

Ep #192: Drinking to Enjoy Who You're With



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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 192.

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 drinking to like people. That's today's topic. Sometimes, you might find yourself pouring a drink so that you can like yourself a little bit more. So figuring that it will help you loosen up or feel less awkward in a situation, but sometimes, you might discover that you're pouring a drink to like other people more.

And we haven't talked about this much on the podcast and I want to talk about it today because it's an issue that I talk about so often in the challenge. When people discover, oh, I think I'm drinking because when I do, it helps me enjoy the time that I spend with other people. And it can be a little disconcerting when you take a break from alcohol and you realize, I'm not sure if I like that person very much, or maybe we don't have that much in common, or I find them kind of annoying when I'm sober and they're drinking.

All of a sudden, you start to realize that without the buzz, someone in your life maybe isn't that enjoyable to be around. I was coaching someone recently on this. And she was so confused. So she was heading back to see her family. She hadn't seen her family in several months because of the pandemic.

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And she was really nervous that when she was there, she was going to drink. And she couldn't make sense of it because she was really enjoying her break. In fact, she was several months in at this point. She didn't feel nervous or awkward or insecure or anxious around her family. She loved her family a lot, so she couldn't figure out what was going on.

And I'll just add that this is really one of the fascinating parts of coaching is really learning how to take something that you can't figure out, like the question, why on earth am I nervous that I might drink around my family when I'm really enjoying not drinking and I don't feel anxious around them, I don't feel nervous or awkward or insecure around them?

You can take a question like this, a question that leaves you scratching your head, and coaching helps you learn how to find the answer. That's really what coaching is. It's about finding the answers within yourself because I don't have the answer, but I can show you how to find it.

So that's what we started doing. So I was working with her and we were talking this through, and we discovered she loved her family so much and she was really missing them, but she also knew that sometimes she got really annoyed by certain members of her family. And in the past, when she had been home and she had been feeling really annoyed at certain people, what she would do is she would just pour a glass of wine.

So instead of dealing with what was coming up, instead of dealing with that annoyance, she had taught her brain totally unknowingly to try and drink over it, which listen, if this actually worked, if you could drink over your annoyance of people, I'd be all for it. But it doesn't really work because being annoyed with someone, including people that you like or even people that you love, that is part of a normal human relationship.

It is normal to be annoyed with people that we like and people that we love. And if your solution to that annoyance is to think that something has gone

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wrong, and then attempt to drink over it, you're never going to make actual headway. You're just going to create more annoyance for yourself because then the buzz wears off, and then you have to deal with the aftereffects of drinking and guess what, the person is still going to be annoying. You won't actually have solved anything.

So that's what I want to talk to you about today. Why we drink to like people. I think understanding this piece is really key. How you can solve this problem without a buzz, because I do want you to feel empowered to solve it and not like you have to build up all these boundaries or cut certain people out of your life. And I'm also going to share with you one really simple practice that's going to help you evaluate your relationships.

I love this practice. I think it's really transformative. And you really only have to do it once. Now, I definitely found myself drinking to like people. There were friendships, even relationships for me where it seemed like it just didn't work without the alcohol. So if I was sober and the other person was sober, either we didn't have that much in common, or even if we did have a lot in common, maybe we didn't get along that well.

And for me, that realization that there were these friendships and relationships in my life that didn't seem to work without alcohol, that I found these people annoying unless I was drinking, there was so much fear for me behind that realization. It was not a realization that I liked making because I was really afraid, okay, what does this mean for my life? If I'm here trying to change my relationship with alcohol and I'm going to have more experiences where I'm not drinking around certain people, then what's going to happen to all my relationships?

Am I going to need new friends? Am I going to need a new partner? Am I going to need just a whole new cadre of people to spend time with? That really freaked me out. And I know a lot of my clients have very similar worries.

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And it's because so many people in the space of changing your relationship with alcohol, they talk about needing to surround yourself with other people who are sober. Now, if you're a listener to this podcast, you know that I have a lot to say about this advice.

First of all, it assumes that other people are the problem. It assumes that other people make it too tempting for you to say no, or that other people are making it difficult for you to stick with your goal. The problem with this belief isn't just that it disempowers you, which of course it does. The problem with this belief is that it's not how the habit works.

You don't pick up a drink because of what someone else around you does. You pick up a drink because of a thought and a feeling in response to what someone does. And that distinction is everything. I don't want you to gloss over it. It is really, really key if you're going to start to not only be able to change your relationship with alcohol, but change your relationship with alcohol and not have it mean that you just have to get a whole new group of people to be around.

How you think and feel in response to what other people do, for most people, it's just automatic. We don't spend a lot of time paying attention to the thoughts and feelings that we're having in the moment. It just happens. That's what everything I'm teaching you here is trying to help you slow down and gain awareness around.

So someone will say, "Don't make me drink alone." I remember so many people in my life who would say this to me. "Rachel, don't make me drink alone. Don't be no fun." And then what? I would give in. And it felt like in the moment, that I said yes to the drink because of what someone had said to me. It really truly felt like I was saying yes because of someone else's words.

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But that's not what's happening. Whatever you are doing, whether or not you are saying yes or no to a drink is an action, and that action doesn't just happen. It is created by what you're thinking and what you're feeling. Your thoughts and your emotions always are behind the action of saying no or saying yes to a drink.

Even right now, if you're not aware of it, even right now, if it just seems like it happens too fast, or you're really sure that the other person was part of it. I can promise you this; when you start to learn how the think-feel-act cycle works, you start to see, oh, there's an explanation for what's going on and it doesn't have anything to do with the other person or what they said or what they did. It has to do with what's happening in my mind.

And this is the best news ever because if it has to do with what's happening in your mind, if it has to do with the think-feel-act cycle, if that's the reason why either you stick to your commitment or you give in, then all you have to do is focus on what's happening inside of you in order to create the result that you want.

You don't have to get other people to change, and that's a big relief because it's very hard to change other people. If you can start to find how you are thinking and how you are feeling around other people, you will start to understand how the habit actually is working inside of you. And with that information, you can change it.

Now, the other reason that I don't like the idea of needing to surround yourself with people who are sober is simply because it's not realistic. Now, mind you, I don't even use the word sober. I've talked about this on so many podcasts but let's just put that aside for a second.

It's not realistic. It simply isn't. I can pretty much promise that there is going to be someone in your life, probably multiple people who you want to keep in your life who are going to drink. Maybe it's your best friend, maybe it's

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your partner, maybe it's a sibling, maybe it's your parents. There's going to be someone.

And if that's the case, if there are people that you want to keep in your life and they're going to make different choices around alcohol, then you are - whether it is a different choice that they make for all of next year or maybe it's just a different choice that they're making from you tomorrow night, if they're going to be making different choices and you're telling yourself, "Oh well, I can't be around those people," it's not going to feel very good.

It's not going to be very enjoyable. You're going to feel like you need to remove these people from your life because what they do affects what you do. But what I want you to know is that you can actually learn how to be around them, around the people that you want to keep in your life, no matter what choices they make around alcohol, and enjoy being around them no matter what choice they make around drinking and no matter what choice you make around drinking.

I really recommend to take that path. Take the path of learning how to be around them no matter what instead of removing people from your life or trying to make it so that nobody drinks around you, or trying to replace all of your friends. There's just so much more freedom in the second path.

I've talked about this before on the podcast. I had drinking buddies who fizzled out of my life when I took a break and when I decided I was really going to get to the problem, the root cause of why I struggled with my drinking. So I had people that fizzled out. I also had drinking buddies who are still some of the closest people, they're my closest friends in this life.

I had to learn how to show up differently in these relationships. I had to learn how to enjoy being around these people without relying on a drink. It was on me. But the think-feel-act cycle that I was learning and practicing to change my relationship with alcohol is the exact same tool that I needed to

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start to learn how to enjoy being around people without feeling like I needed to drink over any annoyance or irritation or exasperation that I was having with them.

It's totally possible. It does take practice to enjoy people. Honestly, it does. And I think this is one of the biggest lies that we are sold in relationships and friendships. We are sold this lie that they should just work. And that if you have to do any additional work on the relationship, it means there's a problem.

I remember thinking that lie so many times in my life. Oh, this relationship has a problem or this friendship has a problem, so therefore, it's not working. Because it should be easy. I shouldn't have to work at my relationships. We should just get along.

And I want to tell you, this really is a lie. This is a lie that you shouldn't have to work at your relationships. You should. You should have to put practice in. And the reason is not because of the relationship. The reason that you should have to put practice in is because you have a human brain. And the human brain was designed to spot danger.

It was designed to find problems. It was designed to fixate on the negative. And it's going to do that, whether or not you're out in the Savanna where your life might be in actual danger from a predator, or it's going to do that whether you're sitting next to someone that you love, where there is no danger and no threat to your safety.

Because you have a human brain is why you have to work on your relationships. Totally independent of whether or not you are drinking or the other person is drinking or you're both drinking or nobody is drinking. If you aren't learning these kind of automatic reflexes of the brain and how to manage them, how to manage the reflexes of there's a problem, I'm going

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to find the danger, I'm going to spot the negative, if you don't learn how to do this, your brain's just going to have a field day.

It will go all day long spotting problems, even with people that you love deeply and care about. Even in friendships and relationships that you want to maintain. Now listen, it doesn't mean that anything has gone wrong. It just means that your brain is doing exactly what it was designed to do.

Your lower brain still thinks it's on the Savanna and that it needs to be in a constant state of high alert, it needs to constantly be on the lookout for danger and problems and something that is going wrong and something negative. And I will tell you, what I have learned in my own life is that I have to practice enjoying people.

I know that this might sound really strange, but it's true. I have to practice enjoying my husband and my best friend and my sister and my parents, and even my little boy. I have to practice enjoying all of the people that I love, which means I have to practice thinking positive, enjoyable thoughts about them. Because otherwise, my brain will focus on everything that all of these people should be doing differently, and I mean everything.

Really, my brain does not have to try hard at all to find all of the problems with other people. It will get straight As at that subject. And it's not because I'm a bad person and it's not because I'm surrounded by bad people. It's just because that's how an unmanaged mind works. It's always scanning for problems. It's always looking for what's wrong. It's always searching for the flaw.

Now, knowing that my thoughts create my feelings, and knowing how the human brain evolved and how my lower brain is always going to be searching for what's not going right, if I let my mind run unmanaged, all it's going to do is spot a lot of problems with everyone around me, and I'm

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going to feel very annoyed and very irritated and very exasperated a lot of the time.

And now here's the thing; add to this alcohol and you will have compounded the problem because so many of us totally unknowingly, we start to teach our brain that the way to deal with these negative emotions that we have about other people is to pour a drink. Oh, then I'll feel better, that buzz makes me feel better.

Now guess what, you're going to be in for a rude awakening when you take a break and suddenly, you're faced with how you actually feel around people. You might realize, I'm not sure I really like this person when I'm not drinking. Now, this is not the time for the despair, and it's not the time to freak out. It doesn't mean that you're messed up or that your relationships are messed up. It just means that your brain has gotten out of practice of creating enjoyment with regards to other people.

You know, one of my earliest podcast episodes that people still bring up, it's number 25. It's called Creating Fun versus Consuming Fun. People loved the concept that I presented in there because the idea was that when you have a habit around drinking or eating or even staring at screens, you become really accustomed to consuming fun.

But that is such a trap that is very easy to fall into because the more you consume, the more you want, and then you start having negative repercussions. But you don't just have to consume fun. You have the ability to create fun as well.

Now, it takes a little bit more energy on the front end. I talk about this in that episode if you're interested. But it doesn't leave any of the consequences. In fact, you often leave the experience feeling better. And I want to tell you that I bring this up because the same concept is true when it comes to enjoying people in your life.

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Are you consuming enjoyment in order to enjoy being around the people in your life? So what I mean by that is are you always drinking or eating or shopping or staring at screens in order to like spending time with them? Or are you creating enjoyment in your mind in order to enjoy them?

Now, when I say that, creating enjoyment, I don't mean participating in different kinds of activities with them. I mean what are you thinking about when you're with these people? Are you thinking enjoyable thoughts about who you're with? Because if you're not, guess what? You're not going to have an enjoyable time.

Are you thinking about what you like about the people that you're with? Or are you thinking about how they should change and do something different and be different? This really is a wakeup call for so many of the people that I work with. It was a wakeup call for me.

So I always have people, especially when this is a new discovery, and this will be a new discovery for a lot of people when they take that initial break. I say, "Listen, all you need to do is just spend a day noticing what your brain does around people." Around people that you love. Around people that you swear up and down, this person I really want in my life. Notice what your brain does, notice your thoughts around those people.

How often are you thinking something negative versus thinking something positive? And if you really do this exercise, if you really pay attention, you will be astounded. Because I will tell you, nine times out of 10, people will come back to me and they will say, "I can't even believe it, I cannot believe how the vast overwhelming majority of my thoughts about this person when I'm with them are negative."

They skew negative. And now keep in mind, this is a point where a lot of people freak out and they think, oh my god, I'm such a bad person, I'm

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having all these terrible thoughts, or they say, "Oh my gosh, this relationship or this friendship is doomed, what am I going to do?"

And I want you to know that neither is the case. You aren't a bad person. You're just doing what an unmanaged mind does, and your relationships aren't doomed because you have the opportunity to understand your thought patterns and start to see how much that contributes to your experience.

And guess what, if you want to start enjoying these people, you don't have to pour a glass of wine. You can just start shifting the thought patterns. Now, keep in mind, you only have to do this if you want to. You don't have to change your thoughts about people. You may take a break from drinking and you may evaluate some of your friendships or your relationships and decide, you know what, they're not really serving me.

But you don't have to. That I think is so key. You can change how you feel about someone without a drink. And honestly, if you're using a drink to enjoy being around someone, it's not a very sustainable solution. Your time taking a break, it really can shed so much light on your relationships and your friendships in such a profound way because once you remove alcohol, you just get to see what's there.

And I don't mean what's there in terms of the relationship. I mean what's there in terms of what's happening in your mind when you're with them. And once you have that awareness, once you get to see where your mind defaults to, you can decide, hey, do I want to improve these thoughts? Maybe you don't. You don't have to. But you have the option of doing that.

That's what's so powerful. You can decide that some relationships and friendships have run their course. I know I have made that decision. But you can also decide that there are people in your life who you love and you want to keep in your life, and the relationship or the friendship matters to

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you and you want to enjoy them more, and you want your decisions around drinking to be totally incidental.

You don't want your decisions around drinking to be the deciding factor of whether or not you can enjoy your time with them. That is true freedom. That is how you change your relationship with alcohol. That's how you really change the habit when you know, oh, the decision I make around alcohol, it's totally incidental, it doesn't really matter when it comes to whether or not I can enjoy being around this person because it never works to pour a drink to enjoy other people.

You're still going to find them annoying next time. And guess what's going to happen? You're just going to reach for a drink again. Unless you take this as an opportunity to examine what's happening in your mind, and then to just notice, hey, am I having a lot of unenjoyable thoughts? And if I am, it's not a problem. I'm not a bad person, they're not a bad person. Maybe this is just a reflex of the brain.

This really can be a moment of reflection to decide, hey, what do I want to think about this person on purpose? Most people never do this. They never decide what they want to think about someone on purpose. They just let their unmanaged mind do all the thinking.

I know for me, I don't want to let my brain run on default with the people in my life because I've seen where it goes on default. It does not create a very enjoyable experience. So you can really decide, okay, so are these relationships, these friendships, this person, is it worth it for me to practice focusing instead on enjoying them, enjoying my time, understanding why I don't, and knowing that I don't need to rely on a drink?

I don't need to have a buzz in order to enjoy my time with them because if I use the think-feel-act cycle, I'll always have the answer for what's going on.

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I'll always be able to see why I'm really not enjoying this interaction. And if I want to, I can change it. 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.