

Ep #160: When Others Think You Don't Have a Problem



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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 160.

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 talking about what happens when you want to take a break from drinking and you are met with friends and family or other people in your life who say, "Really? You don't have a problem. You don't need to do that."

It's something that I have seen come up for more and more of my clients and I'll tell you, it's something that came up also in my own life. And it can be a pretty painful place to be in. I'm really familiar with what it is like to have people question your decision to take a break and think that you don't need to, you don't have a problem.

And it's not that you have a problem. That's not what you need to convince other people of. In fact, you don't need to convince them of anything, but it is really important to understand why it is it feels so unsettling. And it has to do with putting your opinion of you first and making your opinion of what is right for you, the one that matters more than anything else in this world.

And that's what I really want to dive in with you guys today because I see how for so many of the women that I work with, this becomes a stumbling block because they are not used to putting their opinion first when it comes to what's right for them.

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I've talked to you guys about this before, but I took my first break from drinking shortly after my 22nd birthday. I started drinking in college, I was always up for a good time. I thought that going out for drinks and getting drunk was pretty much the best thing that you could do and the best plans that you could have for your weekend.

But there was a part of me that worried internally that I kind of took things too far, or that I didn't always know when to call it quits. And there was also a part of me who didn't always like who I was. Yeah, sometimes I was funny and silly and up for whatever, but sometimes I would wake up the next morning and think, "Did you really do that, Rachel? Did you really say that? Did you really act like that?" I didn't always like how I was showing up.

Now, I never would have told you any of this at the time. I never would have admitted to any of this. But by the time I got to my 22nd birthday, I was kind of like, you know what, I think maybe something needs to change, in large part because I was now living in New York City, I had graduated college, and I had this realization of maybe the antics of college, maybe I need to kind of put them to bed.

So when I decided to take my first break, I had no idea how long it was going to last. I really had no idea what I was doing at all. I was actually going back through my diaries that I have from those days when I was preparing for this episode and it's so funny because there's so much in there of me writing that I just need to focus on me, that I need to stop focusing on partying, I need to stop focusing on guys and stop focusing on what I see in the mirror, and I just need to focus on me and having a better relationship with myself.

And I have to tell you, I'm 39 now and I look back at what I was writing as a 22-year-old and I'm like, jeez, you were smart. You were really confused

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and you were really unhappy, but you also had this kind of insight and awareness that is really magical to read about it now.

And here's the thing; I don't think I'm special. I think you guys have it all as well. I think everyone has this wisdom, this inner knowing that they can tap into. It's just really challenging when no one teaches us how to listen to that part of ourselves.

Now here's the thing; back when I was taking a break when I was 22, I didn't have any of the tools that I teach you guys. I didn't have the think-feel-act cycle, I didn't understand that my desire to drink was created by what I was thinking about. I didn't understand the role of my thoughts. I just thought that I really loved to drink and I just had an addictive personality, that I was just someone who always wanted more and didn't have a good off switch.

So all I had back then was willpower. And listen, willpower was helpful at first, but it only could get me so far because then I was always in the boat of well, I'm healthy, and I like not feeling hungover in the morning, but I still feel deprived and I still feel restricted and I still feel like I'm missing out and I just don't feel like I'm as fun or as spontaneous.

And so what would happen? I would go back to drinking. And that's why I would flip-flop between drinking and not drinking, and I did this all throughout my 20s. But this very first break that I took when I was 22 years old, was living with friends, and I did suddenly go from the party girl to someone who wasn't drinking.

And I tried to hide it for a while, but eventually I felt like I had to come clean. I had to own up to the fact that I had decided to stop drinking for a while and I thought it was the right thing for me to do and I didn't know what that

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meant about me and I didn't know how long I was going to do it, but I was taking a break.

And the response across the board was pretty much the same. I got a response that was like, "Okay, I mean, thanks for telling me, but how long are you going to do this? I mean, do you even really need to do this? You don't have a problem. You're not someone that has a problem with alcohol. So I mean, I support you but you're going to start drinking again, right?"

I mean, that was pretty much the response across the board. And I say this not in any way to say anything negative about the people who responded to me in that way because of course a response had to do with them. It didn't have to do anything with me. The response was about their thoughts about alcohol and what it would mean not to drink.

But here's the thing; you'd think that I would have been relieved to hear people say, "Rachel, you don't have a problem. You really need to do this?" But instead, I found it so disorienting. Because you know what, it was a big deal for me to decide that I wanted to take a break and I was going to take a break from drinking. I didn't make that decision lightly.

I have pages and pages and pages of journals all about it. And then to have the people that I cared most about in my life to have this kind of response, "Do you really think you need this? Might you be making a little bit too big of a deal? Might you be a little too dramatic about this? We all have bad nights, we all drink a little too much. That's just what happens sometimes."

To have people have that response, it really threw me and it really made me question myself and question my decision. And that's what I want all of you to understand today. Because when you decide what is right for you is to take a break, to give your mind and your body a rest from drinking, and

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to just maybe understand a little bit about your relationship with alcohol and why it looks the way it does and why it's been challenging for you to change, when you decide that that's what's right for you and some people in your life might think you're making a mountain out of a mole hill. They might think that you're blowing things out of proportion.

And the question then is what do you do? What do you do when the people closest to you don't really seem to be on board? The thing is that this question is kind of a funny one to consider because I was always so terrified of someone thinking that I had a problem. So I was always really afraid, oh god, if I stop drinking, everyone's going to think that I'm an alcoholic. Everybody is going to think that something's wrong with me. That was a big fear that I had.

So you would think that someone saying, "Oh Rachel, don't you think you're overreacting a bit here? Don't you think you're kind of blowing things out of proportion? You're going to start drinking again, right?" You would have thought that their response would have been a good thing for me. But in my mind, it wasn't. I actually had a very painful emotional response to it. And that's what happens when someone questions a decision that you don't feel 100% about.

Now here's the thing, and I want you guys to really hear me. It's not their questioning of your decision to creates the emotional pain. That's not how the think-feel-act cycle works. It's the fact that their questioning then is basically the mirror for all of the thoughts that you have where you don't feel 100% about the decision that you're making.

So it brings up all your own fears. Maybe I am being ridiculous, maybe I am overreacting, maybe I am being too extreme, maybe this is something that I don't need to worry about. That's what happens there. So that piece is really important. It's not the questioning from other people that is painful.

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It's how it serves as a mirror for all your own fears, all your own insecurities about making this decision.

And this would happen to me over and over in my 20s because I would take a break and someone would question it, and I would kind of soldier on but I didn't have any of these tools. And you would think that I would be relieved at someone saying, "Rachel, you don't have a problem. Come on. It's fine." You would think that I would have had the thought, "Oh good, I'm normal, nothing's wrong with me."

But instead, what happened is it brought up all of my own negative thoughts that I had about what it meant, and also whether or not I could trust myself. That was a big piece for me that was very unsettling with the habit is I often felt like I couldn't trust myself. Not just in I can't trust how much I'm going to drink tonight, but I just can't trust myself in general.

And the reason why all of this happens is because I was so used to putting everyone else's opinions ahead of my own. I did a whole episode on this. Episode 56. It's called Your Opinion of You. And it's what happens when your opinion of yourself is not your priority.

When your priority is what does my boss think of me? What do my colleagues think of me? Do they think I'm smart? Do they think I'm valuable and contributing? What does that guy think of me? Does he think that I'm attractive? Do other people see me as accomplished and successful and belonging and normal and fitting in?

Or do you focus on what you think of you? I was fixated on what other people thought of me. That's where my focus always was. Will they think I'm smart? Will they think I'm attractive? Will they think that I belong? And so deciding to take a break from drinking was one of the first times where I

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was really listening to myself. I was putting my own opinion ahead of what other people thought was right for me.

And you know what? That was really scary. I was not used to doing this. I was used to putting everybody's opinion ahead of my own. And that's why this work of taking a break can be so transformative because yes, it will change your relationship with alcohol, but more importantly, it will change your relationships with yourself.

When you decide to take a break from drinking, you are doing the work of listening to you. You're listening to your own inner voice. That part of you that's just like, "You know, I don't really like seeing this many empty wine bottles in the recycle bin," or that part of you that always is thinking, "I just don't really like feeling like I need a drink when I get home or I need a drink to loosen up, or that the version of me with a buzz is the better version of me. I don't like who I become. I don't always like how I behave."

Whatever that inner voice is telling you that is prompting you to question and think, maybe it's time for me to press pause and just sort some of this out, that's why this work can be so transformative because you're listening to that part of you. And listening to that voice can be scary when you are used to listening to everyone else's opinion first, but it's also why this work will be so powerful.

Because for many of you, the decision to take a break will be one of the first times that you are really listening to you. You are really acknowledging and honoring that little niggling voice inside of you that's like, "Listen, maybe we got to take a rest when it comes to booze. Maybe we got to give our mind and body a break from alcohol. Maybe we got to reassess this relationship we've developed with drinking."

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And I want you to really think about this if this sounds familiar, and it can be with the decision to take a break or it can be with the decision for anything in your life where you know that something is right for you, and maybe not everyone will agree. Why don't you listen to that inner voice? Why doesn't listening to that part of yourself come easier?

And I'll tell you, my reason was simply that fear that I was wrong, that that part of me that was like, hey Rachel, let's press pause here, let's take a break, let's reassess your relationship with alcohol, I was afraid, what if that part of me was wrong? What if I stop drinking and everyone did think I had a problem? What if I was never going to be fun again? What if I would never date again? Hell, what if I never had sex again? That was a big fear of mine.

What if I was always going to be the odd man out? What if I was always the buzzkill? I didn't want any of that. I had so much negative self-judgment, I didn't want to add any of that to the mix. And so what I tried to do for a long time was just ignore that voice, ignore that part of me that was like, I think this is what you need to do. Just take a break, just press pause on drinking for a little bit so you can sort some of this out.

And when I finally decided, okay, you know what, I think I'm going to do this, I think I can't ignore this part of me anymore, I had to start practicing ignoring the opinion of others. I had to practice ignoring friends who thought I was being overdramatic, friends who thought, "Okay, sure Rachel, we'll see how this little not drinking plan of yours goes at Friday's party."

I had to practice ignoring the opinion of people who were like, "Alright, but when are you going to start again? How long? How many months is this going to last?" I had to practice believing that my opinion was more important. In fact, it was the most important. My opinion about what was right for me, what was good for me, what was healthy for me, what was

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going to lead me down the path of the life that I wanted, I had to practice believing that I knew what was best for me.

And here's the thing; when I talk about going back and looking in my diaries and my journals and thinking, "God, I was kind of onto something, I was pretty smart," it's not unique to me. You are too. I believe that you know what is best for you, more than anyone else in the world. They don't know what's right for you. You do. And that goes for me knowing what's right for you.

I don't know what's right for you. Listen, I can make a million recommendations, I can tell you what worked for me, I can tell you what has worked for my clients, I can share with you all the research I have done, I can teach you the ins and outs of the think-feel-act cycle, but listen, only you know what is best for you. I can't know that for you. But also no one in your life can know that for you.

If someone tells you, "You don't have a problem, you don't need to say no tonight, you don't need to follow through on this break that you're doing, just make an exception, you're making too big a deal out of it," you have to practice believing that you actually know what is best for you.

And I'm not saying that you have to believe that you do have a problem. And I'm not saying that you have to believe that you shouldn't drink. What I'm saying is that you have to believe that there is a part of you who knows what's up and knows what's in your best interest.

Call it your intuition, call it innate wisdom, call it your consciousness, whatever you want to call it. There is a part of you that knows what is right for you, that most of us are not very practiced at listening to. I certainly wasn't. It took doing this work to learn how to listen and learn how to honor that intuitive part of me.

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And I'll tell you, you always know when she's talking because she doesn't sound desperate, she isn't making a ton of excuses. In my experience, she's not very wordy at all. She really has very few words but just knows what is up, knows what is best for you.

Your opinion of what is right for you is the only thing that matters, and your job is simply to practice honoring that opinion, even in the face of people who believe something else is right for you. If someone thinks that you do have a problem with drinking, it's not your job to convince them otherwise. They don't understand how habits work, they don't understand that your brain is functioning exactly the way it was designed to.

But here's the thing; if someone thinks that you don't have a problem with drinking and don't need to take a break, you also don't need to second-guess yourself and worry that they might be right. You just need to practice listening to that part of you that knows what is right for you. And I will tell you this; if you've considered taking a break from drinking, if that thought has come up, it didn't come out of the clear blue sky. It came from a part of you whose number one priority is your wellbeing.

It can be hard to hear that voice when you aren't used to listening to her, when you drink over her and eat over her and stay up too late when she's saying go to bed, and working long hours when you know you really need to take a break. We're not used to listening to that part of ourselves, and so doing so can feel really scary.

And it can feel kind of doubly scary when the people in our life don't line up and agree, which is so funny because of course, so many of you are thinking, "I don't want people to think I have a problem," and then someone says you don't have a problem, and then it becomes even more of a problem. Well, what am I supposed to believe?

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What you're supposed to believe is that you know what is right for you. I promise, listening to that wisdom, listening to that part of you who's like, "Maybe we need to change our relationship with alcohol," you only have things to gain from listening to her. It's not just the physical health and wellbeing that you create for your mind and your body when you take a break. When you listen to that part of you, you have so much to gain in terms of where you want to go in life.

Because all of a sudden you get to clear up all this mental space you've been using about how much to drink and am I drinking and why did I drink so much, am I going to drink tonight, am I going to drink at this party, why did I say I was going to have one and have four. You get to clear up all that mental space to focus on something else, and it is the practice of treating your opinion as if it matters more than anything else in the world.

Because guess what? It does. Your opinion of you is the most important thing. Your opinion of what's right for you is the most important thing. And if it doesn't feel that way right now, if it feels hard to listen to what you know is best for you, please don't beat yourself up. Just know this is part of your work.

Because I know that you already have a built-in expert that knows what is right for you. Not just with alcohol but with everything. And when you start listening to that expert, when you start honoring that opinion, that's when your world gets so much bigger and so much better because it's a skill that you can start to practice with taking a break from drinking, but I promise you, learning how to honor what is best for you, what you know is best for you is a skill that will reap benefits in every area of your life.

So listen, people don't need to be right about what you should do when it comes to alcohol. You just need to listen to the part of you that knows what's right for you. Alright, that's it for today guys, I will 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.