

Ep #194: I Have Nothing to Complain About



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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 194.

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.

Hello everyone. We are going to do a deep dive into a very important thought today, a thought that will prevent you from changing the habit of drinking and changing your relationship with alcohol, and it is the thought, "I have nothing to complain about. I shouldn't be so anxious. I shouldn't be stressed out. I shouldn't be so annoyed."

This thought is so detrimental to changing the habit. I watch it come up for my clients time and time again. And if you catch yourself thinking this, that you have nothing to complain about, that you shouldn't feel the way you do, you will not be able to change your relationship with alcohol. Because in order to change the habit, you have to understand why you are drinking.

This seems like such a simple, obvious question. Why am I drinking? And if you don't get curious with it, your brain will just default to responses like, well, I just like to drink, I just like the way it tastes. But I promise you, there is more going on beneath the surface.

This doesn't mean that we have to go digging for some sort of deep, dark trauma. I'm not talking about that. You just have to be willing to be open to examining why is it that you're drinking, why is it that you're reaching for a glass or another or another. What's going on underneath the decision? You're always going to find a thought. You're always going to find a feeling connected with that action.

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And I'll tell you this; a lot of people aren't willing to go there. They're not willing to explore this question because there's this fear, if they find anything more than just, I like the way it tastes, or I just really love wine, there's this fear that oh no, something's really wrong with me.

But nothing is wrong with you if you find yourself drinking more than you want to. What's wrong is simply that your brain is on autopilot. Your brain has learned, hey, this is how I deal with deprivation, this is how I deal with feeling annoyed, this is how I deal with feeling exhausted. And your brain is on autopilot.

And unless you're willing to explore what's there, you're going to stay in autopilot. You won't be able to actually change the habit. Maybe the deprivation of saying no triggers resentment. Maybe it's exhaustion. Maybe it's feeling stressed out. Maybe you feel angry at your partner or angry at someone else. Maybe it's low-level worry about everything in your life or what's happening in the world. Maybe it's feeling dissatisfied.

Maybe it's looking around and thinking, is this really what I want to be doing? Is this what I want to be working on? Is this who I want to be with? Is this what I want for my life? I know that asking yourself these questions, why am I reaching for a drink? What's really going on here? I know it can be overwhelming at first, especially if you're used to hiding.

And it can be overwhelming because you simply see all of a sudden, a problem that you don't know how to fix. But the only reason that you don't know how to fix what you've discovered is really simple. Because your brain thinks that the way to fix it is to reach for a drink.

So all you need to do is learn a new way to solve the problem, a new way that doesn't have the repercussions. Because of course, reaching for that drink may help you temporarily move away from deprivation or exhaustion or worry or stress, but you know that it's not long lasting. You know that

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you'll just need another drink. You know that you'll wake up tomorrow in the same boat.

You know that you're going to start feeling, if not already, the repercussions of using a drink as a way to deal with however you feel in the moment. So you have to be willing to look at what's underneath. But here's the thing; so often when I start working with people, they start doing this work and asking themselves, okay, maybe it's more than I'm just a wine aficionado. Maybe it's more than I just love the taste.

And they start exploring what's there, and immediately what kicks in is this thought, "What do I have to complain about? I really shouldn't feel this way. There's nothing really wrong in my life." What happens for so many people on this journey of discovery and really understanding what's going on with the habit, they start to judge themselves.

They judge themselves for what they discover is actually driving the habit. They judge themselves for feeling exhausted or tired or resentful or angry or annoyed or worried or stressed out. All of that gets wrapped into judgment.

And then they try to support the fact that they shouldn't feel the way that they do by looking around the world and looking at other people and saying, "Who am I to complain? I have so much. My life is really good. Relative to others, I'm doing quite well. And here I am, annoyed or pissed off or feeling sorry for myself or worried or stressed and I really shouldn't be."

But I want you to know, this is the problem. It is a problem to tell yourself that you really shouldn't feel the way that you do. Because when you identify whatever's going on, the stress, the worry, the anger, when you start to notice that you are turning to false comfort as a way to try to feel better, a way to try to take the edge off, when you notice that opening a

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bottle of wine or heading to the pantry and starting to snack has become your default response, that is all important information for you.

That is all information that's going to help you actually change the habit. But as soon as you come in with all the judgment and tell yourself that you shouldn't feel this way in the first place and start beating yourself up, what you will do is not want to acknowledge how you are feeling.

You will tell yourself that it is silly or petty or stupid or selfish and you have no right. And you'll just loop back to this thought, I have nothing to complain about. The problem is that doesn't actually help you. That doesn't actually make you feel better in the moment.

For most people, it really just makes them feel worse because now they've just added a dose of guilt and shame into the mix. The more you practice telling yourself you really don't have anything to complain about, the more you block habit change. This is so true. I really believe that this year in particular has so reinforced this incorrect idea that we have that we should not feel the way that we feel.

There's the pandemic going on right now. There's loss of life. There are many people who are recovering from COVID, months after having gotten it. They have these long-lasting side effects that we don't totally understand. There's people who have lost loved ones. It's been really devastating.

There's been this impact on the economy. People have lost their jobs. There's been real financial strain. There's been tremendous impact on families. People are separated. Parents are trying to juggle work and childcare. People who live alone are feeling greater isolation.

And then on top of this, what we've seen this year, there's all the protests and police violence and shooting and a whole host of deep-rooted

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injustices and disparities that affect how people live their lives and how people are treated here in the US.

And that's just what's happening in this country. There's a lot happening all over the world. So you can look at all of this, you can look at the pandemic and the economy and what's happening with schools and what's happening with the police and you can look at injustices, you can look at all of this and you can see many of these are new challenges that we've never faced before. Many of these are old challenges that some people believed were solved that clearly were not.

All of this is happening and if you read the news or you go on social media, if you talk to friends, you'll hear a lot of people say, "I mean, if ever there was a reason to drink, just look at 2020. 2020 is the year of quarantinis and it's the year of getting to-go cups, and it's the year of having alcohol delivered to your front door."

If you've never before really understood that as a society, we have been conditioned to view alcohol as the solution to how we feel, as the thing that's going to help get us through, then all you have to do is look and see what's unfolded over the past year to really understand how deep-seated this belief is.

Now, there are a lot of you who want to change the habit. You want to change your relationship with alcohol. Maybe you have wanted to change the habit and change your relationship with alcohol for a long time. Maybe this is a new issue for you and it's just started to really rear its head during COVID.

Whatever it is, if you want to do this work, you have to understand the inner workings of the habit. Not just what you can see on the surface. Because what you see on the surface is just reaching for a drink or pouring another. That's only one piece of the puzzle.

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Buying the bottle of wine, opening it up, pouring a drink, getting another, none of these things just happen. But for most people, they're all that they see. They're all that they're aware of. But there's always a thought and a feeling driving everything you do, and those thoughts and feelings will stay in your subconscious, they will stay locked away in there unless you start doing this work.

And they'll just keep driving the show. They'll keep you on autopilot. Finding them is the only way to create lasting change. So you have to be willing to ask yourself, how am I feeling? What am I thinking? And not just examine how much you're drinking, not just look at the quantity, not just look at the action. You have to look at it as a whole.

And this is where the thought, "I have nothing to complain about," can really get in the way of change. Because what I'm asking you to do is to start really being curious and ask these questions and look at the entire picture. And you start to get a glimpse that hey, maybe there is a little bit more here than meets the eye.

Maybe there is something happening beneath the surface. Maybe I'm not fully in touch with how I feel on the day to day. Maybe drinking is helping me solve a problem here. Maybe my deprivation, my stress, my boredom, my anger, whatever it is, maybe I actually can look and see how that's connected to my desire.

So you start to realize how pouring a drink becomes a habit, how it's a way that we have been engrained and indoctrinated to take the edge off and to deal with low-level anxiety and exhaustion and frustration and just feeling dissatisfied in life. But no sooner do you get a glimpse of these inner workings, no sooner do you start to see, hey, there might be more going on here than I was fully aware of that your lower brain wants to shut down this level of inquiry.

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It likes the habit. It wants to keep the habit. The habit is easy. It saves energy. You get a reward. You know how to do it. You know how to pour a drink. Why learn something new? And that's what this thought, this belief that you have no right to feel the way you do, that you have nothing to complain about, that's what it's actually about.

It's not about putting your situation in perspective. It's not about looking on the bright side. It's about shutting down habit change. Every time you tell yourself, who am I to complain? Who am I to feel so bad for myself? Who am I to feel stressed out or worried? You shut down inquiry.

These thoughts have you turn away from the inner workings of the habit. You stop looking at it because you tell yourself I shouldn't feel this way. And as long as you believe these thoughts, the habit is preserved. The habit stays on autopilot. You don't actually learn how to change it.

And I will tell you this; I know this from my own experience. I know this from what I watch so many people in the Take A Break challenge do. And what I coach them on. I shouldn't feel this way. I've done it so many times myself.

And not just in this area of my life. I've watched these thoughts, oh, I shouldn't feel this way, who am I to complain, I've got nothing to feel bad about, I've watched this version of a thought pop up over and over again in my life. It's so engrained for so many of us. It really is reflective of how so many of us were raised, that we shouldn't complain, we should think about people who are worse off, we should suck it up.

But the truth is simple. That thought, that belief, it doesn't magically erase how you feel in the moment. It doesn't magically erase pain or suffering. Suffering is suffering, no matter your lot in life. And trying to tell yourself that you shouldn't feel this way, it's not going to help you feel better and it's definitely not going to help you change the habit.

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It's definitely not going to help you change your relationship with alcohol. It's just going to give you a big dose of guilt and shame on top of how you already feel. Telling yourself you shouldn't feel this way will never help you get to the root cause of why you feel the way you do and why you're reaching for a drink.

You're human, which means you're going to experience negative emotion regardless of what you do or don't have in life, regardless of what happens to you. Negative emotion is part of the deal of being alive. It's part of our experience. But you wouldn't know that from everything around us.

You would think that we were all doing it wrong, that we were meant to be happy all the time. And if we're not happy, we need to fix something. That's what advertisers try to sell us. That's what we're being sold. Life with no negative emotions. Just buy this, eat this, drink this, get this, do this, you'll be happy. But it doesn't work that way.

We're made to feel that negative emotions are a problem, instead of a normal part of human existence. And when we don't know how to get rid of them or deal with them, when we don't see them as normal, we search for things to take the edge off. We search for things to cover up how we're feeling.

We drink or eat or distract or keep working or find so many different ways to try not to acknowledge what is really going on. If you have all of your physical needs met, you have food, you have water, you have shelter, you have electricity, what other basic needs there are, you've got it all, listen, you're still going to be unhappy sometimes. You're still going to be anxious sometimes. You're still going to be worried and stressed out and angry and resentful and irritated and bored and lonely.

Nothing's gone wrong. This is just part of being human. Pretending that you don't feel this way, telling yourself that you shouldn't, telling yourself that other people have it worse off, it's not going to help you. The solution is

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learning how to find a new way to relate to those emotions, a new way to deal with how you're feeling that doesn't involve reaching for something or consuming something or buying something or distracting yourself, that doesn't involve negative repercussions. That's the only solution.

The solution is not to tell yourself, hey, don't feel this way. Because as soon as you do, as soon as you believe this thought, you stop the process of changing the habit. You shame yourself into submission. Submission to this deep-seated belief that you have no right to complain.

And honestly, I don't care who you are, it is always going to be possible for you to find someone that your brain deems worse off always. You will always be able to do that, so then what? If it's always possible to find someone who has it worse off, or so we believe, then do we ever have a right to complain?

Are we just trying to reduce the world down to the one person who can certifiably claim that he or she is definitely the person who has a right to feel bad? You see how ridiculous this is. You can be fortunate and feel bad. You can have all the things that you are told will supposedly make you happy. The house and the job and the partner and the kids and the boat, whatever it is, and still be unhappy sometimes and still be stressed out and still be in pain and still suffer.

You have to learn how to make peace with your negative emotions. You have to learn how to acknowledge them as real and legitimate and not a sign that something has gone wrong, not a sign that you need to eat or drink or buy something to deal with them, and not a sign that you're doing anything wrong.

Just a sign that you're human, that you're having the human experience and that no one's ever shown you how to deal with it. No one's ever taught you that it's normal. No one's ever taught you how to handle how you feel in ways that don't sabotage yourself.

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And most certainly, when you give yourself to just feel however you're feeling and acknowledge it so that you can learn how to show up with it differently and not sabotage yourself, you give others space to do the same. We don't go around deciding who has a right to complain and who can't.

I'll tell you, I really realized this recently in my own life. Telling myself that I was so fortunate was really blocking me from processing some pain and trauma that really needed to be processed. That thought, "You're so fortunate," which sounds so good, it sounds so grateful, was not creating good feelings for me.

It was just keeping pain beneath the surface, where I couldn't address it or deal with it. You can have nothing, you can have everything, and no matter what, you're allowed to feel however you do. This is not a competition to see who has it worse. You don't have to prove or justify how you feel.

How you feel is how you feel. It doesn't need evidence. We're not making a court case here. What it needs is a new way of tending to yourself, a new way of caring for yourself. Caring for yourself in a way that doesn't involve eating or drinking over your emotions because every time you do that, you don't actually get to the root cause. You don't actually learn anything.

All you get are a lot of negative repercussions that you don't want. You do zero good for yourself when you're on this journey of discovery, when you're really being curious about what is going on with the habit and you find, hey, you know what, there's some negative emotions that have gone unacknowledged here.

You do zero good for yourself in that moment when you swoop in and believe the thought, I have no reason to complain. You just create more suffering for yourself. Because then you can't tend to what needs tending to. All you do is tell yourself you shouldn't feel the way you do.

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You're trying to will yourself into feeling better, feeling differently, but that's not how feeling better works. When you don't give yourself space to feel, when you don't acknowledge what's actually going on, when you don't acknowledge why it is you're in need of taking the edge off on most nights, if not every night, you just end up numbing.

I honestly think we kind of have a cult around never feeling bad. We are really made to believe that our negative emotions are pariahs and that when they don't go away, when we can't immediately fix them, that we just have to shove them down. Don't cry, don't complain, don't be upset, look at the bright side, look at everything there is to be happy about.

I honestly believe that those thoughts are more damaging than alcohol. Because you can stop drinking and keep telling yourself that you have no right to feel the way you do. You can stop drinking and leave unaddressed the actual root cause of what was going on with the habit.

And guess what, you'll just find other ways to numb your emotions. You'll just find a new set of different repercussions. You're supposed to feel however you feel. You don't need to change it. You don't need to justify it. You don't need to pretend that it's not there. But you certainly can learn how to tend to it and how to respond to it in a way that doesn't create backlash on your life.

You don't need to prove that you have a right to feel however you feel. You just need to acknowledge that it's there, give yourself permission to be with it, so that you can learn how to respond differently without reaching for a drink, without reaching for food, without distracting yourself. That really is the only way to change the habit. 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,

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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.