

## Ep #197: Desire Confusion



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 197.

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, hello, hello everyone. We are talking about desire confusion today. I love this topic. It's so important, and it will 100% help you. And in fact, it's really essential if you want to change the habit of drinking and change your relationship with alcohol.

And I'm going to tell you, I started thinking about the topic of desire confusion because my husband and I are currently watching *Deaf U* on Netflix. Actually, we just finished it the other night. I immediately became obsessed with this show.

If you're not familiar with it, it follows college kids at a place called Gallaudet University in DC and the university is for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. And I will say that I just totally fell in love with the show from the very first episode, partly because I got very wrapped up in the lives of the characters, but also because it really was the first time that I ever saw people who are deaf or hard of hearing presented on TV as multidimensional people.

They weren't tokenized or presented as the deaf friend or the deaf sidekick, where the focus was about how they were different from "regular" people. On *Deaf U*, these are just college kids trying to navigate college life. They're trying to figure out how to become young adults and all of the complications that come with that.

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And they just happen to communicate using American sign language. And I think that shift is so powerful. So often, we deny people who we perceive as having a disability, we deny them their full humanness, and we don't do this on purpose. We do this because it has been so ingrained in us to believe that there is a normal and abnormal.

And listen, I say all of this having done so myself. I have seen people and labeled people and put them in categories and viewed people through the lens of their disability or their gender or their race or their sexual orientation or their education or their economic status. So I have done this too, and I'm really working on this.

Because you know what, we talk about this on the podcast all the time. I really think it's so limiting and detrimental and label yourself and to label other people. I talk about this all the time when it comes to changing the habit of drinking. I bristle at any kind of label. I think a lot of people do.

And so it's something that I understand how limiting it can be to have other people label you or to feel like you're existing in the world as a label. And so I want to do this work myself to really understand, hey, how have I done this to other people, even if it's been unconscious, even if it's been unknowing?

So anyway, I was watching Deaf U with my husband, and by the way, there is a lot of drinking on this show because you know, they're kids in college. But actually, the drinking is not what caught my attention. What caught my attention is this one really, really short brief exchange that has nothing to do with alcohol but it's such a perfect example of something that I call desire confusion.

And desire confusion, like I said, it's going to get in the way of changing the habit and changing your relationship with alcohol unless you start to identify it. And that's what I'm going to show you how to do today, and I'm going to give you one simple question that will help you any time it comes up.

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Now, the good news is that like everything I teach, what you're going to learn in this episode, it's not exclusive to drinking. Desire confusion happens in every part of your life. So if you can start to spot it around the habit of drinking, you're going to be able to spot it with food and work and money and relationships and lots of other areas in your life.

So this is a skill that you can apply in many places. So I'm watching this exchange on the show. There are two people and they're hanging out and they're kind of interested in each other, and they're also trying to figure out if the other person is interested in me.

And there's this guy, Dalton, and he says to this girl Alexa - actually, he doesn't say it. He signs it to her. He signs to her, "Do you like to chase guys?" And she signs back to him, "I like to be chased, it makes me feel worthy." It's not that big of a moment. It's like a 15 second exchange.

And when I was watching it though, my brain just kind of blew up. And I was like, oh my god, yes, this is such a perfect example of desire confusion and I have to talk about it on the podcast. So desire confusion is when you think you want something because of how it makes you feel, but you're confused.

The object of your desire doesn't actually produce the feeling that you're after. And until you figure this out, you will constantly be chasing the wrong thing. You will be on this wild goose chase wondering why you never feel satisfied.

So I'm going to talk about it in the context of that conversation and then I'm going to talk about it in the context of drinking. So in this conversation, Alexa signs to Dalton, "I like to be chased, it makes me feel worthy." So her desire is to have guys chase her because she thinks that she feels worthy and she clearly wants to feel worthy. She likes that feeling. She wants more of it.

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But here's the thing; she's chasing after the wrong thing. Now, just as an aside, this exchange probably jumped out at me because at one point in my life, I could really relate to what she was saying. I could really relate to this idea of like, that person likes me, now I feel good about myself, I feel worthy. Because I didn't know about desire confusion.

I didn't understand why it really didn't matter how many people gave me attention. Nothing really seemed to stick. I always kind of felt lacking. I didn't get it because I didn't understand this concept. And that's the problem with desire confusion. It has you chasing after the wrong thing.

So it's not the guy. She thinks it's the guy that she wants, but what she really wants is the feeling of worthiness. Now, Alexa in this scene, pretty much like everyone has been taught that being chased by someone, having someone like you, having someone compliment you, that creates worthiness. That's what we're taught, that's what we've been led to believe.

But I'm going to tell you, and if you listen to this podcast, you know it doesn't work that way. The think-feel-act cycle shows you time and time and time again that the feelings that you have are the result of what's happening in your mind.

And this is true for everything. It's true for when people like us or don't like us, it's true with drinking, it's true with work and relationships and money. Everything.

Now, in the case of worthiness, what you think about yourself is what creates that feeling. That's what matters. Your thoughts of you create the feeling of worthiness. Now, think about it this way; think about a time, if you've ever watched someone reject a compliment. I'm sure you have seen this.

So someone will say, "Oh, that person did a really good job or they look great today, or I love this thing about you," how many times have you

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watched someone else immediately start to explain the compliment away? So the person receiving the compliment, person who just heard you did a really good job, or you look great today, or I love this thing about you, they immediately start to explain the compliment away or brush it off, or they might even start giving evidence to the contrary.

Now, you have probably seen this happen but how many times have you done this yourself? I used to do this all the time. Maybe you start trying to argue, oh no, I really did a terrible job, or I look awful today. Or you insist, oh, you're just being nice, you have to say that.

Now, the reason we do this is simple. The reason why this is so universal is because the mind is always going to gravitate back to what it has practiced thinking. And if you have practiced thinking things that are not so great about yourself, if you have practiced spotting problems in what you do and who you are and how you look, then guess what, that is what your brain is going to gravitate back to.

It doesn't mean those things are true. It means that's what your brain is most practiced at thinking. So think about it this way. Think about if you cross your legs left over right. If you start crossing your legs the opposite way, right over left, you might stay in that position for a while, but once you kind of go unconscious and you're not paying attention anymore to how your legs are crossed, I guarantee, you're going to gravitate back to left over right because that's what feels more comfortable.

But it doesn't feel more comfortable because that's the right way or that's the truth. It feels more comfortable because that's the position that you have more practice sitting in. And that's what I want you to think about with your thoughts that you have practiced.

Whatever you have practiced thinking about yourself, it's not the truth. A lot of it we pick up totally unconsciously. So it's not the truth, it's just what your brain is used to thinking. So it doesn't matter how many people say you're

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amazing or you did a fantastic job or you look great today. Your mind will just keep gravitating back to what you've practiced thinking about and what you continue practice thinking about.

This is why it's so important to pay attention to your thoughts. So if you're trying to create self-worth via other people, so for example, how many people like me, how many people think I'm attractive or smart or whatever, you're always going to be chasing for approval. Because even if you get it, that feeling isn't going to last. It's like water off a duck's back. It rolls right off. It doesn't stick. You just keep on searching because your brain is just gravitating back to what you think about you.

Self-worth isn't created by one person complimenting you or two people or 10 people or 20 people complimenting you. It's created by what you think about yourself. This is really good news. I just want to say that. This is really good news.

When I first heard this, I remember not thinking it was very good news because I was like, well, I only think crap about myself. But guess what? We can understand why that is and you can learn how to change it.

Now, the reason why I think that this gets confusing sometimes is because occasionally, you might initially have a good feeling. You might get this kind of fleeting moment of feeling good when someone says something nice to you.

So maybe you find out someone likes you or you get a compliment from a random stranger, or your boss says to you you did a great job. Sometimes your brain doesn't go right into rejecting it or right into oh, you're just saying that, you have to be nice, or I did a terrible job, or I look awful today.

Sometimes, there is that momentary burst of a good feeling. But it's not because of what the other person said to you. It's because of that thought that appeared in the moment that I guarantee is totally unconscious to you

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right now, but usually sounds like, oh, I can't believe they like me, or really? You think I look good in this picture? Or I can't believe you think I did a good job.

That initial good fleeting moment comes from you and your brain. Not from them. It comes from what you think about yourself when they gave you the compliment, but it's so fast, it's so unconscious, you don't even realize that it was your own brain at work.

You don't even realize that you're the one that created that feel-good moment for yourself. Not the other person. You did that with your mind. You created feeling good in that split second with a thought like, oh, I can't believe they like me. And guess what? You also create feeling bad with a thought like, they don't actually like me, they're just being nice.

So this is how desire confusion was working in that moment when she was saying I like to be chased because it makes me feel worthy. That was the confusion going on there, but let's circle this back to drinking.

Now, I know that this might seem kind of far afield, but really, it's not. People have desire confusion all the time about drinking. I had desire confusion for a very long time when it came to drinking, so let me give you a couple examples.

It can sound like, I just want a drink so I can fit in or feel normal. That is desire confusion. Or maybe, I deserve it after the day I've had, I really need to take the edge off. That's desire confusion. Or it might sound like having a drink is going to help me loosen up and connect. This is also desire confusion.

All of these thoughts, "I just want a drink so I can feel normal, I deserve it after the day I've had, having a drink will help me loosen up," all of these thoughts lead you to believe that what you desire in the moment is alcohol. Guess what? That's not what you're actually desiring.

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You have to stay with me here. Because especially at first, your brain will want to fight this. She doesn't get it, she doesn't know me, she doesn't know who I hang out with, I just really love to drink, I've always really loved wine, you have to stay with me here because your brain will want to fight this.

But you believe in the moment that you're desiring alcohol, but what you're actually desiring is a feeling. You want to feel a certain way. Maybe you want to feel like you belong and you're accepted, or that you have permission to relax, or that you can bond with other people, or a whole host of other things.

We drink to try to feel all different ways, but you have to really hone in on this and see that you're searching for a feeling. Not a drink. And the problem is when you have desire confusion, especially when you have desire confusion when it comes to alcohol, you are barking up the wrong tree because alcohol is never going to produce the lasting feeling that you want.

It's like telling yourself okay, well if I always knew every day that someone new liked me, I would feel totally worthy. No, you wouldn't. You would feel totally dependent on getting approval from people every day. You would feel lacking. That's what's happening with the habit of drinking. You become dependent on the feeling that you think only alcohol can provide, but you're confused because alcohol never provided it in the first place.

What? Yes. Alcohol never provided the feeling in the first place. The temporary change that alcohol produces in your body, it's not actually the feeling you are after. The release of neurotransmitters, the slowing down of your brain, the deadening of your nervous system, that's not actually what you're after.

You're after a different emotion. And whatever temporary changes that alcohol produces, it's always fleeting. It doesn't last. This is why we go

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back for another drink to maintain the buzz. This is why we wake up tomorrow and we're right back where we started, feeling like we need a drink to be normal, feeling like we deserve it at the end of the day and we need a drink to relax, feeling like we need a drink to be more of ourselves, or to open up, or to connect with other people.

It doesn't actually create the thing you truly want. When you don't understand how desire confusion works, you just end up chasing the wrong thing. You end up using all of your energy that you could put to better use, you could put to the use of hey, let's understand the habit and the think-feel-act cycle and the reward system in my brain. You end up squandering all of that energy because you're chasing after the drink.

You're chasing after I just want to be able to drink normally or drink like everyone else, which by the way, just as an aside, I want to say drinking normally and drinking like everyone else doesn't exist. There is no normal drinking. And please hear me here.

I'm not saying that to mean that any amount of drinking is abnormal or wrong. Not at all. When I say there is no normal drinking, what I mean is that what is normal is totally 100% subjective. It's not any fixed amount of ounces or glasses. It's not what the CDC or the World Health Organization says.

Normal is totally subjective. It's totally made up, which means that if you want to change your relationship with alcohol, you have to figure out what is right for you. And when I tell people that, that's when a lot of people really freak out. Because they want a number. They want a quantity. They want ounces.

But guess what? Numbers and quantities and ounces, they're only ever going to disconnect you from your body. And what feels right today in numbers or ounces, it may not necessarily feel right for you tomorrow or the next day or the next week or next month or next year or in 10 years.

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So you have to stop chasing after this thing that doesn't exist, this idea of I just want to be able to drink like everyone else, or drink normally. It's not a thing. But here, if you can understand what you're actually searching for, that you're actually right now suffering from desire confusion, and no surprise because we don't just have desire confusion with alcohol. We have it with relationships, we have it with work, we have it with money, we have it in all parts of our life. We have it with our body.

If you can understand that what you're actually after is a feeling, then you can start focusing on okay, so how do I create that feeling regardless of what's in my drink, or my title at work, or the number on the scale, or whether or not I'm in a relationship, or how much money I have in the bank.

Do you see how it all applies? You can start to question yourself, well, why do I feel awkward when I say no? Why do I feel like I don't have permission to relax or stop working without a glass of wine in my hand? Why do I feel disconnected from people when I'm not drinking?

But you can take it even broader than this. Why do I feel like I can't love my body until I see a certain number? Why do I feel like I'll never be successful until I have a certain amount of money or a certain job title or a certain degree? That's what desire confusion is about. It's pointing you in the wrong direction.

Now here's the thing; if you remove alcohol from the equation, or your body, or money, or the degree, or the job, if you remove all of these things from the equation, which by the way, most people never do because we are sold this lie, oh no, you just need to change the circumstances of your life and then you'll be happier.

If you can remove these things from the equation, if you stop telling yourself, oh, it's alcohol that I desire right now, then guess what will happen? All of a sudden, you'll get access to more interesting answers that will actually take you down the path of change.

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Instead of the answer of I just really want a glass of wine, you'll start to figure out, hey, what's really going on with the habit? What's happening in my mind? What's going on with my thoughts? That's where change is created.

And this is where you always want your attention because inside your mind is the only place where you can change the habit. You can't change alcohol. You can't change the fact that it exists or its molecular content. You can't change your DNA, but you can change your perception of what you're really after when your desire confusion kicks in.

And here is the other thing, it's also just exhausting to chase after "normalcy" or relaxation or connection at the bottom of a wine glass. It's really exhausting to chase after those things that way because it's always fleeting. Whatever change alcohol brings to your body, it's not actually creating the emotion that you want.

No one can ever like you enough for you to like yourself, and you can't ever drink the right amount of alcohol to feel normal or at ease or connected. Because in both scenarios, you're chasing after the wrong thing. That is desire confusion.

And the way out is so simple. All you have to do is ask yourself, how do I want to feel right now? Answer that question, and then start working towards that. That's how you create lasting change. 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](https://RachelHart.com/join). Together, we're going to blow your mind.

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