

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 148.

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.

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 148. 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, everybody. We are going to talk about harnessing the impossible today. I love this idea, I love this concept. I want all of you to learn how to do this because it truly is a skill that you can master and it will change everything for you.

I think one of the places we have to start before I introduce this concept to you is just talk about how it is we go about deciding when to change habits. How do we go about deciding? Now, what I did for a lot of my life is think about what I believed to be the right time for change.

Now of course, we have the new year, 2020 is going to be coming up in a little bit, and a lot of people think that the new year is the right time for change. Maybe it's the first of the month, maybe it's a Monday, maybe it is the start of a new season. Whatever it is for you, think about how it is that you decide when it is the time to change a habit.

This is an important first step because you have probably heard me talk about on the podcast that there is no magical right time. You are no more

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

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

likely to succeed because you start on a Monday or the first of the month or New Year's Day.

And in fact, when you understand how the think-feel-act cycle works, you understand that these thoughts, "I'll wait until Monday, I'll wait until the first of the month," they are actually delay tactics that the brain is using. "I should wait" is the belief that some times of the year are better than others.

But here's what actually happens; that belief isn't true. It's just a permission-giving thought. It's an excuse that your brain wants you to believe because as long as you believe it, as long as you believe that starting on a Monday is better than a Thursday, and starting on the first is better than starting on the 12th, as long as you believe that, your brain will delay taking action.

And so you will continue to engage in the habit. You will say, "Okay, well I'll start later so tonight I can open the bottle of wine, I can dig into the cake, I can turn on Netflix, I can hit buy now on Amazon." Whatever it is. So your brain keeps getting the reward.

I'll start later is a thought that actually fuels the habit. So it's incredibly important that you understand how this works in the think-feel-act cycle. You think the thought, "I'll start later, I'll start Monday, I'll start on the first, I'll start in the new year," you believe that thought, that creates the feeling of permission, so then what do you do?

You don't take action. You don't start change right now. And you know, you have to really be honest with yourself about what happens when Monday or the next month or the new year rolls around. Are you taking action? I know that some of you aren't because I was not. That was often something that I was just believing that I would start later, but then I would just delay, delay, delay.

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

Or are you taking action but then it's really short-lived? And then if that's the case, why is that? The reason of course is because another excuse always comes down the pike. So even if you do take action on Monday or the first or the new year, then another excuse might come.

“Well, this is too hard. I've got too much going on. This isn't the right time.” You just have one excuse after another. And understanding this piece alone, there is no magical time and the belief that there is a right time actually just fuels the habit, this is huge. And it's why I actually set up my Take A Break program, which is a 30-day break from drinking, I set it up so that you can start any time so that you can stop believing the excuse that you need the right time in order to be successful.

But here's what I want you to know when it comes to harnessing the impossible, which is what we're talking about today. There is one important caveat to this and it's a little bit of an advanced coaching topic. But here we go. I think you guys are ready for this.

There are certain periods that can actually help you make faster and more profound progress when it comes to habit change. Now, these periods are not linked to a day. They are linked to what you think about the time period. That is a very important distinction. But when you specifically choose to work on change, work on changing a habit like drinking when your brain believes that it will be impossible for you to succeed, that is when you can supercharge your results.

Now, this is what it might sound like. I can't not drink at my best friend's wedding. I can't take a break from drinking while I'm on vacation or while I'm traveling through Europe. I can't say no on my birthday or my wedding anniversary. I can't not drink when my best friend is in town. This is what it sounds like. You get the picture.

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

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

When your brain specifically tells you that you cannot be successful in certain situations, that's when you have the potential for growth that is enormous. And the reason is so simple. When you take a break during this period and you are successful, you have immediately shown yourself that what your brain told you was impossible was actually possible.

So then your brain, this thought that you couldn't do it turns out not to be true. The thought was incorrect. It was wrong. And listen, when you do that enough, as I have in my life because let me tell you, I had a whole long list of impossible situations where it would be impossible for me not to drink, you start to learn something really important.

You start to learn that your brain is not always a reliable source of what you are capable of doing. Your brain is not always the arbiter of truth. Sometimes the thoughts that you think are just plain old wrong.

And learning this is such an amazing thing because then instead of just blindly following your brain and listening to whatever it says, you start to see the power of questioning your thoughts, which really is what the think-feel-act cycle is all about, is looking at your thoughts from a place of being curious and inquisitive and questioning them.

When you teach yourself that the impossible is possible, you learn how to stop treating your thoughts like they're the gospel. And I will tell you, there is no skill that is more important than that. Now, it kind of freaks some people out at first. I have some clients who will say, "Okay, but if I can't trust what I'm thinking, how am I supposed to know what I can trust?"

It feels very unsettling at first, and I think the reason why it is unsettling is because we don't have a lot of practice distinguishing between what our lower brain wants, that inner toddler, what she wants, and what your higher brain, what your consciousness wants.

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

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

Both are always there. It's just that the toddler tends to be really loud and throw tantrums, so it's easy to miss what your higher brain, what your consciousness wants as well. Being able to do this, being able to parse this out, proving your brain wrong, these are part of how you harness the impossible so that you can supercharge your own results.

And I will tell you, it's incredible because once you start doing what your brain wanted you to believe was impossible, your whole entire world is going to open up. The way I have watched this happen in my life has been profound.

The way I have watched it happen in my clients' lives has been profound because all of a sudden, you start this work just believing I just want to be able to change my drinking, I'm so sick of it. And then all of a sudden, you see that you're learning skills that carry through with everything in your life. With your job, your relationships, your family, the whole world really.

Now, you have to really be careful not to confuse harnessing the impossible with proving that you don't have to drink in certain situations. People will say a lot to me, they'll say, "Listen, I know I don't have to drink. I know I don't need to drink at this wedding or this event or on vacation, but I want to."

Or I'll watch people tell me, and I also did this myself, I'll watch people kind of dip their toe into the pool of not drinking and then call it a day. So it's like okay listen, I didn't drink on date night with my husband that was a big deal. I thought it was going to be horrible and it wasn't horrible. But now can we go back to drinking? Can we just learn how to drink less on date night?

And that's what's happening is that you just kind of dip your toe in the pool of not drinking and you prove that it's possible not to do it. You prove that it's possible for you to go on date night and not drink, but then you want to

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

immediately go right back to drinking. You just want to drink differently. And you have to ask yourself why.

I always start with my clients. I always start by saying, "Okay, so did you enjoy it?" And they'll say, "Yeah, it was fine." And I'll ask them again, "Yeah, but did you enjoy it?" And they'll say, "Yeah, it was great." And you can kind of tell from the tone of their voice that it maybe was not so great.

And then I say, "Did you have as much fun as if you had been drinking?" And that's when they look at me in this way, they kind of cock their head like, what? Of course not. What are you talking about? And that's the moment that I always know that what they were really believing was impossible was not not drinking.

They kind of thought that they could do that. What they truly believe and still in that moment are believing is impossible is that you can have a better time when you aren't drinking. The idea of enjoying yourself, not only just as much but more, that's what for so many of you right now you think is impossible and frankly, for some of you, it hasn't even crossed your mind.

I know this because I was in your shoes. And I always tell them, and I'll tell you, it's not enough to prove that you can say no to a drink in certain situations. If you really want to change the habit, if you really want to make true sustained long-lasting change, you have got to take it to the next level. You have got to take it to the level where your brain believes that something truly is impossible, and for most of you, that's having more fun when you're not drinking.

I will tell you, this is what has been so transformative for me. It wasn't just proving that I could say no to a drink in certain situations. It was teaching my brain that I could have more fun. That I truly did not need a drink to enjoy myself. Proving the impossible or what I thought was impossible with alcohol opened up my life to proving the impossible over and over again.

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

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

And I just keep doing it. I keep doing things - I talk about this with my husband where I'm like, "Can you believe I just did this? Can you believe that this just happened?" I'm doing it over and over because the more that I prove that what I believed was impossible is actually possible, the more that all of these preconceived limitations that I have about myself and what I can do in the world, they just seem to fall away. And that is amazing.

I've talked about this before a little bit on the podcast but I want to just kind of refresh for some of you how does the impossible become possible. How does something that you believe cannot happen, happen? How do you make that thing happen?

It doesn't matter if it's the invention of the light bulb or landing on the moon or having a super computer that fits in your pocket, or discovering that you can have more fun when you're not drinking. How does it happen? And the answer is just really simple. Someone has to believe that it could be possible.

That is how the think-feel-act cycle works. If you believe that something is impossible, it will stay impossible for you. You will not ever be able to create the result that it is possible because when you believe that something is impossible, you feel defeated. And when you feel defeated, you don't take action. And without action, you cannot create a new result. Something simply cannot become possible if you believe it is impossible.

Now, this doesn't mean that when you set out to disprove a thought, disprove something like, I can't have more fun when I'm not drinking. This doesn't mean that you think it's going to be a piece of cake. What I'm talking about is you have a glimmer, a little inkling that you might be able to be successful.

And I think, I hope, that's what this podcast does and is for a lot of you, that you hear me talk about my past, you hear me talk about how much I used

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

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

to love drinking, and now you hear me talk about the fact that I don't desire it at all; not when I'm sitting by a fire, not at a party, not when I'm celebrating, not at fancy dinners, not when I'm in Paris, it does not matter. My desire is simply gone.

And I think that that helps give a lot of you that little glimmer or inkling or idea that maybe what feels impossible right now with your drinking, it could actually be possible. Now, a lot of you are doing the opposite. What you are doing is you are focusing on the past. You are looking at all your past attempts when it comes to trying to change the habit of drinking. Everything that hasn't worked, you're looking at the past and it's kind of like you're reading tea leaves and you think that you can define the future from the past.

But I want you to know that the past is not predictive of what is possible for you in your future. Past failures are not an indicator of future success. You've got it backwards. I had this backwards for so long. Your failures can simply be how you learned what doesn't work. But the key is learning because what I was not doing for a very long time was learning from what wasn't working. I was just finding things that didn't work and then using them to beat myself up.

And this is really what happens for so many of you when you attempt to change your drinking is that you're just replaying what you've done before. What you've done before is willpower and gritting your teeth and isolating and hiding out and making excuses with people, saying, "Oh I'm sick," or, "Oh, I'm on antibiotics." And what you have done before is just fixating on saying no, no, no, no. That's where all your focus has been.

And maybe it lasts for a while, but then you give in. It doesn't work, and then you wonder why it doesn't work. And then, at some point down the line, you try the same thing again. The reason why it's not working is

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

because you're not learning from what's happening. And that's not your fault. That's because no one's ever shown you how to learn from it.

Harnessing the impossible requires learning. You have to really understand whatever your brain thinks simply cannot be done. You cannot do it. You have to think about what that means for you when it comes to the habit of drinking. Where is your brain telling you that something is impossible? And then you have to go about disproving the thoughts that are telling you, you can't do it.

But there is an important caveat; you must do this with a new understanding of how to fail. This is the piece that is missing for so many of you. This is why I really focus on this. So much in the work that I do in my Take A Break program is learning, how do you fail in a new way? How do you change your relationship with failure?

You harness the impossible by learning what doesn't work. And instead of just repeating what doesn't work over and over again and then beating yourself up, which is what I did for so long, I just tried to go back to willpower over and over and over again. And it kept not working and I kept using it as a reason to beat myself up.

Instead of doing that, you don't repeat what doesn't work. You start to find what are new alternatives. And that means really getting to the root cause of the habit. And the root cause is always a thought in your mind. The root cause is not the alcohol in front of you.

Now, the reason why so many of us don't ever learn to do this, don't even know that we can do this when it comes to failure is because we aren't given any other alternative. The predominant narrative out there around why people drink too much is really simple; you've got to admit that you're an alcoholic and admit that you have a disease, period, the end.

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

Now, listen, that does not resonate with so many people, and it doesn't resonate with so many people's experiences. It certainly didn't resonate with mine. It didn't resonate with the fact of, like, "Okay, well why is my drinking really unpredictable? Why am I able sometimes to have two glasses and call it a night and other times I don't know what the heck happened?" What's going on there?

Why is it that someone's drinking can change over time and under different circumstances? So maybe when you're around certain people or in certain situations, you find that your drinking looks different. How is that possible?

Why is it that I have so many clients who, for long periods of time, drank socially very moderately and it was no big deal, and then a big change happened in their life; maybe divorce or their kids left home or there was an illness in the family and then suddenly their drinking increased?

Did the brain suddenly radically change and become diseased? No, of course not. Why is it that so many women I work with see similar patterns in their overeating that mimic their overdrinking? If the solution when it comes to the habit of drinking is to never drink again, which is what we're told, well then what's the solution with food?

If you see the same habit unfolding, the same patterns, more is better, consuming well past the point of being satiated, well then what are you supposed to do when you have the same habit around food? Never eat again? That doesn't make any sense.

How can we see two very similar patterns with overeating and overdrinking and claim that they have two totally different solutions? It doesn't make sense. That's why we keep repeating our same attempts at habit change that aren't working over and over again, because no one is showing us a different way forward.

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

No one teaches us about the brain or how habits are formed and nobody teaches us about the think-feel-act cycle or the role of your thoughts when it comes to your drinking. We're led to believe that the focus should be entirely on alcohol and just say no, and truly, that is the wrong place to focus.

You need to focus on what's happening in your mind, the think-feel-act cycle that's unfolding for you, because then, you have the opportunity to learn from what's happening. Otherwise, when it's just say no, your only opportunity is to grit your teeth harder and double down on willpower and it doesn't work and then what are you going to do? That really is the key to harnessing the impossible; the ability to see that habit change is a learning process rather than a graded process.

When I say graded process, I mean so often people go into the idea of taking a break with, "Okay, I've got to do it perfectly and I've got to get my A-plus. I've got to just make sure that I do it perfectly for 30 days." And then, if they don't succeed, they make it mean something terrible about who they are and their future instead of learning from what happened.

If you drink during a break period, you don't have to start counting over again. You use that as a stepping stone. I really believe that this is true. I know that a lot of people have a hard time really wrapping their brain around this. I believe that someone can drink during a break period, but if they are using that as a steppingstone and really focusing on what's happening in their mind and really focusing on the think-feel-act cycle, they can make more progress.

You heard me right; more than someone who goes through 30 days of not drinking and it's just all willpower, all hiding, all isolating, all focusing on just saying no. It really is not about the days. It's what you're doing, how you're learning about your mind. This is what most people don't know how to do because we're not taught.

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

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

And this is why we struggle to harness the impossible. It really is like this quote from Thomas Edison – one of my clients said this to me the other day. And I had heard it before, and I'm still not sure if he actually said it, but you know what, it doesn't really matter.

The quote was about inventing the light bulb and it's, "I haven't failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that don't work." And really, when you look at it that way, when you have that kind of mindset, you understand the think-feel-act cycle so well because when you tell yourself that you've failed and you feel the shame and you start judging yourself and beating yourself up and you use it as evidence that you'll never succeed, what do you do? You quit.

So of course, you create the result that you just keep failing. But when you tell yourself something slightly different, that, "Okay, what I tried didn't work, I just found another way that didn't work," you create a little curiosity. You feel a little inquisitive and you start trying to unpack, well why didn't it work to say no? Why didn't it work for me not to drink at that dinner or to not drink around my partner? What happened?

And then you start brainstorming new ways that could work in the future. And when you have new ways to brainstorm, you have the impetus to start practicing and to keep at it until you get the result that you want. Because truly, taking action until you succeed is the only recipe you need for changing your habit. Just keep taking action. You have got to do that and can only do that from a place of how you are feeling.

Shame, guilt, embarrassment is not going to create what you want. And when you do this, when you practice this work during a time or a situation when part of your brain is telling you it will be impossible to succeed, that's when you have the recipe for wild success because then you can crack open a whole new paradigm for yourself.

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

You can realize, by challenging yourself to take a break from drinking, when your brain wants you to believe that this time period is impossible, it will never work, then all of a sudden, you get to see that, “Hey, my thoughts are not always correct. Sometimes, they’re really underestimating what I am capable of. Sometimes they’re trying to tell me that something’s going to be too hard when really I had it within me all along to create change.”

So when you think about harnessing the impossible, the reason why I wanted to talk to you about it today is because I love that the holiday season is right around the corner because, for most people, this is when you are telling yourself that it would be impossible to take a break from drinking.

And the thoughts are really simple. “I can’t start now, it’s the holidays. I’ve got too many events, too many parties, I’m going to be around my family and there is no way that I’m going to be able to survive that without wine.” The holidays is most people’s impossible time and they tell themselves, “I’ll just wait until the New Year.” And that’s all the messaging they’re also getting in the media and around them and from friends and family, “Just wait, it’s too hard to do it now.”

But listen, because you think the holiday season, because you think December is impossible to change your drinking, that’s what makes it so powerful. I love talking about December like the 30 most powerful days of the year because the last 30 days because the last 30 days of the year, that is when the brain just goes on autopilot. It’s just like, forget it, it’s a lost cause, no need to start now.

But that belief in this time period being impossible is also what makes these last 30 days so incredible. So here’s the thing, if you have been contemplating taking a break from drinking and you also think that December and the holiday period is the absolute worst time to start and

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

that it would be impossible, I want you to know this; now is actually the very best time. Now is when you can harness the impossible.

If you want to do this with me, I'm actually going to make that happen. So what I am doing is letting people enroll now in the Take A Break program, for a start date of Monday, December 2nd. So you can actually use the last 30 days of the year to work with me.

So what will happen is, if you sign up now for the Take A Break program, you will get access to the program starting December 2nd if you use a special link. The link is rachelhart.com/December. And then you'll be able to work with me during this period that your brain wants you to think is impossible. You'll be able to really harness this impossible time to really change your results.

Now, here's the thing, if you don't join me, I really encourage you to still make use of this time. This is the month, December, the month that is coming up is when 99% of people will tell you, forget it, just wait until the new year. But this is the time when you can show your brain that the impossible is actually possible.

So if you want to work with me during the month of December, if you want to harness the 30 most powerful days of the year, just go to rachelhart.com/December and you can sign up there. That link is the only way that you can sign up for a December second start. And listen, if you're already in the Take A Break program right now, just get ready to have an amazing December with me.

Alright, everybody, that's it for today. I will see you next week.

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-

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

Ep #148: Harnessing the Impossible

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.