

## Ep #183: Upside Denial



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #183: Upside Denial

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 183.

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 going to talk about the upside of drinking today and why so many people want to deny that there's an upside to it. Because a lot of people out there who are trying to help others stop drinking, they will want to convince you that there are no upsides, or they will just spend all of their time focusing on the downsides of drinking.

So they will talk about how bad alcohol is for you and it's bad for your liver and it makes you fat and it's bad for your heart and it's bad for your brain. Or they'll point out how it's not attractive. You're too loud when you're drunk, you're too sloppy, you're not nearly as profound or funny as you think you are.

They might talk a lot about the bad decisions that you make when you're drinking. When your inhibitions are lowered, you're probably less likely to keep your emotions in check. Maybe you're more likely to pick a fight, more likely to blubber like an idiot or send that text message that you later regret or wake up the next morning thinking, why did I do that?

And listen, there's a lot of truth to this. Of course there are downsides to drinking. I'm not saying that there aren't. I just think that it's not very helpful focusing on the downsides and not really even focusing, fixating on them. Kind of hitting you over the head with the downsides over and over again.

Because if feeling bad about something was the key to change, then we would all be experts at change. I can promise you, if you drink or eat or

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spend more than you want to, you're probably pretty good at beating yourself up. You know all about the downsides. You have no shortage of bad feelings about the habit.

We do not live in a world with a shortage of people feeling bad about themselves. That is not the problem. We don't need to induce more of it. In fact, what we need is the exact opposite. Most people, when they look at any habit they're trying to change, not just drinking, they feel plenty terrible about the fact that they have the habit in the first place and why haven't they been able to figure it out yet.

This fixation on needing to focus on the downsides and feel really bad about our habits is so ingrained when it's actually the opposite of what you need. This really is the truth. A lot of people really do believe that the key to change is to feel worse. The key to change is just to have more negative experiences, experience more downsides, and then you'll finally convince yourself to get your act together.

That really is the basis for this idea of rock bottom. Rock bottom says things got to get really bad before you'll change. And I think that this myth of rock bottom is so tightly woven into the fabric of how we talk about changing habits because people don't understand the think-feel-act cycle. They don't understand that all of our actions are motivated by how we're feeling, and how we're feeling is created by what we're thinking.

And yes, a lot of people out there, they cite hitting rock bottom as the reason for why they were able to change. But I'm going to tell you this; they're wrong. Yes, they felt terrible, but you know what, they also felt hopeful. Because if they truly had zero hope that change was possible, if they were truly only stuck in shame and guilt and embarrassment, they would have kept at it.

It's that moment of belief that another way might be possible, and they're not sure how, they're not sure how they're going to figure it out, and they

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don't entirely trust the process, but there's a moment of belief. It's that glimmer of hope. That's what actually leads to taking action. Not all the shame.

Because when you're knee-deep in shame, what do you do? You just dig deeper. You keep drinking, you keep eating, you keep spending money because you tell yourself, well, who cares? It won't make a difference, I'm such a screw up.

You have heard me talk about this before on the podcast. I really don't like the terminology of rock bottom. Because I believe it keeps so many people stuck, and I know for a fact that it kept me stuck. I remember seriously thinking that maybe I hadn't figured out my drinking because things hadn't gotten bad enough. I clearly remember having that thought.

I wanted to change, I didn't know how. All of my attempts, they hadn't worked. And everywhere, I heard this message. It's so ingrained in society. You'll see it everywhere that change happens when you're at the very worst moment, when you hit rock bottom.

And so I remember that it actually crossed my mind. Well, maybe if things got really, really bad, I would finally change. I want you to just hear how crazy that is. I want you to hear how crazy it is to believe that the way out is to make your life worse, that there was a moment in time when I truly had that thought because it's what is fed to us, that you need to hit rock bottom, things need to get really, really bad, and then you'll finally change.

This idea keeps people stuck. And here's the thing; if you really believe that hitting rock bottom is the reason you changed your drinking, it's going to have some negative consequences for you down the line because what happens in the future when you decide that you want to create change in other parts of your life?

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What happens when you want to lose weight? Do you first have to gain a ton of weight? What happens when you want to leave an unhealthy relationship? Do you have to wait until it gets really, really bad? What about when you want to change jobs? Do you have to stay at the job until it becomes a nightmare? Or if you want to improve your credit, do you have to run up a bunch of bills first?

No, of course you don't. In every other realm of life, the idea of hitting rock bottom, it makes zero sense. Just none whatsoever. But in the realm of drugs and alcohol, we hold onto this myth that we need to hit rock bottom, that that's the way to change.

And that's why so many people who are taught this idea and who actually believe that rock bottom is how they created change, it's why they then go on to feel pretty stuck when it comes to creating other types of change in their life.

What they don't realize is that yeah, they were steeped in shame, yeah, they had a lot of negative downsides, but it was the glimmer of hope. It was actually a very subtle positive emotion that actually kicked off the process of change. That's what all of us overlook.

And this is why I think we have to stop fixating on the downsides of drinking or the downsides of any habit that we want to change and start actually having an honest conversation about the upsides. We have to stop denying them. We have to start understanding what those upsides are and why they are so appealing to us.

That is actually the pathway to change. If you want to embark on the process of changing your relationship with alcohol forever, or changing any habit for that matter, you have to have three things. First, you have to have the belief that change is possible. If you don't have that, you're not ever going to get started.

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Now, for a lot of you, just listening to this podcast is how you're starting to seed this belief. It's when you start reading and hearing and seeing examples of other people who were in your shoes. Other people who say things that you can connect to.

Often this really is the first step. Whether it is listening to a podcast or reading books or seeking out things online, it's why so many of the women in my program say that they were not expecting how powerful it would be to hear from other women in their shoes, just like them, but they realize very quickly how transformative it is.

Because they start to see, oh, if it's possible for that woman, if it's possible for this other person, and her situation is similar to mine or I can relate to her, then maybe it's possible for me too. So that's the first thing, and a lot of you are already getting that right now. A lot of you are already seeding belief that change is possible just by being here, just by listening to this podcast every week.

The second really important ingredient is you have to have belief that you can create the change that you want. Now, this is really important. Again, it's one thing to think, okay, well Rachel could do it, or other people could do it. That is not enough. You have to believe that you are capable of this.

You don't have to believe that you're 100% capable. You just have to have that glimmer that yes, maybe it's possible that I can do this too. Maybe it's possible that I too can change my relationship with alcohol after years or decades or however long of drinking this way.

Now, your brain will try to convince you otherwise. The beauty is that you have the tool that is going to help you. That's where the think-feel-act cycle comes in. Because it is a tool that anyone can learn. Anyone can learn that their thoughts create their feelings and their feelings drive their actions.

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They can learn how to observe their thoughts at work. Learning this skill really is all that you need. It's all that you need. Because here's the thing; you were born with the ability to learn and you never ever lose it. So the ability to learn how to wield the think-feel-act cycle is always and will always be available to you.

Now, we are taught something completely opposite. We're taught that learning is the domain of young people. You've all heard old dogs can't learn new tricks. It's totally false. Now yes, younger brains, sure, they have an easier time forming new connections and making new neural pathways. But what most people fail to understand is that it's not just the brain of the child that facilitates learning. It's also the environment that learning takes place in.

When little kids are learning, they get so much encouragement from parents and family and caregivers. I was thinking about this today because I was helping my son who is a toddler learn how to walk down the stairs in the morning. So I was holding both of his hands as he took every step, and it was slow going, but he was giggling and laughing, and every time he would make it down another level, he did this adorable little hop of delight.

But you know what, I was also encouraging him. I had a big smile on my face, I kept saying, "Great job, you're doing it." I called out to my husband and I said, "Hey, come watch what he's doing," and then my husband joined in on the praise.

Now, does my son have a very young brain that is very capable of learning new things? Yes, of course he does. But he's also swimming in an environment where he's getting a ton of encouragement and positive reinforcement.

Now, compare that to the learning environment that most adults are in. Compare that to the learning environment that you create for yourself when



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you try to learn something new. Is it an environment of encouragement or one of criticisms?

I will tell you this; for me, for a very long time, it was just steeped in criticism. And this is what I see. With everyone that I work with, they're all practicing new skills or practicing learning the think-feel-act cycle and learning how to allow their urges and learning how to change their response to their thoughts and their emotions and think new thoughts on purpose.

But time and time again, the biggest hurdle to change has nothing to do with alcohol. The biggest hurdle to changing the relationship to alcohol has nothing to do with their desire to drink. Because the biggest hurdle is the environment that they have unknowingly created for themselves. This belief, "I can't do it."

It's how you meet failure. It's how you meet missteps. It's whether or not you default to beating yourself up when you tell yourself, "I should be able to do this" and "This shouldn't be so hard for me" and "Why can't I figure it out?" and "Why is it taking so long" and "What's wrong with me?"

That's why I always say more than anything, learning how to change your relationship with failure is the most important skill that I teach people. It's actually the foundation of learning how to change your relationship with alcohol. You have to learn first how to change your relationship to failure.

The biggest obstacle in learning new skills when you're an adult is not your brain. It's the environment your brain is swimming in. So if you have really low expectations or a lot of negative self-talk, or you default to beating yourself up, it will be very hard for you to learn. And that's what most people miss.

They don't even realize that they're created this really discouraging learning environment for themselves, and so when they attempt to start to



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use the think-feel-act cycle and start to manage their mind and it doesn't come naturally or quickly or easily, or they don't do it perfect on their first outing, then what do they do?

They blame themselves. They blame their brain. They blame their age and how old they are and how long they've been drinking instead of recognizing the environment that they are trying to learn in. So that's really the second thing that you need. You need belief in yourself.

And if you don't have it, don't worry. I didn't either. You can learn how to believe in yourself. You can learn how to create an encouraging learning environment instead of defaulting to this is never going to work, I'm behind, I'm a hopeless case, I'm never going to figure this out. So those two things are so important. The belief that change is possible and the belief that you can create the change that you want.

Now, the third thing that you need is the belief that what is waiting for you, the upside of changing, whatever habit it is, is better than the upside of staying the same. So that means you have to believe that the upside of changing your relationship with alcohol is better and that you want it more than the upside of continuing on to drink the way you're drinking and keeping the current relationship that you have with drinking.

This is why it's so important that you don't go into denial about the upsides to the habit, you don't go into denial about the upsides of drinking. Because the upsides exist. People have used alcohol for thousands of years to feel differently. We didn't know what created our feelings or how to change them, so we relied on substances that could create that change for us.

This really is crucial. You don't love the buzz. You don't love the taste. You love how you feel. This is something that I will go back and forth with people on over and over and over again. If you don't acknowledge that it's the feeling state that is what you are actually after, you will block your ability to change this habit.

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Now, please hear me. This does not mean that if you have developed a habit around drinking, or you're drinking more than you want, that that means you have a terrible life or you're super depressed. What it does mean is that you may not know how to deal with deprivation or frustration or anxiety or boredom on your own. And why would you? No one teaches us how to deal with these emotions.

People just teach us, hey, eat this, drink this, watch this, do this, distract yourself so you don't have to feel this way. So most people feel very unable to actually deal with negative emotions when they arise. That's totally normal. But you have to stop telling yourself that there's no upside.

If there was no upside to drinking, if it was all downsides, you wouldn't be doing it. And maybe the upside is that it helps you relax, or that it helps you quiet your mind, or it helps you feel more confident. Or it might just be that you simply don't have to deal with an unanswered urge, you simply don't have to deal with the deprivation you feel when you say no.

But you must acknowledge that that upside is there and that upside is connected always to your emotions. Always. Knowing that deep down, you do want to drink and then trying to tell yourself I shouldn't, I shouldn't want it, that won't work. Knowing that you want to drink and then trying to fool yourself into believing I don't want it, it's terrible for you, it's poison, it's bad for me, that's not going to work either.

Maybe it will work in the short-term for a little while, I promise you, it's not going to create permanent, sustained, lasting forever change. Listen, if you want it right now, if you want to have a drink right now, if you have that desire, that's okay. You don't need to be freaked out by it. You don't need to pretend that it's not there. You just need to be curious with it.

Why? Why do you want it? How will you feel if you say no? Answering those questions, those are your clues. The wanting, the desire of the drink or the chocolate bar or the new shiny thing, whatever you're desiring, that

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isn't the problem. The problem is pretending that you don't want it and that there's no upside to it.

But that's what so many people try to do. They go around trying to convince themselves that they shouldn't want to drink, that it's bad for them, it's poison, it makes us fat, it makes me do stupid things. I did that for a very long time.

And I will tell you, no matter how much I focused on the downsides, I was not very successful at changing my relationship with alcohol. I was not very successful at changing my desire. Because I wasn't actually looking at the full picture.

The problem when you do that is you don't address why it is you want to drink. And more importantly, you don't address how to solve why it is you want to drink in another way. That's why so many people feel stuck. It's like, well, I want to relax and drinking helps me relax. And if we take the drinking away, I just get to feel stressed out all the time? Of course that's not very appealing.

But when no one's actually teaching you skills like the think-feel-act cycle or how to manage your mind, that's where most people feel caught. You're taking away this thing that has an upside. I don't know how to give that upside to myself any other way, so now I'm just going to be miserable. That is not a life that anybody wants to sign up for.

Now, the good news is that you don't need to be stuck because you have the think-feel-act cycle. You can learn how to manage your thoughts and your feelings. That's how you actually solve this conundrum of what do I do when I feel deprived or I feel bored or I feel anxious or I feel judged, or I just feel some sort of way that I don't want to be feeling.

Instead of reaching for something to consume, you start to learn that you can look to your mind. You can look to your thoughts. And you can learn

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how to change those default thinking patterns. You have to understand what the upside is. You cannot be in denial that there is one there.

Because telling yourself I shouldn't want it isn't going to get you very far. Hitting yourself over the head with how bad drinking is, it's not going to get you very far. You have to want the upside from saying no to the drink more. That's what is missing.

Instead of saying I shouldn't want it, flip that on its head. So you can say, I want to drink to take the edge off, but more than that, I want to learn how to be someone who knows how to end the day and feel happy and content, no matter what happened during my day. Wouldn't that be amazing?

You can acknowledge that the desire is there and say, you know what, right now I want this drink because I want to feel less insecure, but more than that, I want to learn how to be someone who walks into a room full of strangers and feels totally at ease just as I am.

You can acknowledge that you have the desire to drink because you're bored and you want to make it go away, but you can tell yourself, more than that, I want to be someone who isn't afraid to go after what she wants in life and live life to the fullest. You can do that as well.

And people will hear me say this and they will immediately come back with, okay, but how? But I'm always giving you the answer. The answer is always mastering the think-feel-act cycle so that you can learn how to manage your mind, so that you can learn how to manage your emotions without reaching to consuming something.

And that's when people will swoop in and they'll say, well Rachel, I'm too old, it's too hard, I can't do it, I've been drinking for too long, I can't change. But of course, all of that is a lie because you have never, ever, ever lost your ability to learn new things.

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You will always have the ability to learn until the day that you leave this earth. But here's the thing; more than all of this, you have to learn how to want the upside of not drinking. You have to want how to learn how to have these things that you truly deeply want, to feel at ease, to learn how to relax no matter what's happened during your day, to learn how to navigate boredom or anxiety or frustration or anger or loneliness. You have to want that more than the upside of saying yes to a glass of wine.

Because there is an upside. I'm not going to lie and tell you that there isn't. But you know what, that upside is always fleeting. Always. It never lasts. You will always need another round, another drink to sustain the buzz, to sustain the good feeling, to sustain the confidence, to sustain your spontaneity.

You will always need another drink and you will become reliant on it. That's the case for most everyone. In fact, that's how most everyone operates. If it's not with alcohol, it's with consuming other things because no one teaches us how to do this.

That will always be the case unless you learn how to create the things you want on your own, and it's 100% possible once you learn how to practice think-feel-act. I will tell you, I really believe that this is a terrible disservice that society has done to us, spreading the myth that things have to get really bad in order to change, hitting us over the head with all of the downsides, pretending that there is no upside.

The truth is that you just have to see a vision of a future that you want more and believe it's possible for you. And if you can't right now, or if you think that it's not possible, the vision that you see for yourself, you just have to start asking yourself why. Why wouldn't you be able to have a life that is full of pleasure, full of ease, full of laughter, full of spontaneity without drinking?

Why? It's totally possible. This is your work. That's what you have to uncover. You have the ability for so much pleasure and ease and laughter

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and spontaneity and fun, and the reason why I know this is because all of us did. All of us had a lot of those things, an abundance of those things in our life.

All you have to do is look at little kids. I tell you, I learn so much from my toddler every day. I see how joyful it is for him to learn how to do something as simple as walking down the stairs. We were all little kids once. We all delighted in these things. We delighted in the moon and flowers and everything around us.

Every child is like this. That ease, that joy, it didn't just disappear because we grew up and got a job and got a lot of responsibilities. It disappeared because of thoughts that we unconsciously were programmed to think. There's not enough time, I have to do everything right, I can't make a mistake, I have to be serious.

That's why it disappeared. So whatever it is that you want in your life, whatever vision you are dreaming for yourself, I want you to just keep this in mind. It's not something you have to create from scratch. It's just something that you can return to because it's something that you always had.

You just didn't realize that you started picking up and practicing and learning all these thoughts that were disconnecting you from the joy and the ease and the pleasure and the laughter that you want. And you were feeling disconnected and you were given the solution. Have a drink. Eat something. Buy something. That will make you feel better.

I'll tell you this; when the upside of saying no to a glass of wine or a pint of ice cream or the shiny new thing at the store is more exciting than the upside of continuing to say yes, you're not going to have any trouble saying no. All you have to do is ask yourself why right now, the upside of saying yes to the habit is more appealing. That's where your work begins. That's where you get started with this change.

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Not by denying the upsides of drinking or eating or spending. By understanding right now why it's more appealing. With that information, then you can create your path forward, but you can never do it if you're denying the upsides. Alright, 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-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.