

Ep #185: Why Do I Keep Flip Flopping?



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #185: Why Do I Keep Flip Flopping?

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 185.

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 everyone. We are talking about flip-flopping today. Flip-flopping with your drinking. You probably are very familiar with this. I know that I was. I spent much of my 20s, in fact, pretty much all of my 20s flip-flopping. I was drinking and then I wasn't, and then I'd go back to drinking, and then I would get to a point where I would say no, this is really not serving me, and I would stop for a while, and then I would start again.

And this flip-flopping, it was so hard. It really sucked so much energy out of me because I couldn't understand why I couldn't just make up my mind. I was coaching a woman on this very topic recently and she was telling me that she had been working on her relationship with alcohol for the last 10 years. A decade.

And during those 10 years, she had been able to stop drinking for long periods of time and she felt better physically. She really liked so much of her life. She liked how she felt. She liked the impact that it had on her body. But every time, she would get to this point where she was so sure this time was going to be different and I'm done with it, and then she would always find reason to start drinking again.

And so she was asking me, "Rachel, why can't I let go of it?" And that's where I was as well. I didn't understand for so long why I was in this constant flip-flopping, why I knew that I felt better physically, I had more energy, I woke up and actually felt good in the morning and actually got things done on the weekends.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #185: Why Do I Keep Flip Flopping?

I wasn't sleeping until close to noon, I wasn't spending my Saturdays or my Sundays recovering from a hangover. I wasn't dragging myself into work. I felt so much better, but I was always doing this flip-flop. I was always getting to this place where I was like, why not? Who cares? Screw it, just have one. I want to join in, I want to have a good time.

And I couldn't understand that. And the reason why I couldn't understand that, I couldn't understand what was going on is because I thought that the habit of drinking was about alcohol. It's not. The habit of drinking is not about alcohol. I really want you to allow that to seep in.

Because that is contrary to what everyone tells you. Everyone will tell you that if you find yourself drinking too much, if you find that you've developed a habit where you come home in the evenings and you immediately go to the fridge and grab the bottle of wine, everyone will tell you that it's because of alcohol and the effects of alcohol and what alcohol is doing to your brain.

Habits are not created by substances. Habits are not created by alcohol, they're not created by food, they're not created by money. They're not created by things. Habits are created by thoughts. Habits are created by what you are thinking about.

And so the habit of drinking has nothing to do with alcohol. I'm going to tell you, if you can really allow yourself to go to that place, to go to the place of stop seeing your desire and your deprivation as having anything to do with alcohol, this will radically change everything for you. This is how you can let go of the constant flip-flopping and actually decide for yourself, what do I want my relationship with alcohol to be?

Because of course, that's always up to you. You always get to decide. But you have to understand first that the habit that you currently have, it's not about alcohol. It's not about the substance. It's about the story that you

Ep #185: Why Do I Keep Flip Flopping?

have totally unconsciously for most people about what it means to drink and what it means not to drink and what drinking does for you.

Because this story is why you are flip-flopping. It's why it seems like you can't let it go. It's why it seems like every time you get to a good place and you make up your mind, you turn around and decide the opposite. The story, uncovering that, getting that out into the light so that you can see it, that's what actually creates change.

Because if you just stop drinking, if you just say no and you rely on willpower and you rely on gritting your teeth and you fixate on crossing days off a calendar, you may get a lot of non-drinking days under your belt. And there's no doubt in my mind that that will do some good things for your body. It will do some good things for your liver and your kidneys and your brain. It won't actually change the habit though.

Because the habit is not about alcohol. It's about what you're thinking. This is what I'm teaching all of you. This is what I want you to pay attention to is that the decision to drink is not about the drink. It's about your thoughts and your feelings. That's how the think-feel-act cycle works. This is what I'm talking to you about all the time. How your thoughts and your feelings and your actions are always connected.

They always are connected. You cannot understand the action, the decision of purchasing a bottle of wine and bringing it home and opening it up and taking out the cork and filling your glass and drinking and then filling your glass again, maybe finishing the entire bottle, without understanding the thoughts and feelings connected to all of those actions.

And for most people, we don't know that we're supposed to understand our actions in this way. We just think that drinking just happens or it's just something that I do, or it's something that I've always done. This is just who I am, I'm someone who really likes to drink, I'm just someone who loves the taste of Chardonnay.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #185: Why Do I Keep Flip Flopping?

Until you start to understand your habits as a reflection of what you are thinking and feeling, you will never actually be able to change them. So that's what I want you to start considering for yourself. What is the story, what are the thoughts that you have about alcohol and drinking and what it will do for you and what it means about you?

It probably sounds something like, it's going to relax me, it's normal to drink, this is how I have a good time, this is how I loosen up. You have to really be willing to be curious and go deep. It's like excavating. When we're going to our unconscious mind, the thoughts that are there, but we don't have full awareness of them, you have to kind of excavate.

And the way to do that is always with curiosity. It's not hard work. It's just being curious about what's there. And I'll tell you what my story sounded like. And trust me, this is not all of it. But here are some of the thoughts that were driving the habit of drinking for me.

Drinking is normal, everyone drinks, everyone should be able to handle their liquor, and if you can't, something is wrong with you and something is wrong with your brain. Drinking is adult, drinking is sophisticated, drinking is fancy, it's fun. I'm better with a buzz. When I have a buzz, the real me can shine because I'm funnier and I'm a better dancer and I'm more confident and I'm not obsessed with how I look or what other people think of me.

And when I'm drinking, it's easier for me to connect with other people. It's easier for me to be myself. It's easier for me to open up. People like me better when I'm drinking. I feel sexier. It's how I meet guys. It's how I have sex and sex is better when I'm drinking.

I mean really, this is just the tip of the iceberg, guys. But that's what my story was. These were so many of the thoughts that were connected to the habit for me, but I didn't understand that. And so when I was trying to figure out my drinking and slow it down and drink less or stop altogether, when I was trying to change the action, I was just always fixated on the number.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #185: Why Do I Keep Flip Flopping?

How much was I pouring for myself? How many glasses had I had? How many glasses would I have tonight? I was fixating on the number. I wasn't paying attention to any of the story because guess what, I didn't even know it was a story. I thought it was the truth.

I believed all of that. All of that that I just told you, I thought all of that was the truth. That I was better, I was more fun, it was fancy, it was how I could connect with other people. I believed all of that as the truth. But it wasn't. It was just something that my mind had created.

And my mind had created this story about drinking through a combination of two things. First, everything that I learned culturally about alcohol. So everything that I read in books and what I saw on TV, what I saw on the movies, what I heard my friends say, what I heard my family say, all of that I was taking in.

I was learning about drinking well before I ever had my first drink. Isn't that amazing to think about that? That you were learning about alcohol and you were being taught what to believe about alcohol and what to think about drinking well before you ever had your first drink. Years.

I mean think about it for me. I started really drinking when I was 17, when I started college. For many, many, many years before that, my brain was learning about alcohol. It was learning what to think about it through everything I was seeing in the world. Everything that I was being taught about what to think about people who drink and people who don't and people who drink too much and what it means about them.

So I was learning that way, but then I was also learning in the sense of what I told myself I was like when I was drinking. It's so fascinating, right? Because I had all these positive thoughts about it, that it's sophisticated and it's fancy and it's fun and I'm better with a buzz and the real me shines and I'm funnier and I'm a better dancer, I'm more confident, the list goes on.

Ep #185: Why Do I Keep Flip Flopping?

Now, it's interesting because not everybody agreed with that. Not all the people in my life, despite the fact that I had a thought, "People like me better when I'm drinking," there were people who would definitely say to me at points, "You know, I didn't really like you last night. I didn't really like how you were last night or how you behaved."

But I was so committed to these beliefs. I was so sure that they were true. Because here's the thing; when I wasn't drinking, my assessment of myself and who I was didn't skew very positive. It actually had nothing to do with alcohol. It had nothing to do with heading to the bar on a Friday night. It had everything to do with what I was thinking about myself and believing about myself all day long.

And that's what I think is so important to see. We're so sure often that the way that we're going to feel better about who we are is if we change something about who we are. I'll have a buzz and I'll be funnier. I'll lose some weight and then I'll feel prettier. I'll make some more money and then I'll feel successful.

But we know this doesn't work. It doesn't work. Because every time we change something, whether it is what we pour in our glass or what we put on our plate or how much money is in our bank account, it doesn't actually do anything to change the thoughts that you have about yourself. That's what you really need to get curious about.

Because imagine if your focus is just on what you're pouring in your glass. Imagine if your focus is just on alcohol, which is what everyone tells us our focus should be on if we're trying to change the habit. Just practice drinking less, just practice not drinking at all, just practice saying no.

That's where everyone tells us our attention needs to be. But like I was coaching this woman who had many long periods of time, many breaks where she successfully wasn't drinking, she always went back. She couldn't let go of it because she was keeping all of these thoughts.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #185: Why Do I Keep Flip Flopping?

So do you start to see that? Because this is so important for you if you want to change the habit of drinking and your relationship with alcohol. If you haven't changed your story about it, if you don't even know what your story about it is, or if you think that your story about it is just true and can't be changed, you will never actually be able to transform your relationship with alcohol or the habit.

That is the work for you to do. Changing the story, changing your thoughts about alcohol and what it says about you if you drink or if you don't and what it does for you when you drink is the only path to change. Because your habits run on stories. The action of drinking doesn't happen in a vacuum.

Even though that's not what we tell ourselves. We tell ourselves, "I don't know, it just happened." It doesn't happen in a vacuum. There's always a thought and there's always a feeling connected to it. And this is what I was talking to this client about. She couldn't let go of alcohol, which she said she actually really wanted to do because she hadn't changed her story about it.

And when we dug in a little bit, her story was that not drinking in social situations made her different from everyone else and she didn't want to be different. She wanted to be normal. I've actually done a whole podcast on that. A whole episode on why it is that so many people, so many of us really strive to be normal and how drinking, when it's presented as yeah, this is just normal, this is what everyone does, why it then creates so much conflict inside of ourselves when suddenly, we're the person who's not. We're the person saying no.

And what we discovered when I was coaching her is that totally separate from what the contents of her glass were, what we found is that she had this whole belief system about who she was and how she was too much and too different and her personality was too big.

Ep #185: Why Do I Keep Flip Flopping?

So she already had all of these thoughts about herself as being different, and then she also had this thought about drinking as being normal. So you can see how these two things collided. They always collided for her because she wasn't changing either of those. She wasn't looking at the thoughts that she had about herself and she wasn't examining this idea that yeah, drinking is just normal and everybody does it. And if you don't then you have a problem obviously.

She wasn't examining either of these thoughts. She was just focusing on hey, what's in my glass? She was just focusing on the substance, rather than the story. And so in those moments, when she hadn't changed the story and she was fixating on the substance, not drinking, the decision to say no only highlighted the story that she already had about herself and what it meant to be someone who didn't drink.

That's why she kept flip-flopping. Now listen, it's going to look different for you. I've given you this woman's example and I've shared some of my example. You have to do the work of being curious for yourself. And saying okay, what is it that I think about alcohol? Let me get it all out.

You cannot do this in your head. You hear me say this all the time. Get it on paper. What do you think it means to drink? What do you think it means not to drink? What do you think it means to be someone who drinks too much? What does it mean about you? What does it mean about your brain? What do you think drinking does for you?

When I talked about this on a recent podcast episode, really asking you to be willing to examine the upside of drinking, this is what I'm talking about. How do you think it's helping you? How do you think it's serving you?

Now, you have to be really careful here. This is the last piece I want to add. You have to be really careful that sometimes people will say, "I mean, I don't think drinking means anything. I don't think it means anything about someone not to drink or if they do drink or if they drink too much."

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #185: Why Do I Keep Flip Flopping?

People sometimes really want to shut down and say that they have no thoughts about it and that drinking doesn't help them, it only harms them, it's only a negative. If that were the case, then you wouldn't have the desire that you have. If that were the case, then it would be very easy for you to say no.

Be willing to just see everything you have, your entire story about alcohol. Be willing to get it on paper and just be curious about it. It doesn't mean anything in terms of your ability to change, your ability to transform the habit. In fact, it's the path to do it. But being curious with yourself, if you want to understand why it is that you keep flip-flopping, why you keep going back and forth, if you want to stop doing that, you have to start with focusing on the story.

Forget about the substance. You have spent so much time already thinking about alcohol and counting drinks and spacing drinks and telling yourself that you can only drink on certain days or certain times or with certain people and have only this number of drinks in an hour or two hours or in a night. You've done enough focusing on the substance.

Give yourself this moment to focus on the story because that's how you will change the habit. Alright everybody, that's it for today. I will see you 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.