

Ep #204: Habit Mindset



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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 204.

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. We are talking about the habit mindset today, which basically means what you think about alcohol, what you think about your desire, what you think about your urges and your commitment and yourself. All of this matters so much, and I will tell you, it is the part that most people want to skip over.

Most people will say, who cares what I think? Just teach me how to say no. But guess what, you can't say no if you don't understand why you're saying yes. And that's what your habit mindset will show you. The reason that you're saying yes is always based on what you're thinking.

This is a really big part of habit change. Examining your thoughts is something that I focus on in my 30-day challenge because it's not just about giving your mind and body a break from drinking. It's not just about saying no. It's about learning the skills and practicing what you need to actually create lasting permanent change.

So when I do that, we walk through four pillars. Four things that are essential in order to change your desire to drink. We focus on commitment, urges, habits, and then also the self-coaching model. So this is how to take the tool that I talk about all the time on the podcast, the think-feel-act cycle, and actually go from intellectually understanding how it works, to a tool that you can use all day long.

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These skills are what you need not just to change your drinking, not just to change your relationship with alcohol, but to change your desire. But not only that, they really are life skills. They really are skills that once you understand the basics, you can start applying them to everything in life.

But you have to really have this belief that your mind is something that needs to be exercised. It needs to be something that you look at and you examine. It's not something that you can just say I don't want to pay attention to you, you're not worth my time, I'm too busy. It has to be something that you see is important to work out.

So in the last two episodes I talked about commitment and urges, and today I'm talking about habits, specifically about your mindset. Now, I talk a lot on the podcast about how habits work and how they form and why we have them and the lower brain and the higher brain, but I don't really want to talk about structures today.

Understanding the structures of your brain, that's actually very important. It was a very important piece for me to understand oh, I actually have different parts of my brain and they do different things and I can learn how they operate. That was actually incredibly empowering.

But what I want to spend time today talking about really is more of your mindset. Because that mindset piece is what is fueling the habit. It's not alcohol fueling the habit. This can be a really hard thing to wrap your brain around at first because it's like, no, it's the alcohol, it's the thing that creates the reward in my brain, it's the thing that I'm desiring, obviously alcohol is the thing fueling the habit so I just need to get rid of the alcohol and then I won't have the desire.

But here's what so many people discover. I discovered this myself. I would go long periods of not drinking and I would still have a ton of desire. I removed the alcohol but the desire was still there, so what did that mean?

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Well, I will tell you, for a long time I thought well, maybe I'm just stuck with all this desire. Maybe because I can't just get rid of alcohol, it exists in the world, maybe I'm just always going to be bogged down with all this desire, even if I'm not drinking. That was incredibly depressing for me.

But it turns out I was just focusing on the wrong thing. I didn't understand that it wasn't alcohol that was fueling my desire. It was what I was thinking. It was my mindset.

Now, in order to do this, you have to bring your mindset to your conscious awareness. That's not where it is right now. Right now, it's in your unconscious mind. So really starting to look at and see what your habit mindset is, it's the act of bringing awareness to these thoughts that you might right now not have full awareness about and you have to start surfacing them because you cannot change a habit from the level of where it is right now.

It's in your unconscious mind. You have to change it from your conscious mind, which means we have to start looking. Okay, well, what are the thoughts connected to it? What's actually fueling it?

Now, one of the things that I think is so important to remind yourself before you start looking at your mindset is that alcohol is just neutral. It just is. It is not good, it is not bad, it is not the best thing ever and it is not an evil that was brought on by mankind.

Alcohol is just a natural byproduct of living on Earth. I think this is really important because we get so caught up in the good and the bad and the right and the wrong that often we don't even realize that we're swimming in the story of alcohol, rather than just recognizing it just is.

Things on this planet, when it comes to life, things can grow, they can decompose, and they can ferment. And if you put yeast in an oxygen-deprived environment, guess what's going to happen? That yeast is going

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to excrete ethanol in their attempts to burn glucose. It's going to create alcohol.

Now, humans did figure out how to take the process of yeast fermenting sugars into alcohol and humans figured out how to harness the power of fermentation on a larger scale. And we figured out how to create alcohol with different colors and smells and flavors and compositions.

But alcohol still just is. It's just a fact of life. It's one oxygen atom, two carbon atoms, and six hydrogen atoms. But our story of it, our thoughts about it are so much more complicated. And that's what you need to start uncovering. That's what you need to start paying attention to. That story is what is truly fueling the habit of drinking.

Now, you might say, well yeah, but if I never had a drink, I never would have formed a habit. So isn't it really the action that I should pay attention to? Now, for everyone who's been listening to this podcast for a while, you know what I'm about to say. Your actions don't just happen. They don't just appear out of the clear blue sky.

That's what the think-feel-act cycle shows us. That our thoughts and our feelings and our actions, they're all interconnected. We don't say yes or say no or do or don't do anything without a corresponding thought and feeling. But that thought and feeling is what is often not in your awareness. It's a mindset, it's like an operating system that's running in the background that we don't really fully realize is even there. That's what you have to pay attention to.

It is not enough to just say, just say no, to just use willpower, to grit your teeth. That is only going to take you so far. You have to understand what's going on behind the decision to say yes or the decision to say no, or the decision to stop by the liquor store, or the decision to pour the bottle down the drain. You have to understand the entire picture, which means not just

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focusing on what you did or didn't do, but looking at what you were thinking and feeling beforehand.

This is not what we're used to doing. This is not what we're taught to do. When people want to change a habit, they focus almost exclusively on the action itself. We do this not just with drinking, but with everything. We do it with eating and watching and spending and working and procrastinating.

We are obsessed with the action. What we don't realize is that that's just one piece of the puzzle. Habits, all habits, not just the habit of drinking are created first and foremost by what is happening in your mind. Your thoughts, your beliefs, your stories. That's why your mindset is so important.

And most of that, it is below the level of your conscious awareness. Even if you have been listening to the podcast, I will tell you this, I see this so often inside the Take A Break challenge. I will be coaching people and they will be people who have been doing this work and they've been long-time listeners and they have finally decided that they're going to do the 30-day challenge and they think they know already everything that they think about alcohol.

And it's not until they start working with me, or they're on a coaching call with me, and all of a sudden they start to uncover, oh my gosh, I didn't even know that thought was there. That really is the lie. It is so easy to really trick yourself into believing, oh yeah, I know what I think about it.

But guess what? Unless you have really consciously done this work and treated it like going to the gym, I guarantee there are thoughts there that you just have no awareness are driving the habit right now.

Now, when I start talking about what you think about alcohol and your mindset and how important that is, people will assume what I mean is that you have to think a lot of negative thoughts about alcohol in order to

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change the habit. And I'm just going to tell you right now that is not the case. That is not what I'm saying at all.

And in fact, that is very likely going to backfire. Because when you have a lot of desire for something and then you try to convince yourself that it's bad, you try to convince yourself that it's so unhealthy, what you inadvertently will do is turn it into a forbidden fruit. You'll actually start to want it more because now it's this thing that you're telling yourself you shouldn't have.

So it's like you end up creating this kind of facade of not liking it and not wanting it, when deep down you still really want it, you still have a lot of desire. And guess what happens? The facade crumbles and your desire is there.

I think that is what is so important to really understand. You don't have to be afraid of your desire. You don't have to pretend like it's not there. In fact, being really honest with yourself about the desire that you have and how much you want something is often the most powerful thing that you can do.

I think about it sometimes kind of if you have ever thought about or tried to talk yourself out of liking someone. I have done this myself. I remember doing this several times in my life. So I had feelings for someone who I didn't want to be attracted to for a whole host of reasons, and I would spend a lot of air time talking about how much I didn't like the person and how they were a jerk and how I couldn't stand them.

But deep down my desire was still there. And what I didn't understand at the time was that I would have been so much better off just acknowledging that I had desire, that I liked the person, and then being curious why. What's that about?

But instead, I had so much judgment for having the desire, so I couldn't even be curious with what was going on. But when you're curious, that's

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what reveals so much more of what's happening in your mind. This game of pretending that you hate something that you don't actually hate, it's not going to get you any closer to understanding how the habit is working or what's really going on.

And this is what I see with a lot of people who come to the 30-day challenge from other programs. Because there are a lot of other programs out there that really focus on how bad alcohol is for your body and how unhealthy it is, and they really do see that as a way to convince you to kind of see the light and finally figure out how to say no and to stop drinking.

And listen, I will tell you this; I do think it's important to know what alcohol does in your body and how it actually functions in your body. And I do believe that most people do not have a good handle on this because as we get older, we are very quick to chalk up any kind of low-level health issues that we're having, whether it's with sleep or digestion or energy, we're very quick to say like, I'm just getting older, that's what this is.

And so because we have an excuse for it basically, what so many of the people that I work with discover is that once they take a break from drinking, it's like, wow, wait a minute, what's going on? I thought I was just feeling this way because I was old. But all of a sudden, my sleep is better and my digestion is better and my energy is better and my mood is more stable, and I guess maybe alcohol was having more of an impact on my body than I realized.

But notice, none of this is coming from a place of hate or it's evil or it's bad. It's just coming from a place of curiosity. I had this the other day on a coaching call with a woman who was saying she was eight days in and she was saying that she just couldn't believe how much better her sleep was.

And she wore one of those devices, I don't know exactly what it was, but she wore one of those devices that actually tracked her sleep and she was

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realizing that she was actually having longer and more restful sleep. And she couldn't believe it. From eight days.

So I do think it's really important to know what alcohol does in your body and how it affects you. And I believe many times, people will have no idea and they'll never actually attempt to figure it out because we're so quick to just say well, I'm just getting older, this is what it's like.

And I also do believe, just talking about this piece about how alcohol impacts us, I do believe that a lot of the messages we get are really confusing. Is alcohol this health tonic that mankind has used for thousands of years and really heart healthy? Is it aiding in many of the illnesses that we have or is the leading cause of preventable death?

I do think that the messages we get are really confusing. Now of course, the answer is both. It is true that alcohol has been around for thousands of years and humans have used it as a tonic and they've used it to treat illness. And it's also true that alcohol is one of the leading causes of preventable death.

But listen, the reason why I bring this up is because I can always tell when someone is kind of in the territory of the forbidden fruit, when they are telling themselves that the way to be successful is to start disliking it and to hate it and to remind themselves how bad it is for them because I can hear it in how they talk about alcohol.

And I'll hear them say things like it's terrible, it's awful, it's damaging, it's disgusting, it's destroying your body, it's ruining your health. The language is so strident. But you don't need to aggressively hate something. If you're just like, oh, alcohol is just part of being alive, it's just part of living on this Earth, it's not a villain, which is good news because when it's the villain, then you're the victim. And that is not a good place to be in.

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So you don't need to demonize alcohol and you also don't need to make it off limits. I think this is the other really powerful things. Convincing yourself that you can't drink or you aren't allowed to drink, that also can be a big problem because then you're ignoring the fact that the truth is you have free will and you always have free will.

Telling yourself you can't do something when of course you can actually do it, it just ends up feeling like you're kind of lying to yourself. It's so much more empowering to say I can drink and here's why I want to, and here's also why I don't want to and acknowledging this discrepancy and being curious about it and curious about what's going on.

Because then you're still in the realm of it's a choice, it's a decision. Telling yourself that you can't have something when you actually can have it, it just makes you resentful and wanting to rebel when there literally is no need to. You don't need to rebel against something that you have permission to do. It's so much more powerful to say I can and here's what I'm choosing, or I can, and I don't want to, or I can have as much as I want and here's what I'm deciding to do. That's so much more powerful.

But the reason why I really want you to understand that alcohol is not good or bad, it just is, and that you don't need to hate it, you don't need to make it off limits in order for you to really truly change the habit is because once you realize this, then you can just stop focusing on alcohol itself and start looking at your mind.

Hating it, making it off limits, that's an external focus. That has you looking outwards. It has you focused on alcohol. I don't want you focused there. That's the wrong direction. I want you looking inwards. I want you to start saying, hey, what's happening inside of me? What's happening with my thoughts? What's happening with my feelings?

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I want you to start paying attention to this mindset that you've not been paying attention to, and in fact, the habit wants to stay. It wants that mindset to stay in your unconscious brain.

Now the good news is you have the ability to bring it to your full awareness. What you need to really start to do is uncover the thoughts behind the habit. Your thoughts about alcohol.

What does it mean to drink? What does it mean to be the person who's not drinking? What does it mean to be the person who drank too much last night? What are your thoughts about desire? What does it mean to have a lot of it? What does it mean to struggle to say no to your desire? What does it mean if you find yourself saying yes more than you want to?

You have to uncover your thoughts about commitment. What does it mean to have a certain number of failed attempts to change your drinking, or to have promised yourself that you would say no and then you said yes? What does that all mean? And you have to uncover the thoughts that you have about yourself and your ability to change.

I have people work through when they first start in the 30-day challenge, I have them work through four questions that really help uncover their mindset. Really focusing on okay, so what is my mindset about me and my ability to change, my mindset about desire, my mindset about commitment, and my mindset about alcohol.

Because all four of those areas are really creating your unique experience with the habit. You have to be willing to look at whatever is in there, whatever thoughts you have, so that you can see what's actually fueling the habit, so that you can change them.

Because I will tell you this; if you have thoughts like well, I don't know, I have an addictive personality, or I'm just missing an off switch, or I'm just a compulsive person, or being compulsive or addictions run in my family. Or

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if you have thoughts about your desire that it's too hard to say no, my urges never go away, they're so uncomfortable.

If you have thoughts about your commitment that sound like well, I've tried a million times and nothing works, or I'm terrible at following through, or I just can't make things stick, or I don't have any willpower.

If you have thoughts about alcohol like life would be boring without it, drinking is normal, it's what normal people do, I need a buzz to open up, drinking is how I meet people or how I have fun or how I watch the game or how I make friends or how I have sex or what I do on Fridays.

If you have all of these thoughts and you're ignoring them, you are ignoring working with everything that is currently fueling the habit for you. These thoughts, they are playing out in your mind whether or not you like it. Whatever your version of these thoughts are.

They are part of the habit cycle, whether or not you want them to be there. And if you don't uncover them, if you don't start looking at them, you're going into habit change blind. It's like you're missing the map. That's what uncovering your habit mindset is all about. It's giving you the map to start to create permanent change.

But when we don't want to look at our mindset, when we don't want to look at our thoughts, we don't give ourselves the map. So then we're just wandering aimlessly, trying to figure out, is this going to work? Is this going to work? We end up just focusing on saying no instead of examining why have I been saying yes. That is the more powerful place to look. Why have I been saying yes?

That's where the real change takes place. Not at the level of doing. At the level of thinking and understanding. You cannot change the decisions that you're making around alcohol without uncovering why you've been making those decisions in the first place.

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You have to pay attention to that habit mindset. And so really, that's what I want to encourage you to do. Whether or not you're part of my 30-day challenge, pay attention to this. Ask yourself, what are my thoughts about myself and my desire and my commitment and alcohol?

Treat it like you're going to the gym. Don't try to do this in your head. Get it down on paper. All of your answers are going to give you the map that you need to change the habit permanently and to change your desire. And without that map, it will feel very, very difficult and very frustrating to change the habit.

But once you have that habit mindset, once you can see what's going on in there, all of a sudden, you have every step that you need to take in order to create the change that you want. Alright, that's it for today. Next week we're going to talk about the last pillar of habit change so stay tuned. I'll 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 and start your transformation today.