

Ep #180: Halfway Point



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 180.

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 my friends. We are talking about halfway points today because guess what, we're at the halfway point of 2020. Can you believe it? There are only six months until another year begins, which I will tell you feels crazy for me because I keep thinking that it's April but it's not.

So back in January, I asked you guys a question. I asked you, what do you want 2020 to be about? And so I want you to for a second think about the end of 2019. Go back in your mind, go back to that place. What were you thinking about? How did you want to make this year different?

Maybe you wanted to be healthier or happier or in better shape. You probably wanted to stop worrying about something. Something that you were consuming. You probably wanted to stop worrying about your drinking or your eating, your weight, or whatever you just find yourself doing too much of that is creating negative consequences for you.

If I look back and think about what I always want to change for myself, I find that I often end up with I just want to worry less. I have this thing that I'm worrying about and I want to worry less about it. So you can think about it this way. What were you worrying about at the end of 2019 that you didn't want to bring into 2020 or you wanted to change in 2020?

Now, if you are like me, you probably ended your year thinking, "Okay, next year, that's going to be when I make real change." I always used to say this

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to myself. This is the year that change is going to happen. But you know what, for the longest time, I didn't know how to follow through.

And I would use that inability to follow through as, "I'm just stuck here forever. Something's wrong with me. Why can't I figure this out?" I did it with my drinking, but I did it, listen, in so many areas of my life. And now whenever I think, "Okay, this time is going to be different, this is when I'm going to make a change, this year is going to be about something else, I'm not going to be worrying," you know what happens?

I make that my reality, which is crazy to me. It's crazy that I've gone from this place of never following through, not being able to trust myself, not being able to believe myself, to this place now of yeah, it's going to happen. I know it's going to happen. I got my back no matter what.

And the only reason I've been able to do this is simply because I've learned how to change my thoughts and my feelings and my actions. I've learned how they're all connected and I've learned how to change that cycle when it's not working for me.

And that is what you are here to do too. So think back about how you wanted your life to change at the dawn of 2020. And I want you to check in with yourself about where you are right now.

So a lot of people had a lot of big plans for what they wanted to see different in their life and then 2020 came knocking. And this year has been no joke. 2020 is not a year to be trifled with. What has that meant for you? What have the events of the last six months meant for whatever you told yourself you were going to change, you were going to do differently?

Especially, what has it meant for your drinking? And are you on track or are you telling yourself, "Well, I don't know, who could have predicted this? This is crazy. This year is crazy so of course I'm not where I want to be."

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That was the mindset that I used to be in and that is the mindset if you're in it right now, then we have got to get you out of it.

Thinking, believing that what happens out in the world determines what happens when it comes to your choices, when it comes to your drinking, that is the problem. That is what needs to change. Because what happens out in the world and the choices you make around alcohol are totally separate. Completely, 100%.

So what I want you to consider today is really simple. How does everything that has transpired so far over the last six months, how does it connect with the habit of drinking right now, or any habit of overconsumption? But how does what has happened over the last six months connect to where you are, where the habit is right now?

What have the events of 2020 meant for your drinking? What has it meant for your relationship with alcohol? Did you go deeper into the habit? Has the habit grown? Is it more entrenched? Or have you used this time, the events of 2020 to actually do the opposite because that's possible too?

You can actually use everything that's happened to free yourself from being on autopilot. That's where the think-feel-act cycle comes in and that's why it's so powerful. It is just too easy to say, "Well, I don't know, a pandemic happened, look at the economy. My routine has been turned completely upside down."

And then tell yourself, "Well of course I turned to wine, of course I turned to food. Who wouldn't?" It's so easy to fall into that trap but here's the thing; it's just not true. It's not how the habit works. The outside world, whatever has happened, whatever is happening, it has no bearing on your drinking.

And if your brain is struggling to believe me when I say that what is happening and what has happened in the last six months has no bearing on the habit right now, I get it. I get it if this is like, "What is this lady talking

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about?” Because I definitely looked at what was happening in my life and what was happening in the world and always saw that as reason for why I needed relief, reason for why I was pouring a drink, reason for why I felt like I deserved it.

So it's okay right now if your brain is kind of struggling to get on board with this. This is what we're going to be really be talking about today. But here's the thing; this is not the part when I say, “Listen, it has nothing to do with what's happening out in the world or what's happening in your life. It has to do with your choices.” This is not the part where we start blaming and shaming.

This is not the part where we say, “Oh, it's all your fault. Everything that you're consuming right now is all your fault.” That's not what we're talking about today, and listen, that's not what we ever talk about on this podcast because it's just simply not true.

Today is about understanding what the habit is using, what your brain is using as reasons to keep the habit. That's all we're doing. It's not about shame. It's not about blame. I want you to examine what really has happened for you. Get really specific. For you in the last six months, and let's understand how that is connected to the habit of drinking and also independent of the choice to drink.

It's connected to the habit of drinking because the brain will use it as reason, use it as an excuse, but it's independent of the choice to drink because guess what, we always have free will. We just have these things kind of mushed together and we don't realize that we need to be able to separate them out.

Alcohol isn't driving the habit. What's happening in the world isn't driving the habit. What's driving the habit are habitual, unconscious thought patterns that your brain has practiced over and over and over again outside of your conscious awareness that has led to the decision to drink.

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So right now, if you're not where you want to be, you just have one of two problems. Either you have no idea what those thoughts and those thought patterns are, you're not aware of them. It just feels like drinking just happens. Or you are aware of them but you have no idea how to respond differently to them.

I'm going to tell you this; both of these things are really simple problems to solve. You can most definitely 100%, I don't care who you are, learn how to uncover these thought patterns. Everyone has this capability. And you can most definitely 100% learn how to respond differently to these thought patterns.

You have that ability because you have a human brain. And when you learn how to do both of these things, it will not matter one bit, one iota what is happening out in the world when it comes to your drinking. And that, my friends, is where true power and freedom comes in.

Now, I want to really go into this piece on shame because I know that's where so many of you want to slip into. Remember, when I'm talking about choices and I'm talking about decisions, this is not to blame. This is not a time to shame yourself.

I was talking with my coach about shame last week, and by the way, yeah, I have a coach and I work with her every week. I really believe that coaching is the most important investment that I can make. Not just that you can make. That I can make.

I really believe learning how to manage your mind, learning how to think differently, learning how to change your mindset, learning how to be curious with yourself is the only way to create different results in your life. And so I invest in that. That's a number one priority for me.

But anyway, I was saying to her when we were talking about shame, I was saying shame, when it comes up for me, it feels like I'm pulling down the

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shades. And I kind of likened it to these blackout shades that we have in my little boy's room.

I don't know, if you can think of the ones that you kind of pull down and they have a spring in them and they roll themselves back up. I close his shades every night when he's going to bed. I open them every morning, I'm very familiar with what these kind of - I don't know what they're called - roller shades are.

PS, ours really don't work very well so it's always a struggle. But when I was talking to my coach, I was like, that's what shame feels like for me. It feels like I'm trying to pull down the shade and keep out all the light because as soon as I feel shame, I want to retreat into darkness. I don't want to look. I want to hide.

That, to me, is such a profound way for me to understand shame because when I realize, oh yeah, it's all about pulling down the shades, it's all about retreating into darkness, then I can just ask myself why. Why do I feel like I need to retreat into darkness? Why don't I want to look at what's happening in my mind?

And of course, every time I'm curious with myself, every time I'm like, hey, why don't we want to shine a light there, Rachel? I see that it's because my brain is saying, "Well, you must be doing this or you must have made this choice or you must have made this decision or you must have gone back on your word because something is wrong with you or you're bad or you're broken."

And you know what, nothing could be further from the truth. Not just for me, but for everyone. For all of you. I don't care how much you've had to drink in 2020. You haven't done anything wrong. You are a good person. You are whole, there is nothing broken about you. There is nothing that needs to be fixed. You do not need fixing.

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The only thing you need is to learn how to exercise a muscle, learn how to utilize the tool of the think-feel-act cycle. That's it. It's not about there being something wrong with you or something bad about you or something broken about you. And the events of 2020, they have no bearing on your drinking and you are not to blame if you found yourself drinking more over the last six months.

I want you to kind of hold both of those concepts in your mind right now. The events of 2020 have no bearing on your drinking and you are not to blame if you've been drinking more over the last six months. I know a lot of you are like, how can this be?

Because isn't something to blame? That's what we think we need to do when it comes to understanding habits. Either we got to blame the world or we got to blame our circumstances or the economy or the loss of routine, or we got to blame our partner, or we got to blame ourselves and our lack of resolve and our lack of discipline.

Or maybe our genes, our family tree, or the fact that we're born with an addictive personality. We're constantly looking for something to blame and what I want you to consider is that the way for you to create lasting, sustainable, forever change in your life, the way for you to rewire your brain is to remove blame entirely.

Because how could you ever be responsible for doing something that no one ever taught you how to do? I talk about this all the time. Learning this work I think is the most important work in the world, and does anyone teach us in school? No. Does anyone teach us about how habits form and how the brain works and the think-feel-act cycle?

Especially when most people start experimenting with alcohol? No, we have no idea. How could you possibly be responsible for responding to your emotions and your desire and your deprivation differently if A, no one

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talked to you about them ever, and B, what you did learn was oh, these are really bad, we got to make them go away really quickly?

How could you possibly be responsible for saying no to a drink when no one ever explained why you were saying yes in the first place? Because PS, it's not because you like to drink. It's not because of the wine. It's not because you like the taste. That's not what's going on.

And how could you be responsible for changing your thoughts, changing those habitual thought patterns that are just running like ticker tape across your brain when no one's ever given you a process for shifting your beliefs in a realistic, believable way?

So listen, you got to take blame out of the picture. It is so much easier to understand what is actually happening, why you are actually saying yes, why you are reaching for a drink when you remove it because then you can see, oh, it's not about the wine, it's not about what's happening in the world, and it's not about me. It's just about these thoughts that have become habitual.

"I want it, I deserve it, I need it, it will make me feel better." These thoughts that not only have become habitual, but you have practiced thinking over and over, you have practiced rewarding, and you have never learned how to respond differently to them.

So then you keep reaching for a drink, and every time you reach for a drink, that action perpetuates itself. The habit grows. It becomes more entrenched. Now, the good news is we can unlearn our habits. That's what you have the power to do because you have a human brain.

With this information, you can see the habit for what it really is. Just a series of thoughts that were practiced over and over that are usually unconscious and you don't yet have a way to respond differently to them.

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So think back over the last six months of this year. How many times have you thought to yourself, “I don’t know, just one thing after another, I’m totally overwhelmed. I just want to escape.” Or maybe you thought to yourself, “Listen, my life has been turned completely upside down. All these things have been canceled. I have very little to look forward to and I just want to feel good.”

Or maybe you have told yourself, “I promise that I’m going to be good. I’m going to take this seriously. I’ll get back on track just when everything gets back to normal, but until then, I mean, what else am I supposed to do? I’m going to have a drink.”

These thoughts are the problem. The events of 2020 are not the problem. What’s happening in the world is not the problem. Alcohol is not the problem. How much you drank last night or last week or last month or last year, none of that is the problem.

And let me tell you, you most certainly are not the problem either. The problem is just a couple sentences in your mind that you’re listening to only because no one has ever taught you how not to listen to them. And trust me, the way not to listen to them is not by gritting your teeth and willpower and white-knuckling it.

The way not to listen to them is to actually come up with believable alternative thoughts that you buy that create true emotions of feeling capable and determined and hopeful and empowered. And the reason why I know this is because I used to have the exact same thoughts in my life when I looked around at the world and was telling myself, “Things are not going the way they should. Things are not going the way I expected or the way that I think they should be unfolding.”

And so when I was stressed out, what I knew to do was I’m going to make a beeline for wine and chocolate and more wine and more chocolate and repeat that over and over again. I just didn’t understand that what was

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happening was I was playing the same record in my mind that frankly had been on repeat for a very long time.

And I really didn't understand that my constant search to eat something or drink something for what I believed was relief when of course, it's not. That's why I was constantly going back for more. That's why I had this insatiable hunger. Because you can never get enough of something that you don't actually need.

And what you don't actually need is relief from how you feel because how you feel is normal. The full spectrum of human emotions are normal. Now, notice if your brain wants to argue with me about this. Notice if your brain is like, "You don't know how I feel, Rachel."

Really, how you feel is normal. All of the feelings. What's not normal is the idea that we should be happy all the time. What's not normal is the belief that life should always be easy or that negative emotions, okay fine, they can happen, but they should be limited to a very tiny sliver of our lives, preferably only when someone dies. And even then, those negative emotions shouldn't last for long.

That's not normal. How you feel, whatever emotion you are experiencing is normal. What's not normal is the search to get rid of it. The search to never feel bad, to always feel good. Because when you attempt to do this, when you attempt to always feel good, that actually makes you feel terrible in the long run.

And that constant search to feel good, that is what has been driving this insatiable hunger to eat and drink and numb your emotions away, which PS, will never work. All it will do is create a bunch of negative consequences for you, and that my friend is the real problem.

When you understand this piece of the puzzle, that's when you have so much power to access what's really going on with the habit. So think about

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it. What did you want your 2020 to be about? How did you want to change your relationship with alcohol this year?

Now we're at the halfway point, now we're at six months in. If you're not where you want to be, the challenge is just to understand why minus all the shame and blame. Don't pull down the shades. That is the worst thing that you can do. You got to shine some light, you got to be curious about what are the thoughts that got me here.

Because if you don't know what they are, you're definitely not going to know how to respond differently to them or how to change them. Why have you been reaching for a drink? Why don't you want to feel deprived or bored or lonely or disconnected? Why are those emotions a problem?

When you answer that question, you will find the thoughts that actually need changing. You don't need to change yourself. You don't need to change alcohol; you don't need to change 2020. You need to change your knee-jerk response to how you feel and your emotions.

I'm going to tell you this; I feel like I'm kind of selling you guys on the willingness to feel a negative emotion. Most people are no, ew, no thank you, I don't want that. Because everything that we are sold, pretty much everything that we are sold in this world is how to feel good.

That's what you're getting from advertisers all the time, that's what you're getting from the winemakers, that's what you're getting from people who are trying to sell you things to buy stuff. How to feel good. I'm kind of offering something different here.

It's how to feel a negative emotion and just feel it and not have it be a problem. Because that's the thing; you can teach your brain that it's not a big deal. You can remove all of the drama, all of the unnecessary resistance.

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And then what happens is that these negative emotions, deprivation and loneliness and boredom and awkwardness and insecurity, whatever it is, these negative emotions that used to be like, oh my god, this is terrible, I have to get rid of it immediately, they become totally manageable.

You don't have to make it so that you never experience a negative emotion again. You just have to teach your brain they're not a big deal. And when you do that, when you allow yourself to have the full human experience, because guess what guys, it's coming anyway. It is coming anyway so you might as well allow yourself to do it.

When you do that and you allow yourself to be present with these emotions and not try to constantly escape them or numb them or eat over them or drink over them, that's actually how you feel truly and deeply amazing. Because when your emotions are no big deal, then guess what, you're not afraid to go after what you really want in life.

Because what's always stopping you? A negative emotion. And I promise you this, what you want in life, it is way bigger than wine and chocolate. When I was so stuck in the habit, I really couldn't believe that it would be bigger than that, but I'll tell you, it was.

The halfway point of the year, six months in, is one of the least utilized moments for change, for turning your year around. People just believe it's too late, too much time has passed, no one changes in July. But you know what I'm going to tell you, I personally love July as a moment for change because that's when I made the commitment that led me here.

The beginning of July was the month for me that I decided to take a break from drinking but to do it totally different than how I had done it in the past. Because how I had done it in the past was just to say no over and over again and isolate and hide out and white-knuckle it.

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But I decided many years ago that I was going to take a break starting in July differently. I was going to stop fixating on what I was or wasn't drinking and I was going to start focusing on what was happening in my mind and how I was feeling and how I could learn how to feel better and to feel good and confident and capable no matter what I was doing, no matter what was happening.

And the rule that I made for myself was really simple. I basically said you're going to teach yourself that you don't need a drink to do the things that you think you need it for, or the things you think are easier when you have a buzz. You don't need it to unwind or to deal with stress or to deal with boredom or loneliness. You don't need it to socialize or to feel confident or to be silly or to let your guard down.

And that July was the first time that my break wasn't focused on alcohol. It was focused on me. That's what changed everything and that's what will change everything for you. So listen, if you want to do this work with me and you should because learning this, changing this habit, mastering the think-feel-act cycle, it will change your life forever.

It is not just about changing the habit of drinking. If you want to do this work with me, then I really want you to join my July challenge. We're going to use the halfway point of the year to create change. Spend 30 days doing it with me.

Do not let another six months go by. Don't tell yourself, "I'm going to figure it out when things calm down." That is a lie that fuels the habit. You've got to commit to making change now. You've got to learn how the habit is working now. If you're waiting for some sort of magical time when everything is going according to plan, let me tell you, that magical time is never going to appear.

So here's the thing, if you want to join me, we start Monday, July 6th and you can sign up over at rachelhart.com/july. PS, I have a brand-new

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website, which I'm so excited about. I love it. So you should just totally check it out, see what it looks like.

Alright, that's it for today. I will see you guys next week. I'm so excited for those of you who are going to join me for the July challenge. Alright, have a great week everyone.

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.