself a drink, but actually, it doesn't really help the way that I thought I did."

That's kind of mind-blowing in and of itself to recognize that this belief that you had is that this is the way to unwind, this is the way to relax, when they really start bringing full awareness and attention and curiosity to what is going on, they're like, maybe not. I don't really need it, and it's not even helping in the way that I thought it was.

A lot of women discover that they don't actually like to drink. They don't actually like the wine. They don't actually like the cocktail as much as they thought they did. This really sends people for a loop because when you're so committed to feeling like it's the best thing ever and I love it and I'm just a wine person or I'm just a cocktail person or whatever your drink is, it is really kind of earth-shattering to have a drink and be like, I don't think I really like this as much as I thought I did.

And a lot of people will discover that, you know what, they don't need a buzz, they don't need a drink to connect or to have fun or to be spontaneous, or frankly, to be uninhibited. I think that's a big thing. Sometimes I just wanted to be uninhibited in my life. I wanted to feel like, who cares about the rules? I just want to do what I want to do.

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And I only gave myself permission to do that in the realm of alcohol. And learning that I could be uninhibited, learning that I could let go of all of my worries and my cares and all of my shoulds and all of my beliefs about how I was supposed to behave and what was proper and what was polite and what was respectable, to just say, you know what, no, I'm just going to do it, it feels good for me. That's really amazing.

But I really want to go deeper today into the unexpected discoveries, because I think all of that is waiting for you, but I also truly believe that there are some deeper discoveries that nobody talks about. So there are four of them that I'm going to be discussing today that really, when you do the work to understand the think-feel-act cycle and how your brain works and how habits are formed and how to respond differently to your emotions, and when you do all that work to change your relationship with alcohol, you will have these changes in your life.

So the first unexpected discovery is that you learn how to move past all of your can'ts, all of your doubts, all of your fears, all of your drama that your brain is so good at creating. Because that's the thing. The human brain is really good at creating a lot of can'ts and doubts and fears and drama.

So when you do this work, you learn how to believe in yourself, even when your brain is saying that's not going to work. Think about how often is your brain saying to you, "That's too hard, that's too much, I can't do it, we should wait." We have all of these limiting beliefs. You're not unique in this.

My brain will have these limiting beliefs too. I had a lot of limiting beliefs around drinking and my ability to change and my ability to change this habit and change my desire. I had a lot of limiting beliefs that I would never have as much fun or be as much fun and that I would always be on the outside looking in and that I would always feel like I was missing out or missing something if I wasn't sharing a drink with people.

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Now listen, now I can look back and say, “God, Rachel, you were so wrong.” But it’s not just the limiting beliefs that I had around drinking that I realized were wrong. It’s all my limiting beliefs. That’s the power of this work. When you start challenging your habitual, automatic thinking that the brain is just so used to trotting out, you start to really question what your brain is telling you.

I’ve talked about this on the podcast before, but I just can’t state it enough. When you realize that your brain is wrong sometimes, that is when your real power kicks in. Because instead of just believing whatever your brain spits out as if it’s the gospel, you start to be like, wait a minute, didn’t I hear that song and dance once before?

And it wasn’t true. It was wrong back then. So maybe it’s wrong right now. And the work that I have done to really, not just change my relationship with alcohol, that to me was the stepping stone, but the work that I have to understand how the brain is functioning and to look at my thoughts really critically, what I have realized is that every single limiting belief my brain offers up, it always proves to be wrong. Always.

Every single one. Every single time. Can you imagine the power in believing that that was true for yourself? That every single limiting belief that your brain offers up is just wrong. And now here’s the flip side. Every single empowering belief, it also turns out that those are true.

I am more capable, more resilient, more badass than I ever knew, than I ever gave myself credit for, and so are you. So changing your relationship with alcohol, which by the way, advertisers and media and society is telling you all the time you can’t do it, it’s impossible, that really is the path to all of a sudden, “See, hey, all these can’ts, all these doubts, they were wrong. They weren’t a big deal.” All my fears, all my drama, it was just a story that my brain was concocting to keep the habit. And every time I believed it, the habit didn’t change.

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I think about how all of the drama I had around drinking and my relationship with alcohol and why it was that I drank more than I wanted to and why it was I drank so fast and why it was so unpredictable for me, all the drama I had, and trust me, I had a lot of drama, I start to really realize, oh, that isn't the truth. That's just a story that my brain came up with to keep me in the habit.

Because the lower brain cares about finding pleasure, avoiding pain, and doing so as easily as possible in the immediate moment. That's what it cares about. I had to learn how to access my higher brain and use what my higher brain cared about, which wasn't just the immediate moment. It was about my dreams and my goals and my future and how I was going to feel tomorrow and next week and next year.

When I took a break, I decided I was committing to learning how to do everything that I really thought I needed a drink to do. I was committing. I was all in to learning to relax and have fun and open up and be silly and spontaneous, and frankly, just deal with my emotions.

And you know what, at the time, I was single. And my brain was like, "Well, I guess you're going to figure this out, Rachel, but you're never going to meet someone. You're never going to figure out dating. You're never going to figure out sex without a buzz. You're just going to be a cat lady living alone forever."

My brain was so committed to that story. And you know what, it was totally wrong. So what I want you to consider is what is the story you have right now? What is your brain insisting is true about not drinking or changing your relationship or understanding the habit or not being someone who gives in or not being someone who always has to answer deprivation with a drink?

What is the story right now that you are believing? Because what if it's not true? What then? I'll tell you, that's when your life takes off. Because then

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you're like, oh right, that's just a crazy old lady nattering in my head. I don't need to listen to her. That's the power in it.

So the first thing that happens that I think is really unexpected for a lot of people is that they discover through the process of changing their relationship with alcohol and the habit and their brain, they discover, hey, you know what, I don't always have to believe all of my can'ts, all of my doubts, all of my fears, all of my drama. I can just be like, yeah, it's that crazy lady nattering away. I know what's up. I don't need to listen to her.

Okay, so the second unexpected discovery, you become someone who makes a decision instead of staying in indecision or confusion, and you become someone who always has your own back when you make a decision. Now, I will tell you, I was stuck in indecision around my drinking for so long. Years and years and years where I was so undecided about what to do. I did nothing.

But you know what, when you're stuck in indecision, it is a decision. It doesn't feel like that, but it is because indecision is a decision to keep the status quo. It's a decision to keep the pain of right now because you're so afraid of this future pain that you're imagining in your head.

But listen, pain is coming either way. Pain is part of the human condition. For whatever reason, we were to put here to experience a life free from pain. So do you want the pain that's going to help you grow? Because listen, growing and working towards your goals and evolving and creating new things, it's going to include pain because you have to step outside of your comfort zone. You have to do what is uncomfortable in order to do any of those things.

So you do want that type of pain that helps you grow, or do you want the pain of staying stuck and stagnating? I know which one I want. I definitely will always take the pain of growing and evolving and creating something new over staying stuck and stagnating.

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And I will tell you this; it was uncomfortable to teach my brain how to figure out all the things that I had relied on a drink to do for me. Of course, it was. I was doing something new, I was stepping outside of my comfort zone. But you know what was always waiting on the other side? Every single time, every single time I would say no at a fancy restaurant, I'd say no on a trip, when I was traveling, or at a party, or after a crappy week, you know what was waiting on the other side? Pride.

I was always feeling like, oh my god, I can't believe I did that. Yes, it was hard, but that's where the pride kicks in. To be on the other side and be like, hey, I just did this thing that my brain wanted me to believe I couldn't do. That's what's waiting for you on the other side when you move towards discomfort, when you teach your brain, you know what, it's not that big of a deal. I can handle this, I've got this.

But what's waiting on the other side of staying stuck in the habit is just discomfort. There's no pride. There's no feeling like a badass. There's no looking back and being like, hey, kind of blew my own mind there. No. You're just like, why did I do that again? Why did I say yes? Why did I give in? There's just recrimination and beating yourself up on the other side of the habit.

But it's not just about getting out of indecision, which frankly, that in and of itself is huge, just to decide, you know what, indecision is a decision, it's a decision for the status quo and I'm not okay with the status quo. The other thing that's waiting for you when you change your relationship with alcohol is that you become incredible at making decisions and having your own back because you learn the skill of looking to yourself for the answer and treating yourself as your own best authority.

And I am going to tell you this; I did not do that. I did not know how to do that. I looked at everyone outside of me. I looked to them to tell me what to do. I thought they were the best authority on what I should do in my life. But

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here's the thing; you don't have to look to your partner or your friends or your family to decide what's right for you.

And in fact, you shouldn't. Because the only person who knows what's right for you is you. Period. I think that piece is so important. It's so important to be like, "Hey listen, this is the right decision for me, period, the end." Not to be in this place of like, well, I'm not sure, I'm not sure I can do it, I'm not sure this is right for me, what do you think? Do you think I can succeed? Will you be uncomfortable if I take a break?

No, you have to do what's right for you. When you believe in yourself and you don't need to get other people's opinion on the matter, not just around alcohol but around anything, that is so transformative. Because then you know, hey listen, I've got my back. I don't need to get everyone on board. I don't need everyone to support me because I know that I'm going to support me no matter what.

I really used to be someone who polled everyone on everything. And do you know how much time it takes when you are polling everyone in your life on their opinion for all of your decisions? I did this with big decisions and little decisions.

Now, not only does it take so much time, but undoubtedly, you still have to decide. It's still up to you. Making decisions yourself, making them quickly, and sticking to them, not wavering, not going back, not saying I really should have asked this person, what do they think? Doing that, that is a skill that will save you so much time. It will create so much power in your life.

You will be amazed. I will tell you this; when I moved to San Francisco to be with my now husband, I definitely had some people in my life who did not think it was a good decision. They were like, "Rachel, you really haven't been dating him that long. It's a little soon, don't you think? And PS, you're

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not even engaged. You have an amazing career, you have an amazing apartment in New York. What are you doing?"

And the ability for me to be like, "Listen, I know you're not on board but that's okay. I love you but I also love my decision. It's already been made, thanks for your opinion, but I've got my back here." Now, that was kind of a big decision in my life, but listen, it happens with smaller decisions too.

I'll tell you a story that - it might be a little silly, but I think you'll understand the power in it. When we got engaged, I had to start planning a wedding. And I will tell you, I made one appointment. One appointment at one bridal shop in San Francisco. I went there one time and I tried on maybe seven dresses. I didn't have anyone with me, I didn't take any pictures and send them to anyone.

I was there for about two hours and at the end of that visit, I said okay, this is the dress. That was it. Done. Now, the funny part of this is that there were two women in the store who were helping me, and they really did not know what to make of me.

They were used to this being a big production and a lot of people and take a lot of time and they kept being like, don't you want to come back and maybe bring some friends or some family? And I was like, no, I'm getting this done today.

It was down to two dresses in that time that I was there and there was one that it really was very flattering on me. It was really cut for my body perfectly, and these two saleswomen were like, we really think that this one looks better on you. And you know what, they were 100% right. It did look better on me.

But the other one that wasn't at flattering, I really liked it. It was more of what I wanted. It was more me. It was more of a statement. And they really were like, fighting for the dress that was cut for my body. And I was like,

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nope, this is the dress that I'm getting. This one is more me. And I got that one.

And every time I look at my pictures from our wedding, I see that dress, and I think, not only like, yeah, you were so decisive about that and I love that, but also yeah, you know what, it's not the most flattering dress on me but it's what I wanted and it was my decision. And I love that.

I love looking at the dress and being like yeah, you really had your back and you still have your back. I love it. The ability to make decisions, make them fast, have your own back, not need other people's input, it is transformative on your life in big ways and small ways.

And when you do that around drinking, when you learn that the most important decision is always what is right for you, not what is right for anyone else. Not what your best friend wants you to do, not what your partner wants you to do, what is right for you, that is one of the most powerful areas where you can really practice this skill.

It sounds kind of crazy that changing your relationship with alcohol is going to help you pick a wedding dress in two hours, but it did for me. It really did. It's going to help you save so much time in your life.

The third unexpected discovery is that you start to live in possibility. Now, I want this entire episode to be practice for you of living in possibility, but you know what, you can live in possibility every day of your life. Most of us don't do that. I didn't know how to do that. We don't live in possibility. We live in what's impossible.

Because we tell ourselves, I can't change, I'm too old, something's different about me. And not just with the habit of drinking. We do this with everything. I'm too far along in my career to make a big change, I'm too far along in this path to upend everything.

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We're constantly telling ourselves what we can't do. What's impossible. And you know what, all a lie. You can live in possibility. You can live in the place of like, why not? Why not change your relationship with alcohol? Why not write the book? Why not leave your job? Why not move abroad? Why not say no to a drink?

Now listen, you have to think about what happens in your own brain when you hear me talk about living in possibility. Did you hear me list all those why nots and think, "Yeah, she doesn't really know me, she doesn't really know my life, she doesn't really know my partner or my friends or my circumstances or my situation. She doesn't really understand."

Your brain is going to constantly fight for your limitations unless you direct it otherwise. Because it thinks keeping things the same is keeping you safe, but it's not keeping you safe. It's keeping you stuck. Fighting for your limitations is never going to make your dreams come true, and I know you have dreams. You do. Don't tell me that you don't.

Fighting for your limitations won't do anything for you. It will just keep you dreaming. It will just keep you thinking, oh, maybe one day. If I had more time, if I had more money, if things were different, if I hadn't made this decision in my life.

That will stand in your way of taking action. More things have radically changed in my life since I took a break from drinking and changed my relationship with alcohol than you can imagine, and I watch this happen for my clients time and time and time again.

And the thing that I hear them say all the time is, "I just didn't even realize this was going to be the result of working with you. I thought it was all about alcohol. I didn't understand the incredible number of ways that my life was going to change." And that's what I've seen in my own life.

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It's transformed in ways that I will tell you, 10 years ago, never would have thought was possible. Never. I left my career, despite the fact that I was rising the ranks. I was making a great salary. I started my own business, despite the fact that I'm not an entrepreneur, I don't know how to do that.

I became a coach, I wrote a book, I started a podcast, I started working with thousands of women. And you know what, this past weekend, I was in the New York Times. I'm going to tell you this; do you know how excited it was to see my name in print, to see my letter published in the New York Times?

My husband and I went to eight different corner stores to find one that carried a hard copy of the Times because I actually wanted to hold it in my hands. And let me tell you, trying to find the New York Times in the middle of a pandemic, 3000 miles away from where it's published, it turned out to be kind of challenging.

But it was so amazing to hold it in my hands and see my name, see my letter. And you know what, I'm going to tell you this; when I decided to write that letter to them, my brain was like, "Rachel, they're not going to publish it. There's too much going on in the world. This is not a big enough issue. You're not a big enough deal."

My brain wanted me to believe why bother. But I did bother because I was like, well hey, what if it does happen? Let's live in possibility. This can be true for you too. What do you dream of doing that your brain is like, not possible, not realistic?

I think the word realistic is something that we really use against ourselves. It sounds like we're just being very responsible and very practical. But you know what, realistic and responsible and practical, those words kill possibility in your brain. It just shuts it down.

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When you change your relationship with alcohol, when you learn how to use the think-feel-act cycle and learn how to manage your mind, all of a sudden, you start to say, hey maybe I can be thinking about possibility a lot more.

Maybe I don't have to be realistic and responsible and practical. Maybe I don't have to listen to what everyone is telling me, what advertisers and media and entertainment and society is telling me is and is not possible. Because why not go after what you want and see what's possible rather than just sitting on the sidelines and telling yourself, can't be done, only other people?

And finally, the fourth unexpected discovery when you change your relationship with alcohol, you discover by using the think-feel-act cycle and witnessing, not only how your thoughts create your feelings and drive your decisions, including the decision to pick up the drink, but you discover, hey, I can change that. I can decide to think something new.

And then you realize, oh, I'm in charge of my brain. Not the other way around. I used to feel like my brain was in charge of me and I was at the mercy of it. Why did I do that? That's what I was thinking all the time. Why did I do that? What's wrong with me? Why do I keep breaking my promises?

I always felt like my brain was kind of out to get me. It was always trying to sabotage me. But my brain wasn't out to get me. It wasn't trying to sabotage me. No one had ever shown me how it worked or how to use it or how to change it, so of course I was confused, of course I felt like I was at the mercy of it because I knew nothing about it.

I knew what society had told me, not just about my brain but about addictive personalities, as if they're a real thing, and what society had told me about alcohol and desire and deprivation, what it means to be someone who struggles, and the fact that everyone should be able to handle their

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liquor, and some people just can't handle alcohol, and if you drink too much, you have a problem.

This is what I thought I knew because those were the messages I was being fed all the time. But I just can't tell you, they're all wrong. If you drink too much, you have a brain that is practiced at doing what brains like to do. Consume rewards. And if you drink more than you want to, it is because you are very practiced at saying yes to desire and freaking out when you feel deprived.

Now, without a new approach to those two emotions, yeah, you're going to stay stuck. But guess what, you just need the new approach. It really is as simple as that. You just need the framework for how things work inside of you and a tool, which is called the think-feel-act cycle, to figure out how to start moving forward.

Listen, when you manage your brain around alcohol, everything else is kind of a piece of cake. Because alcohol is a powerful reward for the brain. So when you learn how to do the work here, you are going to supercharge your results in the rest of your life. Because everything that I talk to you guys about, everything that I teach you about the think-feel-act cycle, we don't just apply it to the habit of drinking.

It is a meta skill. It is a tool that you can apply to your entire life, whatever isn't working, whatever you're unhappy about, whatever dream you want to go after, whatever you want to change. You are learning it here. I'm going to tell you this; I really could go on with more discoveries, but I think that these four really do cover the most unexpected and important ones.

People don't realize this. They don't realize that changing their drinking and changing their relationship with alcohol really isn't about alcohol and it really isn't about drinking. It's about stepping into a new version of you. And frankly, who doesn't want to do that? Alright my friends. 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.