

Ep #140: Optimal Health



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 140.

Whether you want to drink less or stop drinking, this podcast will help you change the habit from the inside out. We're challenging conventional wisdom about why people drink and why it can be hard to resist temptation. No labels, no judgment, just practical tools to take control of your desire and stop worrying about your drinking. Now, here's your host Rachel Hart.

Well hello everybody. We are going to be talking about optimal health today. This is such an important issue for my clients because I hear them tell me all the time, I just want to be healthy. I just want to be able to see my kids grow up, or have the opportunity to meet my grandkids or spend time with my grandkids, and I've seen my parents or my grandparents, or the people that I love have health issues. I've seen that and I don't want to repeat it. I want to be healthy. It's the one life that I have.

And all of this sounds so great. But the struggle that they have is that in the moment, when they are faced with the desire to drink, being healthy, it just isn't all that compelling. I was actually coaching a woman on this yesterday in the Take A Break program. And we were talking about this very issue, about why she signed up and why she wanted to take a break.

And she said I really want to be healthy. My health is really important. And I asked her, is it actually compelling in the moment when you have that desire for that glass of Chardonnay? And she paused and kind of hesitated and then said a little sheepishly, well it should be. It should be really important.

And I think that's where so many of you are stuck. You want to be healthy. You know that the habit of drinking is negatively impacting your health, but in that moment when you feel the urge, thinking about being healthy tomorrow or next month or next year or 10 years from now just isn't a big enough pull because in that moment you just want the relief that the drink is going to offer.

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You just don't want to feel deprived anymore. You don't want to feel like you're missing you. You don't want to feel stressed or anxious. And that's what ends up winning.

Now, so many of you are beating yourself up over this. You're telling yourself I should just care more about my health. It's the most important thing in the world. I only have one body, one life. But beating yourself up only happens because you don't understand how the brain is working when it comes to your health, which is why I spend so much time in the program explaining to people how the brain works.

It's so important. Because once you really start to understand the different priorities of your lower brain and your higher brain, how they operate differently, how they care about different things, you will start to understand why in the moment, the pull for relief is stronger and faster. And that will always be the case unless you learn how to manage your lower brain with your higher brain.

So you don't need to beat yourself up over this. You just have to understand what's happening in the brain at that moment. But I will tell you the other thing that I have discovered in the Take A Break program. So many of you are using alcohol, you're using a drink to manage health issues.

So you're pouring a drink to help you fall asleep or to cope with chronic pain, or to dull the aches and pains from old injuries. Some of you are even using alcohol to manage symptoms from menopause. And I think it's important to understand why.

We're given so many tools for how to manage pain in terms of sleeping pills and painkillers and ointments, prescriptions. But here's the thing; when none of that works or it doesn't work as well as you want, you start to try to figure out okay, well what else can I turn to? Maybe I can drink something. Maybe I can eat something.

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Sometimes it's so you can kind of dull how you're feeling or go a little unconscious. Sometimes it's so you can try to make your brain believe that you are feeling better than you really are. It's all trying to manage what's happening in your body, but here's the problem. You haven't been given any tools to learn how to manage what's happening in your mind.

And you have to pay attention to both. We can't just look at your health as something that's solely happening in your body. You have to pay attention to what's happening in your mind. And by the way, the mind and the body, although we treat them as if they are separate entities, they are not. They are entwined.

Because this issue is so prevalent, I have noticed so many of you are doing this, I decided that in October, I'm going to run a special bonus course in the Take A Break program on optimal health. Because this is really a tool that I see so many of you guys need.

So if you are relating to what I'm saying, if you really care about your health and you know that it's really important, but it's just not a big enough pull for you in the moment, or if you know that you have fallen into a habit where alcohol is something that you might be using to help fall asleep or to manage any kind of chronic pain or injury, or just maybe you notice that your drinking started to increase around menopause, this is the perfect time to join.

Because when you join, now you'll be able to take this live bonus class with me. It's going to be a multi-part class and really learn how to use the think-feel-act cycle, not just to change the habit of drinking and not just to create the emotional wellbeing that you seek, which both of those things are huge, but how to actually use it to create optimal health.

So if you join today before October 1st, you're going to get all the material that I provide in the program to help you take a 30-day break successfully and actually learn how to change your desire, but you also will get special access to this live bonus class that I'm teaching on optimal health.

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I talk so much about mastering the think-feel-act cycle to create emotional wellbeing so that you're not at the mercy of your urges. And so that you learn how to cope with your negative emotions in a way that is healthy. And a lot of my clients are really surprised to hear me say that you can use the think-feel-act cycle to improve your physical health.

They at first are like, is that really possible? I thought this was just about feeling better emotionally. I thought it was just about my emotions. But listen, emotional management is a huge part of creating optimal health. Especially when you learn how to cope with any kind of pain.

Because here's the thing; you are going to have pain. If you're not in pain right now, you might get sick, you might injure yourself, something will happen. Pain is a part of the human existence. No one teaches us how to deal with it though, other than go get a prescription.

Many, many of my clients created a habit around drinking because they started to use pouring a glass of wine as a way to manage insomnia or manage aches and pains, manage old injuries. And what happens is that if you try to take a break without this skill of understanding how to use the think-feel-act cycle to not just manage your mind but to manage pain as well, then you're going to freak out at first if you no longer have the thing that you've been using to numb your pain, if you can no longer drink in the evening.

And it makes a lot of sense because we think that the tools that we need to manage any kind of physical pain is go see a doctor, go get a prescription, go take a pill. And listen, I'm all for that. I love how science and medicine and doctors can help make us feel better, but let's be honest. It's not a magic pill. You might get a prescription that can turn down the volume of the pain that you're experiencing, maybe from a 10 to a seven, but there's still going to be pain that you need to manage and most of you have no idea what to do.

And so if you try to take a break and you're in this situation, what I find is that without the skill, most people just will go straight back to drinking.

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They'll say well, I didn't like the consequences of my habit but then when I wasn't drinking, I had all this pain that I didn't know how to manage, I had all this insomnia that I didn't know how to manage, or the symptoms of menopause were just kind of through the roof and I didn't know what to do with it and I wanted to just feel better in the moment.

And so they just go straight back. One of the most transformative skills that I teach is how to separate our physical pain from emotional suffering. This is one of the things that I'm going to cover really in depth in this bonus course. Because most of you guys have it all jumbled together.

I want you to think of it this way. You break your arm. There is the physical pain of what's happening in your arm, with your bones and your tissues. The body is working to repair itself. But there is also pain from emotional suffering from what you are thinking. You might be feeling despondent or hopeless. You might be telling yourself that you're never going to get better, you're always going to hurt, and you don't have time to deal with this.

The physical pain and the emotional suffering are not the same thing. Now, when I introduce this concept to a lot of people, at first they turn to me and they're like okay, so I'm supposed to be happy that I broke my arm? And that is not what I'm teaching.

What I'm teaching is imagine if you could separate out the two and imagine if you weren't feeling as despondent or hopeless or frustrated or angry or resentful at your physical pain. Even if you could reduce those negative emotions by the tiniest bit, it actually makes a huge difference in how you feel physically.

And I'll tell you this; most people can reduce them once they learn the skill by a huge amount. Clients are so amazed to see and frankly, I've been amazed to see in my own life how physical pain becomes more manageable when you can start to shift the emotional suffering that you don't even realize you are creating.

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Most of you are just layering emotional suffering on top of physical pain, and then the physical pain becomes harder to bear, which creates more emotional suffering. And it becomes this vicious cycle that is so hard to get out of without knowing how to use think-feel-act, how to manage your mind.

Your brain is just going to register all of this as pain unless you learn how to separate it out, and the learning how to do this will help you feel better but it will also really set you up to start creating optimal health for yourself.

Because optimal health isn't oh, I just never get sick, I never feel any pain. It's knowing how to manage your mind and your body when you do get sick and when you are in pain so that you're not causing more problems for yourself.

You're not causing more negative consequences in the way that you're trying to cope with these things. So let's talk a little bit about optimal health. I'll tell you this; some clients come to me and they know immediately that the habit of drinking is creating a lot of negative consequences for their health. They feel it the next day.

But a lot of you don't. A lot of you come to me and you say a couple glasses, it doesn't really affect me physically. It doesn't impact how I feel. I just don't like that it's become a habit. I just don't like the example that I'm setting for my kids. I just don't like that I'm zoning out on the couch in the evenings instead of making good use of my time.

And I will tell you this; time and time again I work with people who tell me yeah, it doesn't really affect me. And they are shocked, blown away to discover just how much alcohol was affecting how they were feeling every day. They come back to me and they say oh my god Rachel, I had no idea. I had no idea that I was feeling so crappy in the first place. And I can't believe how much better I feel right now.

They're blown away because they didn't even know that they were suffering. Feeling bad just became their baseline that they didn't even realize was a problem. I talk a lot about this in episode 49 of the podcast about settling when it comes to your health and how it happens. And if you

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haven't checked out that podcast, I encourage you to have a listen because it does explain how it's easy to miss some of the physical symptoms.

You start creating this low-level discomfort in your body and it's so regular that your body starts to see it as the new norm. It becomes your new baseline for how you feel. And it, for a lot of people, is just not worth mentioning.

But so many of you have a baseline for your health right now that does not have to be your baseline. You are waking up never feeling rested, you're having kind of chronic issues around your digestion, maybe you have kind of dull headaches every day and you just think well, this is just what life is like. This is just what it's like to get older.

And you have no idea the impact that the habit of drinking has and how it's created this low-level discomfort that is just your norm. It's just your baseline. You end up creating a norm around physical health that does not have to be your norm. You can feel better.

And the reason why this is so easy to is, and this is really important is because your brain believes it already has the explanation for why you feel the way you do. And the explanation is simple. This is just what happens when you get older. The body just breaks down. You just don't feel as good. Getting older means more aches and pains.

I used to be a morning person but not anymore now that I've gotten older. I used to have more energy but not anymore now that I'm 30 or 40 or 50 or 60. Doesn't matter the age. You think you have the explanation and you think that it is aging.

And when it comes to optimal health, a lot of you guys are thinking well, those days are behind me. Now that I'm aging and my body is breaking down and I'm less capable of rejuvenating and my body is less capable of repairing itself, this is how I'm going to feel and I don't feel great, but that's just how it is.

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And so you're just accepting this idea that growing old just means that you're going to have a life of aches and pains and that's just how it is. But here's the thing; when you believe that you have the explanation, oh, it's just because I'm getting older, that's what your brain believes, it just gets to stay on autopilot. It doesn't have to examine the choices that you're making around your body.

And I'm not just talking about the choices you're making around alcohol. I'm talking about all sorts of choices. You don't have to examine how you're really taking care of yourself because you think that you have the explanation for why you feel the way you do and there's nothing you can do about it.

It's so important to pay attention to this, to this built-in excuse for why you think you feel the way you do. Because so many of you are using I'm just getting older to explain away this baseline that you don't need to have. The brain moves on. It sees no need to explore this any further.

And so many of you are settling when it comes to your health and not actually even thinking that optimal health is possible for you for this very reason. Growing older has just become your knee-jerk justification.

You don't realize that you could feel a million times better than you do right now if you started to examine how your drinking and also how so many other habits of food that you eat, the amount of rest that you give yourself, how often you move your body, how much day-to-day stress, anxiety, and overwhelm you feel is playing a role in this baseline.

This is everything. I can't stress how important it is because I can't stress how many of my clients just assume well, this is just what you feel like. I was talking with a client of mine recently who happens to be a doctor. And she said something that just completely blew my mind about this very issue.

So her previous norm is drinking four glasses of wine at night. And she was telling me that she didn't really think that it affected how she felt until she took a break. Then she was like wow, I feel so much better. But not only do

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I feel so much better, I had no idea how bad I was feeling before. And we were talking about this and she said, you know, the major advantage you have when you're getting older that no one ever talks about is your ability to choose what you want homeostasis to be as you age.

Now, homeostasis is simply your body's ability to maintain a state of internal balance and physical wellbeing no matter what is happening. So you can think of it like your body's baseline. So you can't ever prevent yourself from getting sick or from getting injured, but you can choose, and you have so much power to choose your body's baseline.

Your body is keeping you at homeostasis all the time regardless of what you are doing because homeostasis is how it keeps you alive. So think about it with your internal temperature. The internal temperature of the human body is 98.6 and it hovers kind of around that, up or down a couple degrees, no matter what you're doing.

No matter if it's really hot outside or it's really cold, your body is going to make you either sweat or make you shiver to maintain homeostasis. Your body is determined to keep your internal temperature at a constant state, regardless of what's happening around you. It's not just with your temperature though.

Your body is doing this with proper water balance and healthy blood pressure and stable levels of sugar and salt and calcium, protein, fat, oxygen, all of these things. It's also constantly eliminating toxins to your urinary and digestive tracts.

But when you have a habit around drinking and it doesn't matter if it's a daily habit or just bingeing on the weekends, you are continually overstimulating parts of your brain and parts of your body, making it more difficult for your body to keep this baseline and to return to this balance that it needs in order for you to stay alive.

Because no matter what your drinking looks like, your brain and your body is always concerned with maintaining this homeostasis. Now, we don't think

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about this a lot. We don't think about the importance of our stomach or our small intestines or our liver, kidneys, our lungs, our heart. We don't think of all that they're doing every day, day in, day out, just to maintain homeostasis, just to keep us alive until one of them stops functioning the way that they should.

And then suddenly we go oh, I guess my kidney was kind of important. I just never really thought about the job that it was doing. But drinking puts a huge stressor on maintaining your body's baseline. Your body already has all this work to do to maintain homeostasis, even if you never consume a drop of alcohol in your life.

But when you do start consuming it, your body immediately has to turn to manage the alcohol that you consume because of course, it's a toxin that the body has to get rid of immediately. And listen, it's not just the drinking because think about what happens when you're drinking.

Are you eating a lot of extra calories? Are you maybe deciding to smoke a couple cigarettes? Are you falling asleep on the couch? What are you doing because your inhibitions were lowered? So the body has to manage the dehydration and the extra calories, and maybe the cigarettes that you were smoking, and the interference with sleep on top of everything that it's doing just to keep you alive and maintain homeostasis.

This is really important. It's like you are putting your body through a fire drill. It's chugging away all the time keeping you alive, and then you start to consume alcohol and the body's like oh my god, I got to stop what I'm doing, I got to get rid of this. This is really important. It takes a toll on your body. And it starts to become your new norm. Your baseline drops.

Now listen, optimal health is available at any age by choosing your baseline. It's a choice that you can make. What do you want your homeostasis to be? What are you going to do to consciously decide what you want your body to have to handle? Because it's going to be working whether or not you want it to or not.

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So what kind of environment do you want it to be working in? This is the miraculous thing that most people never pay any attention to because we don't know that we can. No one tells us. You get to choose. You get to choose as you age what you want your baseline to be. But it's very hard to choose optimal health when you don't even realize that the baseline with which you're working is compromised.

And this is the beauty of taking a break. You get a glimpse of what is possible. Because you're not just giving yourself a break from drinking. You're giving your mind and your body a break. It has to do so much work for you every day. You're giving your mind and body a rest from constantly having to go on high alert and run the fire drill with alcohol.

You get this glimpse of what is possible and how you can feel better. Now, this glimpse might be harder for you at first to see if you have fallen into the habit of using alcohol to manage insomnia or chronic pain or an old injury or going through menopause. Because you take a break to give your body a rest, and so it can start to return to a regular baseline but then you're left trying to figure out well, how do I cope with not being able to fall asleep?

How do I cope with this old injury? How do I deal with my chronic TMJ? Whatever it is for you. And this is where so many people get stuck and they'll say Rachel, I took a break because I wanted to change the habit, I wanted to learn how to change my desire, but ultimately, I wanted to feel better. And now I feel kind of worse and I don't know what to do.

And it's because they haven't yet learned how to separate out physical pain from emotional pain or how to use the think-feel-act cycle to actually manage pain so that they can feel better. This will be an additional barrier to returning to your baseline, returning to the homeostasis that you want, that you choose, if you don't learn how to cope with it differently.

And the problem is that when you use alcohol to cope with any kind of chronic pain or sleep or injury or anything like that, it's even more important for you that you actually choose your body's baseline because it's already compromised.

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That really is why it's so important. And that's why I want to teach this class for you guys in October in the Take A Break program. Because I see this for so many of you who really care about your health. You want to have a long life and not just set a good example but be around for your kids or have the time that you want to have with your husband now that you're retired.

Whatever it is, you want to feel better but you don't understand how to get there because of the habit that you've developed around drinking. Optimal health is not just hey, what did you eat or did you work out, did you go to the gym. Those things are important but it starts with how you feel. It starts with understanding that all the actions that you take in connection to your health are driven by your emotional state and driven by what you are thinking.

And if you are struggling with any of these things, insomnia, chronic pain, or any kind of physical ailment, it's going to be harder for you to get to optimal health without mastering these tools. Otherwise you're going to be in this situation of always feeling like it's a tradeoff. Okay, well I have to either choose to change the habit or choose to feel good, even though you know the habit of making you feel worse in the long run.

But it doesn't have to be a tradeoff. If you only take one thing away from today's podcast, I hope it is this. Stop telling yourself that the way that you feel, it's just because I'm getting older. So many of you are limiting yourself, you are limiting your ability to experience and create optimal health because your brain is believing that that is the reason and then it doesn't look any further.

That is never the truth. You can create optimal health for yourself at any age. Alright, so if you want to go through this class where I'm going to really break this down in depth all throughout October, if you want to do this process live with me, make sure you go to rachelhart.com/join and sign up for the Take A Break program before October 1st and you will be able to get access to this bonus course that I am running. I cannot wait to see you guys inside. See you next week.

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Okay, listen up, changing your drinking is so much easier than you think. Whether you want to drink less or not at all, you don't need more rules or willpower. You need a logical framework that helps you understand and, more importantly, change the habit from the inside out. It starts with my 30-day challenge. Besides the obvious health benefits, taking a break from drinking is the fastest way to figure out what's really behind your desire. This radically different approach helps you succeed by dropping the perfectionism and judgment that blocks change. Decide what works best for you when it comes to drinking. Discover how to trust yourself and feel truly powered to take it or leave it. Head on over to RachelHart.com/join and start your transformation today.