

## Ep #202: Commitment Misunderstanding



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #202: Commitment Misunderstanding

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 202.

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 everyone. If you are listening to this podcast today, the day that it comes out, it means that it's December. Welcome to the final month of 2020. Can you believe that we made it this far?

I'm going to tell you something. It's not too late to sign up for the 30 most powerful days of the year challenge. This is a special challenge that I run every year inside Take A Break. We do this 30-day challenge during the month of December because this is the time that most people dismiss as being impossible to change the habit.

Who would possibly embark on habit change the last month of the year? But here's what I want you to know. This is the moment where there is so much potential for growth, so much possibility for you to supercharge your results simply because your current mindset is why would I ever do it in December? Nobody would try to change a habit in December.

When you do the work, when you start this work in December, you really have the ability to disprove so much of your thinking and your mindset about what is possible for you. So if you're interested in doing this, we're going to be doing it all month in December, all you have to do is head on over to [rachelhart.com/cleanslate](http://rachelhart.com/cleanslate).

There is still time to sign up. Now, what I want to talk to you about today is really begin a conversation about what I believe are the pillars of habit change. Now, when anyone signs up for my 30-day Take A Break

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challenge, one of the things that they start with are going through the four pillars of habit change.

These pillars really are essential if you want to change your desire to drink and your relationship with alcohol. Because what I am teaching is not how do I get through 30 days of not drinking. It's how do I actually rewire my brain? How do I actually change my desire? How do I change my relationship with alcohol?

And that cannot be learned unless you master these pillars. So the four pillars that I teach inside the 30-day challenge are commitment, urges, habits, and the self-coaching model. Now, the self-coaching model simply is the tool that we use to take the think-feel-act cycle, which I'm always talking to you about on the podcast, that's what we use to actually start to put it to work.

So I'm going to spend the next couple podcasts really dedicating each episode to one of the pillars, and today we're going to be talking about commitment. Now, before we dive in, I do want you to know this; it is one thing to learn about the pillars of habit change. It is another thing to learn how to use them.

So we're going to be just introducing you to the idea of the pillar. Once people are inside the challenge, that's when you start to practice, that's when you start to really learn, hey, how do I use this? How do I go beyond a concept and turn this into a skill?

But now the other thing to keep in mind is that you're not going to master this in 30 days. This really is a process that you have to keep coming back to. I say this over and over again, but learning how to change a habit is skill-building. And like anything, you have to practice.

So if you think about the body, there are muscles that you need to regularly use and work out in order for you to stay in shape, in order for you to have

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mobility and flexibility. Well listen, the same thing is true with your brain. You can't just pay attention to it once, or you can't just say I'm going to pay attention to it for 30 days and then shut the door on it.

You have to be willing to continue this process, and that's why for people who continue beyond the 30-day challenge, so we have that option for people to continue beyond and to do the advanced work and to really embark on a journey inside Take A Break, they keep coming back to the pillars over and over and over again because it's something that you're really learning to master.

So let's talk about what it means to master commitment. When I talk about mastering commitment as a skill, what I'm talking about is becoming someone who really trusts yourself to keep your promises. I will tell you, this was not me. I did not feel like I could trust myself at all to keep promises, especially when it had to do with anything that I felt kind of compulsive around.

Anything where I noticed myself having strong desire. So I could keep my promise to show up to work. That I could do. But I didn't for a long time feel like I could keep my promise to have one glass of wine, or keep my promise to have one cookie. Anything that felt like, god, I have a lot of desire, a lot of urges, a lot of pull, that was a big struggle for me. That really is something that you can learn how to do.

Now, what I teach is learning how to have your back. People ask me what this means all the time. What do you mean when you say learning how to have your own back? And I think why this is so confusing is because we think of commitment as a process of perfection.

Okay, so I wasn't perfect, I just got to figure out how to be perfect next time. But that's not what I'm talking about. When I'm talking about having your back, I'm talking about how you learn to pick yourself up, learn from what happened, and then keep going.

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That's where I was stuck for a long time because in between moments when I would have a night where I'd be like, what happened, we just had anything we wanted to drink or anything we wanted to eat, I would have such a long period of time before I could get myself back on track.

And really, for me, mastering how to be committed to my promises and how to have my back, it was just continually shortening and shortening and shortening the time. So it wasn't about how do I become perfect, which is where most people really spend their time thinking.

Okay, how do I not make a mistake? How do I not screw up again? It was what do I need to do to get back on track? And that really changes your entire focus. When you shift from okay, I got to never make a mistake to hey, how do I get back on the horse? That is why commitment is a practice because you can learn the fundamentals in 30 days.

But the work of becoming someone who trusts yourself and always has your back and can pick yourself up more quickly each time, that really is like going to the gym. That's really something that you need to practice over and over again.

Now, what I specifically want to talk about today is something that a lot of people get confused about when it comes to commitment, and I kind of term it commitment misunderstanding. And what people misunderstand when it comes to commitment is the essential nature of commitment and what commitment means.

And I think the reason why we have this widespread misunderstanding of what commitment is is simply the way that we define it. So I was looking in the dictionary. I went through a lot of different definitions, and I found that they all kind of sounded similar.

So here are some of the definitions that I found for commitment. The state or quality of being dedicated to a cause or activity, the act of binding

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yourself intellectually or emotionally to a course of action, and an agreement or pledge to do something.

Now, all of these make sense. I understand what these mean. So the problem is when we take these definitions and we then expand them and try to apply them to what I am teaching in a 30-day challenge, what most people do is they come into the 30-day challenge and what they believe is okay, so I signed up for this 30-day break, so I'm dedicating myself, I'm pledging myself, I'm binding myself to not drinking.

And this is where you're wrong. This is where I was wrong for a very long time, and this is where commitment misunderstanding comes in. Because when your focus becomes all about saying no to a drink, you will be led astray.

As strange as this sounds, and I know it does, as strange as it sounds to tell yourself I'm not supposed to just be focused on saying no to a drink, and in fact, I don't want you to focus on not drinking, this really is the path you have to challenge yourself to head down.

Because when you focus on not drinking, what you are doing inadvertently is teaching your brain that the solution to the habit is simply saying no. But the problem is that saying no will not change a habit and I know this because of my own attempts over many, many years to change the habit of drinking, to change my relationship with alcohol and having many times tried to do this simply by using the tactic of just say no.

I talked about this before on the podcast. Right after my 22nd birthday, I stopped drinking and I said no to drinking for almost an entire year. And you know what, my desire was still there. It was totally unchanged. Yes, I felt healthy, yes, I enjoyed waking up and not having to worry about what I did or said the night before, but I still really wanted to drink a lot.

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I really wanted to be like everyone else. I really wanted to cut loose sometimes. I really just wanted to have fun. I really wanted to feel uninhibited. And all of that meant that I still really, really, really wanted to drink. It didn't matter that I had gone a year without drinking because my focus had just been on saying no.

I didn't understand that that is only one piece of habit change and on its own, it is not enough and it will not change your desire. This is what no one teaches us. Habit change is not just about what you do or don't do. It's not just about saying yes or no to something because whatever you say yes or no to, that's an action.

So the action of saying yes to a drink, the action of saying no to a drink, it doesn't just happen in isolation. This is why we talk about the think-feel-act cycle all the time because everything you do or don't do, including whether or not you reach for a drink, it's connected to what you're thinking and what you're feeling.

And when we just focus on saying no, we're only looking at one part of the equation. And that's why people can go long periods of time and feel like, hey, why do I still have all this desire? This really is something that it takes a while for people to truly wrap their brain around.

How is it that you can say no to a drink for a long period of time and still want it a lot? And on the flip side, how is it that you can say yes to a drink and not have as much desire? And actually sometimes not want it? That's the piece that blows people's minds. It blew my mind. And I watch it happen with my clients when they're like, wait a minute, I love to drink, this is my favorite drink, and I just had it and I don't really want it and I don't really like it, that is so wild.

That's when I know my clients have really turned a corner with their desire, when they say, I sat down and I poured myself a glass of wine, which normally would have been the best part of my evening or the best part of

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my day. And normally, I would enjoy it so much. And I started drinking it and I realized I didn't even want it and I stopped drinking halfway through and I didn't actually enjoy it that much.

When you are in the habit and you are so used to just drinking and drinking quickly and wanting more and feeling more and more desire, to have that kind of moment, to have that kind of change, it will blow your mind. It will stop you in your tracks because you'll see, oh, my desire does not have everything to do with whether or not I drink.

Now, how on earth is this possible? Because the chemical composition of alcohol doesn't change. The chemical reaction in your brain doesn't change. What changes and what changed your desire was what you were thinking and your experience of it.

That's how your desire changes. Now, I often give this as an example because I think people have had this experience and can understand it outside of the realm of alcohol if you think about how your desire can change in a romantic relationship.

So if you think about maybe there's someone who you're super attracted to and you really desire them a lot and you fantasize about being with them and you just are filled with a lot of desire, and then you learn something one day and your desire suddenly changes. It shifts.

So if we're to take a really extreme example with this, let's say that you're attracted to someone, you have a lot of desire for them, and then you learn something about them that you just really don't like. Maybe you learn - if we're going to be really extreme, maybe you learn that they hurt animals.

Now listen, unless you're into hurting animals too, your desire is probably going to take a nosedive. But now here's the thing I want you to consider; the person is still the same. They haven't changed one bit. The only thing that's changed is your thinking about them.



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That's how powerful your thoughts are. And when you understand this power, you start to see, oh, what I think matters so much more than I think. So then the focus isn't just about saying no. The focus is what is my mindset around drinking.

Now, I want to really caution you with this because I know that some of you right now are hearing me say this, you're hearing me say how powerful your thoughts are when it comes to your desire and you're thinking, okay, so I just got to convince myself that I hate alcohol. No, please do not do this. It really does not work.

It might work sometimes in the short term, but I promise you, it really does not work in the long term. To try to convince yourself that you hate alcohol or that it's bad for you or that it's poison or that it's toxic, when in fact you still have a lot of desire, all that happens is you turn it into the forbidden fruit. You end up actually increasing your desire because you tell yourself I can't have it because it's bad for me, but secretly I still really want it.

So I want you to really pay attention here. Although mindset is really important and paying attention to your thoughts is really important, you cannot force it by trying to make yourself hate alcohol. The solution is not to force yourself to hate it. It is to give yourself an accurate understanding of your current relationship with alcohol and why you developed that relationship.

That is what most people are missing. When we say we love it, when we say that our favorite drink tastes amazing, when we say that it's the best thing ever and it makes every situation better and it makes me better, when we say all of those things, what we end up doing is we don't end up questioning those thoughts. We don't end up examining them and holding them up to the light and seeing, hey, you know what, is something else also true?

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One of the exercises that I have people do when they continue on in Take A Break, so they continue on beyond the 30-day challenge and they stay on to do the advanced work is I have people who are interested - not everyone wants to do it, but some people do want to incorporate alcohol back into their life.

And so I offer them this exercise about mindful drinking. So if you haven't heard of anything like this or done anything like this, it's really where you're consuming alcohol very consciously and with your full attention. And I will tell you, if you've never done an exercise like this before, it doesn't have to be with alcohol. Maybe you may have done it with food.

It really can shift your entire perspective. People will say when I really pay attention, when I'm really conscious about consuming alcohol and I'm mindful about it, I don't actually like the taste that much, or not as much as I think I do. Or they will say, when I really pay attention - I had someone say this recently in a coaching call.

She said, "I really pay attention, I get a very clear signal from my body to stop. But then I blow right by it. I don't want to be mindful, I don't want to pay attention to it, I don't want to listen to the fact that I'm getting very clear information that I shouldn't have more."

And I remember discovering that for myself and how powerful that was for me because oftentimes when I was very stuck in the habit, I just felt like, oh, I just always want more and I just can't ever stop. My default setting is more, more, more. But when I really started to pay attention, I was often getting signs where part of me was saying don't have more Rachel, you've had enough.

But because I was slipping away from being mindful and I was going into this more unconscious consumption, I would just ignore it. But here's the thing; when you start to do this, you start to really understand why you're in the relationship you are in and also if you make the decision to consume it

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in a more mindful way, you start to get more information to understand how the habit is working.

And then you start to see, hey, it's not just this black and white I love to drink, I love the taste. You start to understand, well, that's not the full truth. You can get to this place of realization. Because that's really what it is, you have this realization that oh, I have multiple thoughts and multiple feelings and multiple experiences when I drink and it's not just I love it, I love it, I love it, I love it.

But also, you can't get to that realization if you're just trying to convince yourself I hate it, I hate it, I hate it, I hate it, it's poison, it's toxic, it's bad for me. Because that's not creating realization. That's just trying to jam thinking down your throat, and we all know that that does not feel good. Nobody likes that.

And that is why I think it's so important to really bring this back to commitment and understanding commitment and understanding why we're so confused about commitment, why we have so many misunderstanding about commitment.

Because when you take a 30-day break from drinking, you aren't dedicating yourself to not drinking. And I know that sounds really weird, but it's really important for you to just sort of spend some time hanging out with this idea. You're not dedicating yourself to saying no. Your commitment, the pledge, the dedication, what you're binding yourself to is feeling uncomfortable.

I really want you to pause and have that sink in. Your commitment is to the act of feeling uncomfortable. Your commitment is really about allowing yourself to feel whatever comes up when you say no. It has nothing to do with what you pour in your glass.

And I will tell you, it took me years to understand this and years to understand why all my past attempts had failed. But when I did, when I

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understood oh, commitment isn't about me saying no to a drink, commitment is my willingness to feel uncomfortable, that's when everything changed.

I talk about this, that decisions are really easy to make but they're hard to follow through on. So it's very easy to say that you're going to do something. It becomes difficult when all of a sudden, it's the moment for you to follow through.

And listen, this isn't just true with the decision to drink. It's true with every commitment you will ever make in your life. Maybe it's losing weight or getting in shape or saving money or staying married or writing a book or whatever, going after your dreams.

The only reason that these commitments are hard to follow through on is because of how you feel when it comes time to honor your commitment. So it's not the decision that's hard. It's the emotion that is hard. I really want you to think about that. Not drinking is easy. It really is.

What is challenging, when you're resisting, what you're moving away from is how you feel when you say no. Because you're used to just covering that up. You're not used to managing deprivation or anxiety or annoyance or frustration or awkwardness or insecurity or boredom or loneliness. You're not used to managing that on your own. You're used to pouring a drink to try to solve these emotions.

But of course, the drink doesn't actually solve them. They just come back the next time. And your brain still doesn't know how to manage them. When you start to see that commitment is not about just say no, it's about your willingness to feel uncomfortable and keep taking action, that changes everything.

Now, I know that a lot of you hear this and you feel a little freaked out at the idea of welcoming discomfort. But the only reason that you are a little

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freaked out by this is because all of us, and I mean all of us have been fed a lie. And the lie is that discomfort means you're doing something wrong, that everything in life should be easy and effortless and that if it's not, there is a problem. That's the lie.

Discomfort is not a problem. Discomfort is the path. Discomfort is how you grow. And the better you get at managing discomfort, the more goals you will reach and the more dreams in your life will come true. That is really the only thing standing in the way of you and the relationship that you want to have with alcohol. It's discomfort.

Are you willing to feel whatever comes up? Are you willing to feel unsure and insecure and awkward and inadequate and disconnected and confused and anxious and unworthy? Whatever comes up for you. Are you willing to do that or are you just going to pour a drink so that you can temporarily mask that feeling?

That is what commitment is about. Now here's the thing; the more that you teach your brain that discomfort isn't a problem, the more that these emotions become something that you're able to handle on your own, and they're no longer a reason to drink, not only will the habit change, not only will your relationship with alcohol change, but your entire life will change.

Because once you realize that the worst thing that can happen for you is feeling uncomfortable, and then your brain knows, oh, but I can handle discomfort, I don't need to drink over it or eat over it or distract myself from it, I don't need to run from it and hide from it, when you discover that, then you become unstoppable.

It's the willingness to move forward even though you feel unsure or shaky or scared. It's the willingness not to drink even when you feel deprived or unhappy or awkward or lonely or bored. Commitment is really just boiling down to a willingness to feel your feelings and learn how to manage your

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feelings, including the ones that right now, you have gotten very good at trying to avoid.

Because here's the one thing that I know. We don't get to delete emotions from our life. We don't get to look at a menu of emotions and say I just have decided I don't ever want to feel anxious or bored or lonely or insecure again. We don't get to do that.

What we do get to do is learn how to manage them so much better, learn how to move through them without creating all these negative consequences. Because that's what I was doing for such a long time. I didn't know how to manage the deprivation, or the awkwardness, or the disconnection that would come up.

And so I would try to drink as a way to mask it, and of course, because I didn't know how to manage my emotions and I didn't want to feel any discomfort, guess what, I would have more desire to drink and then I would create all this negative emotion. Then I would have all the negative consequences from drinking more than I wanted to.

And then I would have even more to deal with. But you can teach yourself, hey, I can actually learn how to move through discomfort. You teach yourself how to make it be less of a problem. Drinking will be comfortable in the moment. Saying yes to the urge will be comfortable in the moment.

But you already know that after that moment has passed, you're just going to want more. You are going to have more long-term discomfort. Your brain likes to be efficient. It likes to keep doing what it has been doing. And the comfort, that momentary comfort that you get, it just leads to more discomfort down the line because you're never learning how to manage how you feel without turning to putting something in your body.

And the way out of this is a willingness to be uncomfortable because you know that letting go of that instant gratification is actually going to create

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long-term, the life that you want. So right now, you've been practicing drinking. And yes, in order to change the habit, you have to practice not drinking. But it can't just be about saying no.

It can't just be a focus on alcohol. It has to include this willingness to examine what's going on, this willingness to be uncomfortable, this willingness to do something that feels wobbly or unfamiliar and know, hey, that's how I'm teaching my brain. That's how I'm actually changing the habit.

That willingness to be uncomfortable, that determines whether or not you will succeed. So your ability to commit, it isn't about who you are. It's not about trying to become a more disciplined person. It's about how you feel when it's time to follow through on a decision.

Commitment really boils down to your willingness to feel uncomfortable and keep taking action. And the more you practice that, the bigger your life will get. Because everything that you want to do right now in your life and you aren't doing is because you haven't been willing yet to feel that discomfort.

But you can start to teach your brain that discomfort really is not a big deal. I want you to see that this is the misunderstanding that almost everyone I work with has with commitment. The work of commitment is not just saying no. The work of commitment is understanding that you can handle any emotion that comes up no matter what.

You don't need to pour a drink to handle any of it because here's what you discover when you start doing this work, how you feel is created by what you're thinking. Think, feel, act, it all goes together. So if you're feeling uncomfortable, you don't need to look at what isn't in your glass. You need to look at what's happening in your mind. But you must start by really understanding commitment in a new way.

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Alright, so here's the deal. If you want to do this journey with me in December, if you want to do the 30-day challenge and really take advantage of the more powerful days of the year to supercharge your results and to have the greatest possibility for growth, head on over to [rachelhart.com/cleanslate](http://rachelhart.com/cleanslate).

There will still be time to join during the first week of December. Alright everyone, that's it for today. Have a great 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](http://RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.