

## Ep #141: Health Avoidance



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #141: Health Avoidance

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 141.

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. I'm going to tell you something. I am so excited for October. This is one of my very favorite months of the year. You know, you guys have probably heard me talk about how I grew up in Connecticut, and I just think that New England is made for fall. I love changing leaves, I love apple cider, I love pumpkin picking, which by the way, I had this funny conversation with my husband the other day.

We live in California now and I was talking about going to get a pumpkin. And he said oh yeah, you go to a pumpkin patch. And then he started describing a pumpkin patch to me, and it was not a pumpkin patch. It was like a tent in a parking lot with pumpkins. But then also bouncy castles. And I was like, wait, what? That's not a pumpkin patch. A pumpkin patch is when you go to a patch in a ground and you get a pumpkin.

So we had very different understandings of what a pumpkin patch meant. But I will tell you, even though I live in California now, I am starting to love what October means here. So I still haven't totally figured out the weather, but September is usually one of our warmest months and November is often when the rainy season starts if it decides to rain at all this year.

And so October's kind of like a shoulder month and you don't know, is it going to be warm? Are we going to get rain? Who knows? But I still love October and I still think a pumpkin patch is when you go to an actual farm and get a pumpkin from the ground. Sorry honey.

Anyway, I decided to do today's podcast, which is all about health avoidance in the month of October in honor of my aunt Sue. So my aunt

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Sue, she was kind of like a fairy godmother to me. I was so lucky growing up in Connecticut that I was surrounded by family, and she and her husband lived about 10 minutes down the road.

And she was just a really amazing presence in my life. My aunt Sue never had any kids of her own and she really was kind of like a fairy godmother to me. She was also one of these women that's just so good at everything she does. So she knew how to throw the perfect party and she was amazing in the kitchen. She was a fabulous gardener and a fabulous quilter and seamstress. And she was also incredibly worldly.

She was always traveling and she loved to travel and study languages and try new things. She read all the time and loved music and loved art. And I was so lucky because she really was determined to share all of this with me and my sister. She was always taking us on trips. She was always taking us to museums and performances.

And when I was 16, she actually took me on my very first trip to Europe. We went to Paris, which was still like, the most amazing gift that I could have gotten as a 16-year-old. And I was thinking about her because about 10 years ago, she got a cold that just wouldn't go away and she had that cold for months before she finally went to the doctor.

There was just too much going on and she said it wasn't a big deal and she had travel on her schedule. But when her husband finally convinced her to go, the doctors found that she had breast cancer and it had spread to her lungs and it was actually far advanced by the time that they found it.

And my aunt Sue was gone six months later. I didn't think that I was going to get really emotional but here I am. You know, I think of her in October because this is the month where everything goes pink for breast cancer awareness, and I can't help but think of her.

Of course, we would never know what would have happened if she had went to the doctor sooner, but I so wish that she had because she never

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got to meet my husband, she never got to meet my baby, she never got to see me become a coach and see the business that I created.

But here's the thing; I'm guilty of this too. I have also in my life put off going to the doctor when I knew that I should be going. And sometimes it was because I said I didn't have time, but a lot of the time it was because I was afraid of what the news might be.

There were times in my life in my 20s when I knew that I should be going to the doctor and getting tested for STDs and I put it off and put it off and put it off. Or times where I knew, you should really take a pregnancy test, Rachel. And I was so paralyzed by the fear of the potential results that I just kept delaying and delaying.

And I know that a lot of you out there can identify with this. You are also at times in health avoidance. You are ignoring the physical symptoms of what is going on, you're ignoring the need to go to the doctor, and it usually happens for two reasons.

One, because you're so afraid of the news that you might get, and two, a lot of times because you're afraid to be honest with a doctor or a nurse or any kind of health professional about what your drinking looks like. And for a lot of you, it's some combination of the two.

I can't even tell you the number of friends, not even clients, just friends who have gone to the doctor for a routine checkup, maybe it's a routine pap smear, or a mammogram, or a colonoscopy, and the doctor finds something that could be suspicious.

And so they have to get a whole 'nother round of tests and wait for those results and in between the time of their original appointment and waiting for either the second test or the second round of test results, they go down a rabbit hole of eating more and drinking more and just kind of freaking out because they have all this fear about what the news could be and they don't know what to do with it.

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So they're just kind of sitting in fear and using food and using alcohol as a way to try to escape it. They're sitting there with all the what if's. What if I get the terrible news? And I have known people who didn't even end up going to their second appointment. They just never showed back up. They found an excuse to cancel.

That is a real thing that so many of you struggle with and so many of you have done yourself. What's going on here with health avoidance is that you're actually just avoiding a circumstance. So the test results or the findings, or even just telling your doctor what your true consumption of alcohol looks like is trying to avoid a circumstance.

There is no such thing as terrible news or terrible results or drinking that is shameful. But we don't think that. We think that the information, we think that the facts of the situation is just too shameful or too much to bear, when really, what's going on, what's too much to bear and what's creating all this shame is our thinking about that circumstance.

This is why the think-feel-act cycle is so important. Because what will happen when you don't know how to use it to manage your mind, you will start catastrophizing and you will start delaying and you will avoid your health. You will be in this situation where you're actually hiding out from information and hiding out from the help that you need and you're not going to feel any better.

In fact, you may just go deeper into the very activities that are not serving you. Because now you have this thing that is gnawing at you but that you refuse to look at. That is health avoidance. And the key is to learn how to use the think-feel-act cycle to see that you don't ever, ever need to avoid information.

In fact, avoiding information, what you think is making you safe is actually making you more unsafe. Because when you're avoiding the facts of a situation, you can't choose the correct course of action. You just bury your head in the sand. What you need to practice is learning how to use the think-feel-act cycle to get out of health avoidance so that you can have your

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back no matter what the news is, no matter what you're going to share with the doctor.

When you believe that you are capable of handling any piece of information about your health, you won't ever hide from it. Because a lot of times, it's not even just results that we're avoiding. It's not even going in for a regular physical because you don't want to answer questions about how much you drink.

I want you to think about this. How many times have you lied to your doctor or when you're doing an intake form with the nurse about your drinking and what it really looks like? We're so afraid of being found out. So you end up feeling like you're leading this double life and hiding the truth from other people when all you're hiding is data.

That is what it is. What you drink, how much you drink, how often you drink, it is just data. But we're so afraid of letting people know what the real story is because we don't even want to know the real story. We don't even want to look at the data.

You know, or maybe you get test results back that actually is cause for concern. And what happens? You jump right into shame. You immediately start saying ugh, I brought this upon myself, it's my own fault, my own stupidity, my own selfishness, my own recklessness. This is the reason why I have these results in my life. You immediately blame yourself.

And it happens because we are told that changing a habit, including the habit of drinking is just a matter of knowing better. So people say this to me all the time. I know that I shouldn't do this and I don't know why that isn't enough. Well, it's not enough because you don't actually understand what's driving the habit.

It's not enough to know better. You have to actually see what's fueling the habit and it isn't because a glass of Chardonnay tastes good. And it isn't because you're so stressed out. It's what's happening in your mind, what's happening with your thoughts. That's the only way to change a habit.

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It's not about knowing better. It's about knowing how to think differently. It's about knowing how to manage your mind, which is a skill that no one ever teaches us. So what happens when maybe you get results that are something that means you need to take action?

You might even just start the cycle of hiding and looking for relief again. The cycle of blaming yourself for any circumstances about your health is a cycle that leaves your health worse off in the long run because you will go into shame and we will hide there, and then after a while what will happen is you just start looking for relief. And guess what your favorite place is for relief? Pour a glass of wine.

Another thing that I see a lot of my clients do that is really connected to health avoidance is they're so good about making sure that every member of their family gets checkups and regular visits to the eye doctor and the dentist, and if anything is ever wrong, they take them immediately to the best specialist.

But when it comes to how they treat themselves, they don't do any of this. They avoid going to the doctor, they don't go to regular checkups, they are always saying well, I just can't afford to take time off or things are too busy. They delay even going to a physical therapist when they're injured or they go to the physical therapist and they get the exercises and they never do them. That is health avoidance.

And I want you to think about this. We don't ever do this with the people we love. With the people we love, we always believe that their health is paramount because we love them and we want to have more of them and more time with them. But when it comes to ourselves, what do you do?

I used to do this a lot. Oh, that can wait. I'll put it off. And then what would happen? You put it off and put it off until you get really sick. Maybe you even end up hospitalized. And despite that, despite understanding that you shouldn't put your health off, that you shouldn't be in avoidance, it's so easy to just go right back into falling into the trap right again, of avoiding, even if you end up in the hospital.

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Even if you got really, really sick. Even if your injury got so much worse. You just fall right back into the trap because no one is teaching you why you're in avoidance or how to manage your mind about it.

This really is the tension. Everyone wants to be in optimal health. We all want to live a long life and have time with the people that we care most about and be able to make use of the time that we have on the planet. But then we don't know how to take actions that are aligned with this, so we drink too much and we eat too much and we don't take time off when we're sick and we put off going to the doctor, and we're not honest with people in our lives about what our actual habits look like, much less honest with ourselves.

And this is the tension. I'll tell you, I've actually worked with a lot of clients who will tell me that they sometimes wake up in the middle of the night and they have this kind of fear of dying, fear of death. I used to have this too. And would lie awake thinking in bed like, oh my god, what am I doing with my life? I haven't been using my time well. There's so much time that I've wasted. There's so much that I want to do and am I ever going to do it?

And I will tell you that this is a really fascinating thought to watch unfold in the think-feel-act cycle. Because if you're thinking oh my god, I'm so freaked out that I'm going to die, I haven't made good use of time, or that the people I love are going to die, we're thinking that because what we want is more life. More time to experience the world.

But when we think those thoughts, we feel scared. When you feel scared, you worry, you catastrophize, and sometimes you might even think more morbid thoughts. That's what you're actually doing. That's how you're showing up.

And so here's the fascinating thing; the time in life that you so desperately want to have more of, that's why we're thinking all those thoughts in the first place because we're thinking god, I want more life. We end up taking time away from the life that we have because we're spending all this time worrying and catastrophizing and thinking about a terrible future.

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So you actually end up in a situation with thoughts like these where you aren't living your life. You aren't living it to the fullest. You aren't making the most out of the time that you have and the time with your loved ones because you're so worried about losing it.

And that is no way to live. I think about this with my aunt Sue. I think about how long she put off going to the doctor and I don't know why exactly she did that, but I know that she only finally went when my uncle insisted that he just put his foot down, she had to go.

And I think about what if her health had been her number one priority? She took care of so many people in her life. She took care of me in such an amazing way, but what if her health had been her number one priority? Maybe it would have been the exact same outcome. Of course, we never know. But maybe not.

You know, the reason why I think that health avoidance is such an important thing is because I see how so many of you are in it and you are sabotaging the life that you want to lead. So last week I was talking about optimal health on the podcast and this special course that I'm going to be teaching all month long in the Take A Break program.

So this is my 30-day program if you want to take a break from drinking and this course is all about how to use the think-feel-act cycle to manage your mind and get out of health avoidance so you can start creating optimal health. Because I will tell you, so many of you started using a drink as a way to fall asleep or cope with an injury or chronic pain or even to manage the symptoms of menopause.

And so changing your drinking requires – it requires that you learn new ways to manage your physical health and manage these symptoms. Otherwise, what will happen is you'll try to change the habit, you'll try to take a break, and you'll feel totally lost without having the drink to cope with insomnia or to cope with pain.

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And that's why so many people can't figure out how to change the habit. I will tell you that my clients are always so surprised at how effective the think-feel-act cycle is at actually managing physical pain. They are really amazed by it but they have to get out of health avoidance first. They have to get out of the fear of knowing. They have to stop treating the circumstance, the information, the facts of their health or the facts of their drinking as if that is the problem.

They have to get out of the fear of being honest with themselves and others. Because really, the truth is never detrimental. But you also have to get out of treating your own health and wellbeing as if it can wait, it can take a backseat, everybody else's is a priority, everyone else's is more important than your own because that's never the case. Your health is always the most important.

So if this sounds like you, I really encourage you to sign up to take this live course with me all throughout the month of October. It is going to help you get out of health avoidance, teach you how to use the think-feel-act cycle to actually start to manage physical pain and anything that you've been using a drink to manage up until this point, and it's going to show you how to get into optimal health and how to start creating that in your life.

Because I will tell you, when I start talking about health and health avoidance and these issues, people can get kind of freaked out. But I want you to know that your body has an amazing ability to heal itself, especially when you take a break from drinking.

Your liver can actually start to repair itself. Your blood pressure will start to lower. Your immune system actually strengthens. It's crazy that even one drink, one drink can weaken your body's ability to fight germs for 24 hours after you've had that drink.

You will be able to drop weight because here's the thing; it's not just that alcohol is empty calories. It ramps up your appetite. It lowers your inhibitions so it makes it easier for you to say yes to all of the things that are actually adding weight.

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And when you take a break from drinking, it helps your brain. It improves your memory and your cognition and your problem-solving skills. This is what I know. Your drinking matters. It matters way more than you think when it comes to your health. It matters way more than just how do I feel in the morning. It matters so much.

And you know what, breast cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers for women. And drinking increases your risk. I was looking at it and I could not believe the statistics on this. Compared with women who don't drink at all, women who have three drinks per week, just three have a 15% higher risk of breast cancer.

And it doesn't matter if you don't binge drink. It doesn't matter if you're not drinking to get drunk. It doesn't matter if you're only drinking red wine. This applies across the board. And with every additional drink, the risk increases by 10%.

Listen, this is not to say that alcohol is bad. This is not to say that we have to demonize it. This is not to say that you should never drink again. But you have to really be able to make an honest assessment of how it is affecting you. And if you don't want to tell your doctor how much you drink, if you don't want to be honest with yourself about how much you drink, then that is worth looking at.

I will tell you that one of the reasons why this is kind of confusing is because we hear all the time about the protective benefits of drinking. Especially the protective benefits of wine. I was talking about this with my clients recently about this controversy in France last year when some of that country's leading doctors and public health advocates actually wrote a public letter saying that the claims of the French wine industry was making that wine was somehow different from other types of alcohol were just wrong.

They were saying it's exactly the same thing. Drinking wine is exactly the same thing as drinking beer or vodka or whiskey. There is zero difference

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when it comes to what's happening in your body. What matters is the amount of alcohol drunk. It doesn't matter what forms it comes in.

And there is a burden on your body when it comes to alcohol consumption, and that burden can easily, easily, easily outweigh any kind of protective effects. And it was fascinating because people were outraged. This even went to the level of the prime minister. This was a big deal in France.

And the outrage was really based on don't you dare say this thing that we enjoy and is part of our culture and part of our identity is something that is bad for us. We want to hear that it's protective. We want to hear that it's helpful. We want to hear that the thing that I am doing is benefiting me.

And here is the thing; certainly the people that are selling alcohol want us to believe all of these things. There was – just in our own country, in the US, just this year, the National Institute of Health was forced to shut down a study on the benefits of moderate drinking when it came to light that the study was actually funded by the alcohol industry.

So listen, the thing that I want you to take away from this is that you have to actually figure out what is working for you. If you're just looking at a headline that comes across your news feed that says the protective benefits of red wine and you're using that to justify your drinking, you're in health avoidance.

But I also don't want you to start demonizing alcohol. That is not the point here. The fact of the matter is that when you start demonizing something, that can actually be even more detrimental when it comes to changing the habit because what happens when we demonize something that we still want, that we still have desire for? It turns into the forbidden fruit.

You end up having more desire for it. So you have to pay attention to that. We can just look at alcohol neutrally. We can just look and see what's happening with your health. But the other thing to keep in mind is that the way that we drink alcohol is not the way that we did 100 years ago. It's not the way that we even did 20 years ago.

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It's not just that food has been supersized. Alcohol has been supersized right along with it and nobody talks about that. We consume it in much larger portions and much more frequently than we used to. All you have to do is look at the change in size of wine glasses.

A standard serving of wine is five ounces, and glasses 20 years ago, they used to hold just a little bit more than five ounces. They were about six ounces in size. So that serving went right up to the top of the glass. You were looking at it and you thought I have a full glass of wine.

But now in today's wine glasses that are huge, sometimes they're 15 ounces, 17 ounces, 23 ounces. You pour five ounces of wine into that, it looks like a really paltry pour. So what happens? The brain thinks oh, I'm not getting enough, so we pour more. We drink more.

It has been supersized and alcohol is more abundant, more accessible, more mainstream and in more places than ever before, and you have to pay attention to that. What matters – I always tell people in my program, what matters is not a government recommendation. It's not what you read in the New York Times. It's not a headline. It's not even what I'm saying.

What matters is the effect that your drinking currently has on you. What matters is you, the individual. It doesn't matter how the same amount of alcohol affects your husband or your sister or your best friend. That doesn't matter at all. That's not where you should be looking. You should be looking to yourself.

But here's what happens. We're so disconnected from our bodies, we're so afraid of any information and the truth and we're so stuck in health avoidance that we don't want to look. We don't even want to go to the doctor. We don't even want to be truthful with people.

So here's the thing; this month is breast cancer awareness. I think it is the perfect time to make a commitment to your health, to get out of health avoidance, to start having the kind of health that you want. And if you know that you use a drink as a way to cope with insomnia, or to cope with an

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injury or chronic pain, or just stress and overwhelm, now is the time for you to start taking a different action, and that's what taking a 30-day break in the Take A Break program can help you do.

Because so many of you out there know that you want your health to be a priority and you want to change the habit but you don't know how to do it and that's what I'm going to be teaching you all this month. All throughout the month of October.

I'm going to be teaching live classes where you can learn how to use the think-feel-act cycle, not just to change the habit, not just to create emotional wellbeing, which PS, those things are amazing, but to use it to create optimal health and get out of health avoidance.

So if you join in October, you're going to get all the regular materials that will help you take a successful 30-day break, plus you're going to get access to this special live course that is going on every week of the month.

So if you want to do the process live with me, if you want to get out of health avoidance and start creating optimal health, just go to [rachelhart.com/join](https://rachelhart.com/join) and sign up today so that you don't miss any of it. There is no better time to start getting out of health avoidance and creating the kind of health that you want. I cannot wait to see you guys inside. I'll see everybody next week, and I miss you so much, aunt Sue.

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](https://RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.

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