

Ep #191: Why Do I Keep Sabotaging My Success?



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 191.

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 everyone. We are talking about self-sabotage today. It is something that so many of my clients struggled with. It was something that I struggled with for a very, very long time. And it's something that I want to make sure you don't have to struggle with because you don't need to.

So many people find that they start getting success around changing the habit of drinking, and then even if they haven't sabotaged themselves, they start worrying that they might. They look into their past, they look at their past history and think, "God, what about all these other times when I was doing so well and then it all went down the drain?"

So that's what I want to explore with you today. What self-sabotage is, what's actually behind it, and why you're probably mislabeling what is happening. That piece is so important.

Now, as I said, I was really a big believer that I was someone who just self-sabotaged myself all the time. And I believed that I would do this in pretty much every aspect of my life. So I would go for a while not drinking and I'd be feeling great, and then I'd wake up one morning totally hungover and think, "Why did I do that? What's wrong with me?"

Or I'd go on a diet and I'd lose a bunch of weight, and then suddenly I'd find that I had gained all the weight back and then some. Or this used to happen a lot for me that I'd be in a relationship with someone and things

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would be going really, really well, and then all of a sudden, I'd start picking fights with the guy, or for no reason, I'd let my eye wander elsewhere.

So I felt like I was sabotaging myself over and over and over again in so many areas of my life, and it seemed like any time that things started going well, I just couldn't let that happen. I had to sabotage my success, whether that was with drinking or eating or causing problems in my relationships, or a lot of other areas in my life.

And it drove me bonkers because I felt better physically when I wasn't drinking and I wanted to lose weight, and for a very long time, I was pretty desperate to be in a happy, committed relationship. Every time I got close, all that self-sabotage would kick in.

I would find ways to undermine my goals and my values because that's really what self-sabotage is. It's doing something, taking an action that conflicts with what you really want and what is best for you. It's doing something that actually undermines a goal.

Just think about the meaning of sabotage for a moment. It's when someone intentionally damages or destroys or hinders an enemy. That's what sabotage is. So when you are self-sabotaging, that's what it feels like we are doing to ourselves. We feel like we are purposefully hindering our own success, our own dreams, our own goals. And the question is why.

Why would we do that when we really want this thing? When we really feel better when we're not drinking? When we like what we see on the scale? Why would we purposely hinder our own success?

And the first thing that I think you have to understand before we can talk about mislabeling self-sabotage, I think you have to understand that it's not a personality trait. You were not brought into this world as someone who self-sabotages. No one is.

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This is really important, and I say this and I stress this because I watch people who feel very stuck and can point to a lot of evidence in their life that they're just someone who sabotages their success. I watch them feel like and tell themselves this is just who I am. I'm just someone who can't allow myself to be happy. I'm just someone who always has to blow it once things start going well.

This is so wrong. And if you notice yourself doing this, if you've noticed yourself saying, "Well, I'm just someone who can't let myself be happy, or I always have to undermine my success." I really want you to pause and think about it because it's not who you are. It's simply an action that you have practiced.

There's such a big difference there because if you believe it's who you are, you're also going to feel pretty helpless to change it. But if it's simply an action that you've practiced, then you can start to practice something different. You can start to understand why it is you're taking that action, why it is you decided to get drunk, why it is you decided to overeat, why it is you decided to rack up the credit card bill.

You can understand that. That's always your job is to find the real cause of what's going on. And the cause is not who you are. The cause is not the brain that you were handed. The cause is just always a thought. That's how the think-feel-act cycle works. That's what we're always paying attention to and focusing on.

When you act in ways that are out of alignment with your dreams and your goals, it's simply a matter of understanding that cycle. It's simply a matter of being curious about the thoughts and feelings that led to whatever you did or didn't do.

Now, most people don't focus on their thinking. They try to examine their actions in isolation. So they look at getting drunk after a week of not drinking, or making a late-night fast food run after losing a bunch of weight,

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or going on a shopping spree after paying off their credit card debt. They look at those actions as a sign of who they are deep down.

Now, this makes sense that we interpret it as a sign of who we are because when a behavior seems inexplicable, when it doesn't make sense, when you find yourself thinking, "I know something is good for me so why would I undermine that? I know that this helps me feel better, so why would I throw that all down the toilet?" the answer isn't because you're just someone who can't be happy or you're just someone who can't allow yourself to be success, or you're just someone who has to sabotage yourself.

The answer is in the inner workings of the habit. But until we're given the tools to understand how the habit is working, it is going to seem very confusing. It is going to feel very inexplicable. Because we want our habits to just be able to disappear because logically, we know that it's not serving us.

Logic is only going to get you so far. It's one thing to intellectually understand that something isn't good for you. It is another thing to understand why you are drinking or eating or spending or doing whatever that isn't serving you. You have to look beyond logic. You have to go to how habits work. And they are fueled by the think-feel-act cycle.

Now, unfortunately, for most people, much of that cycle is unconscious once it has become a habit. So it seems like I don't know why I did that, it just happened. Now, the good news is that things don't ever just happen. If you take one thing away from what I teach in this podcast, it's that nothing ever just happens.

Whatever you do or don't do, you can find the cause of and the cause is always the think-feel-act cycle. There is always a thought and a feeling that preceded whatever it is that you did or didn't do. That's what you have to be searching for. But you cannot find it if you're busy labeling what

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happened or labeling who you are. You have to start bringing curiosity into it.

This piece is so true, and this really gets to what I think the real problem is when it comes to self-sabotage is that you're mislabeling what is happening. I was certainly mislabeling what was happening for a very, very long time.

I was telling myself that whatever I did, the drinking or the eating or the spending or letting my eye wander, whatever I did, that it was about who I was. That wasn't the case. It was just about the habit. It was about a part of the habit that I didn't yet have full awareness to, and frankly, I couldn't get full awareness to until I dropped all the judgment.

I was coaching someone recently inside the Take A Break challenge and I said to her, what if instead of labeling whatever happened as self-sabotage, what if instead, you just decided it was a moment to understand yourself and the habit better? It was a moment for deeper awareness. It was a moment for seeing something that you were previously blind to.

I tell you, most people really miss this opportunity because they don't look at the decision to drink or the decision to eat or the decision to spend or any decision really, they don't look at it for a moment of growth if that decision is at odds with what they want. They just beat themselves up for it.

But of course, it's a moment for growth. It's a moment for you to really understand, hey, why did I do that? What was going on there? How was I feeling? What was I thinking? What were the excuses that were coming up for me?

Instead, most people just take what happened, they say that it's self-sabotage, and they just slip into shame. Because that really is the problem with labeling whatever you have done that isn't serving you as self-

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sabotage. When you label it this way, you're likely to feel a lot of guilt and a lot of shame.

You are likely to start having thoughts like, what's wrong with me? Why haven't I learned my lesson by now? Why can't I just do what's good for me? Why does everyone else have this figured out? When you think those thoughts, you are pointing to you, yourself, as being the problem.

But you're the problem never. That really is something that I cannot stress enough. You are never the problem. And if you think that, if you tell yourself that you're the problem, you have to drop that line of thinking right now because you're the solution. You're the only person that can ever change your habit. No one else can do it for you. You are the solution.

You just haven't been given the tools to do it. You haven't been given the information and the practice and the knowhow in order to actually unravel what your lower brain unconsciously created. That's what these skills are all about.

The solution isn't about finding the right program or teacher or book or podcast. And when you believe that it is, you will always be looking outside of yourself. The solution is about accessing the power that you have to change a habit.

No one can change it for you. Only you can do that, and everyone has that ability once they are shown how to do it. It really is just believing that you can figure it out, rather than believing that you're the problem. Because when you label whatever happened, drinking or eating, anything, when you label it as self-sabotage, you're really bound to feel negative emotion and that negative emotion will only lead you down a shame spiral and there's nothing to be found down there. You're just going to go deeper and deeper into feeling terrible.

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And a lot of times, people will be afraid of self-sabotage before anything's even happened. They will start getting success under their belt, they will start feeling good, and they will tell themselves, "Oh, this is too good to be true. I haven't been able to maintain this in the past, I've always gone right back to where I started."

You start worrying about this thing that hasn't even happened yet because the belief is, well, if it happened in the past, it's bound to happen again. But no, it happened in the past because you haven't yet understood that piece of the habit. You hadn't yet understood what was going on there.

Worrying about it when it hasn't happened, or labeling whatever happened as self-sabotage, neither of those things are going to serve you. And in fact, both of them make you more likely to numb because then you have the shame and the anxiety and the worry and you're blaming yourself, and you're thinking, "I don't know, maybe just something's wrong with me. Maybe I'm bad, maybe I'm screwed up. Maybe I'm just one of those people who can't figure it out."

And then so what do you do? You turn to something to give you temporary relief. Relief that will never last in the long run. Relief like opening up a bottle of wine or polishing off the leftovers or buying a pack of cigarettes, or buying something to try to take your mind off of how you feel. That's what numbing is. It's an attempt to escape, and it never works.

You know that already. You know that that relief is fleeting. That numbness that you feel, it doesn't last. That's why we keep going back for more. That's why we start to feel like we have an insatiable desire. Because when you don't know how to manage your emotions on your own, when you don't know what to do with negative emotions bubbling up inside of you except trying to run away or escape or numb them, of course you're always just going to have more desire.

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Because we don't get to wave a magic wand and just decide we're not going to feel negative emotions one day. They are part of the bargain of being human. We feel it all, the good and the bad, and we have to get off this chase to only ever feel good and never feel bad.

Sure, I would love for you and for everyone to have more joy and more wonder and awe and connection and love in your life. But we can't do that and expect that we'll also never feel the negative emotion. You just have to change your relationship with it. Otherwise, that hunger, that desire to escape, it will just grow.

You don't need to change who you are. You just need to start shifting your thoughts. And that starts with understanding that whatever action you took, no matter what happened, there's always a thought that led to a feeling that drove the action. That's think-feel-act. That's how the cycle works.

So what were you thinking? Please, don't skip this over as unimportant or say I don't know because answering this question is everything. I really want you to consider that self-sabotage doesn't exist. When you take an action, whatever it is, whatever you do, it's not because you're trying to undermine your success. It's because you don't fully yet grasp how the habit is working.

When you reach for the drink or you reach for the cookies or you reach for the credit card, it's because you don't fully understand the habit. You don't fully grasp the thoughts that are leading to eating or drinking or spending. So you really aren't sabotaging your goals. You're just witnessing the habit unfolding. You're having a moment, you're being offered the opportunity for greater awareness.

But most people miss that opportunity because they slap on the label of self-sabotage. And the habit is always going to continue unfolding until you find the thoughts fueling it, until you learn how to respond to your desires differently. And you have the ability to do both of those things.

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You can start to address thoughts like who cares, it doesn't matter, one won't hurt. You can start to see the impact of thinking things like I don't deserve this, this is too good to be true, it's never going to last, I've never done it before.

And you can start to dismantle the scaffolding of questions like who am I if I don't drink? How will my relationships work without alcohol? Whatever you find in there when you start going on a hunt to understand, hey, why did I do that, whatever you find in there, you can change.

That is the power of the human brain. We don't have an animal brain. We have a human brain, which means that we can witness our own thinking. We can watch our mind at work. And we can learn how to change it. We don't have to be stuck thinking that thoughts that we've always thought because of the brain inside of your head. Because it is an amazing tool. It's just no one has shown you how to use it.

When you do that, when you start to uncover what you have yet to see up until this point, that's when you're able to really free yourself from the habit. And all it takes is awareness and curiosity. That's it. You've been blessed with both of these things. Every single person has awareness and curiosity. It's built right into the system. It's built right into our brain.

We are naturally aware and curious as humans. We just forget this along the way. We are taught to go unconscious. We swap out curiosity for judgment, never knowing what's going on. And then we forget that we have these tools of awareness and curiosity to actually help us.

We don't need to change who we are. We just need to go back to these two tools that we've always had by our side. We just didn't realize we could use them. That's what I want you to start to bring to any moment where you are quick to label, just self-sabotaged myself again, or any time that you worry about self-sabotage happening when it hasn't even happened yet.

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When you do that, when you're quick to label something as self-sabotage, you lose a moment of inquiry. You miss the potential to really understand the habit, to bring to your consciousness what you haven't been able to see before. I want you to see these moments as an opportunity to know yourself and know the inner workings of the habit better and deeper and more fully.

Because that's what this work is all about. You cannot change what you can't yet see. And if you don't know why in the past you have had periods where you've been doing well and then you went right back to drinking, you're losing weight, then you went right back to overeating, whatever it is for you, if you've had those periods in the past, or if you're worried about them happening in the future if you have a lot of success right now, all it means is that there's a piece of the habit that you haven't yet found yet but you can.

You have the ability to bring it to your consciousness as long as you don't label it as self-sabotage. Alright, 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.