

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 208.

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 what other people think and other people's opinions about your decision to take a break from drinking. So wherever you fall on the spectrum I have clients who will say, "It really bothers me what people think." And I have clients who say, "I don't care one bit."

Wherever you fall, this episode is really important for you because the fact of the matter is no one – no one goes through life impervious to other people's opinions of your choices. We all have to learn how to deal with that and learn how to support the choices that we make regardless of what anyone else thinks. Understanding the real reason why you care about other people's opinions, that's important. Most people are very confused on that front and we're going to be talking about that today.

And you also need to know what to do if you're feeling stuck, if you're feeling like you can't move forward, you are delaying making a decision about taking a break or changing the habit because you're very fixated on worrying about what other people will think. Everything that I'm going to talk to you in today's podcast is really how you start to change. How you can start to move forward.

Now, I want to start with the real reason why we care about other people's opinions of our choices around alcohol, or just other people's opinions in general. Most people will say, "Well, I just want to be liked. I just want to be

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

accepted. I just want to have people supportive of whatever I decide to do.” And why not, it feels good. But I really want you to think about this.

Someone liking you or your decisions, it doesn't feel like anything at all. In fact it does not create any feeling inside of you. It creates a feeling for the person doing the liking. It creates a feeling for the person having the thought, I like her. I like her decision. I like what she's doing. The person thinking the thought is the one who experiences the feeling. You do not experience anything with regard to their thoughts, someone else's thoughts creates their feelings. It doesn't feel like anything for you until you make it mean something.

So let's just take it out of the realm of alcohol for an example. Maybe you've had someone, maybe you found out once that someone liked you and you didn't like them. Now, I remember this happening for me, especially when I was younger, maybe when I was in elementary school or middle school. And I'd find out that someone liked me and I didn't like them and I'd think, gross, I didn't want that person to like me.

Now, if people liking you created your feelings then whenever anyone and I mean anyone, had a positive thought about you it would feel good for you too. But that's of course not what happens. Sometimes people like you and it feels good. Sometimes people like you and it feels bad. And sometimes people like you and we immediately dismiss it. Someone's positive thoughts about us, someone's positive thoughts about what we are choosing to do, does not create how we feel.

Think about this, think about all the times that someone, maybe a parent, or a sibling, or a partner, or your best friend, or even a stranger told you something positive about you, told you how much they liked you. And they said, “I love you. You look amazing. You're so smart. You're such a good friend.” Think about all the times that you've immediately dismissed their words. I used to do this all the time. I would to say, “You have to say that.

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

You're saying that because you're my mom, or you're my sister, because you're my boyfriend. You have to say that, you have to be nice to me."

So I do want you to think about this because it is a concept that applies to everything in life, not just people's opinion of our decisions that we make around alcohol. But we believe that we want people to be supportive because we want them to like us and like our decisions because that feels good. But that's not what happens. People are liking us, they're liking the decisions that we make and we say, "Well, that doesn't count." We argue against their positive opinion. Here's how you're wrong. Here's what you're missing. Here's what you can't see.

This is us arguing against it, if it feels so good why aren't we basking in how good it feels? Because of course, it's not what someone is saying or thinking about us, it's what we're making it mean. You have to start believing that you care what people think because it feels good when people like you, or support your choices, and that it feels bad when people don't like you and don't support your choices. These things, whether it's related to alcohol or anything else, it doesn't feel like anything until you think a thought, until you make it mean something good or bad about you.

And most people until they learn thought work they do this completely unconsciously. They make other people's opinions mean something about who you are completely unconsciously. Because until we learn thought work we're not aware how our thoughts create our feelings. We think that our feelings are created by everything external to us, including what other people think of us and what other people think of our choices.

So we just assume that it's other people's opinions that create how we feel. And so then we spend all this time trying to make sure that other people's opinions are good. Not acknowledging that a lot of times people do have positive opinions and we're dismissing them because of course what matters is our opinion of ourselves and our opinion of the choices that we're making.

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

Now, I think it's really important to understand why we care so much about this, why we care so much about what other people think. And it goes beyond just well, it feels good, which is what most people say. I think it's important that we really understand the evolutionary design behind this. Acceptance was part of survival. Other people's opinions of you mattered a great deal when your survival depended on being accepted in the tribe.

So this wasn't just about wanting to be liked, it was about wanting to stay alive. Because if you were part of the tribe, part of the group it was going to be easier for you to find food, and water, and build shelter, and fend off attackers or predators. Being part of the group, being accepted had a survival advantage. So it's hardwired into the brain to move towards acceptance and away from rejection, not because it feels good but because the lower brain thinks that survival is on the line.

Now, of course your survival is not on the line right now, you can find food, and water, and shelter, and safety as an individual. You don't need to be part of a group. We aren't living in a world anymore where we need to have the advantage of being in a tribe. You have to remind yourself however, what is really happening in your brain, that's why I think it's so important to understand this evolutionary aspect to it. The fear of rejection can feel so strong, and so intense, because it's really about survival, that's what it was about. But now you have to remind yourself, I'm okay, I'm going to be safe. I can make different choices.

I can have people have a whole array of opinions about the choices that I make and I'm going to be okay. My survival is not on the line here. Sometimes you just really have to remind your brain that it's operating an old program. I think it shows up really in all areas of life. And caring about what people think, it's not just related to the decisions that we make around alcohol, of course it shows up for a lot of people in many different areas of life. So we are worried about how people will perceive our attractiveness. We are worried about what people will think of the things that we say.

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

We are worried about how people will perceive the things that we do. I don't want to be seen as weird. So it's normal to care about what people think because of how humans evolved. This idea, well, I shouldn't care at all, I should be beyond that by now, well, that really only happens if you do the work to get beyond it, if you do the work to understand why your brain cares so much about acceptance and rejection. And what that's truly about, how that's connected to evolution.

And then also start paying attention to, you know what? It's not what people think of my decisions, it's what I make their opinions mean, that's what's creating my feelings. You can hope that this just happens unconsciously for you, that you unconsciously get to the point where you say, "You know what? I don't care. The most important thing is what I think and what I believe about myself." You can hope that that happens, but I find that most people have to do the work. I don't want to just unconsciously hope that I reach any point.

I want to make sure that I'm consciously aiming the ship to where I want to go. I think that this really started to put into perspective for me what was going on when I was really worried at first about what people would think of my choice to take a break. Because once I understood what was really happening here and how it was what I was making their opinions mean.

And this fear of rejection wasn't that I was being silly or childish, it was really connected to an evolutionary desire to survive. Once I understood all of that then I can start to really practice, okay, listen, it's going to be uncomfortable for me at first if people have opinions that are negative. Because I'm used to really trying to make sure that everybody has positive opinions of me, or not sharing something if I fear that the opinion will not be positive. But I'm going to teach my brain that you know what? I can handle rejection, it's okay, it's survivable.

People can have their opinions but whether or not it's painful, whether or not it hurts has to do with what I make it mean about me. Now,

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

understanding this doesn't mean all of a sudden that your fear evaporates. This is a longstanding thought pattern that most people have practiced over, and over, and over again. But it does mean that you're able to show up with your fear differently because then you can see what's really going on. So it's sort of like you're looking under the hood. And suddenly you can actually understand how the engine works so that you can start to fix it.

Now, the other reason that people say they care about what people think with regards to the choice to take a break around drinking. They'll say, "Well, it will just be easier if the people in my life support me." And again it sounds on the surface like that makes a lot of sense. Of course, if everyone's onboard with what I'm doing, won't it be easier? If everyone thinks this is a good idea then it will be smoother sailing.

But again whether or not someone thinks your decision to take a break is a good idea has no bearing on how hard or easy you find it to say no to a drink or no to an urge, or to be curious about your mind. Just think about the examples in your life, it doesn't, again have to do with alcohol.

I have had this example where I've been in a situation where I wanted to end a relationship. All of my friends were onboard, they were all saying, "I'm so glad you finally came to your senses, I never really liked this guy you were dating. I never thought he treated you very well." But you know what? That didn't magically make breaking up with someone easy. It didn't make getting out of the relationship a breeze because I still had to do it.

I still had to face all of my uncomfortable thoughts and all of my uncomfortable emotions about what ending the relationship would mean. And would I find anyone else again? And maybe this person was the best that I could do. Just because people were onboard with my decision didn't mean that I got a free pass and didn't have to deal with my thoughts and feelings. I didn't get to bypass any of that. I still had to do the work.

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

And this is what I see all the time in the Take A Break Challenge. So I see people start the 30 day challenge and spend a lot of the time focusing on it would just be so much easier if my partner, or my family, or my best friend was supportive of the decision that I was making to take a break.

And here's the problem, instead of focusing on their own thoughts about alcohol and how they feel, and how it feels for them to say no to an urge, and what their beliefs are about what saying no to a drink means about them. They spend all this time fixating and getting everyone in their life onboard with their decision.

And the problem is it's a diversion. It diverts you from the work that's actually needed, which is focusing on your thoughts. Because at the same time I have lots and lots of people in the challenge who have family members, and partners, and friends who are totally supportive, they're over the moon that they're doing this.

And you know what those people say to me? "Well, it's nice but it doesn't change that I still have to figure out how to do this. I still have to figure out how to deal with my permission giving thoughts and my urges. I have to deal with all my excuses when I'm used to just drinking over my feelings." All of this comes into play when it comes to talking about people and your decision to take a break.

Because if you're telling yourself, well, it will be easier if people support me or I just want people to be onboard, I just want people to support my decision then you're diverting your attention away from what really matters. What are you making it mean that you've decided to take a break? What do you think about being the person at dinner tonight who's going to say no to a drink or who's going to say no for the next 30 days, or 60, or 90 days, or however long you decide that you decide that you want to do this work? You have to get really clear on those thoughts first.

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

I was teaching a class yesterday and I had someone who was in the Q&A and that person wrote, “But how do I take what you’re teaching on the podcast, how do I actually put it into action?” So when I say things like, “What do you think about your decision?” You hear me say this over and over and again, “You have to get these thoughts on paper. You can’t just think about it, you have to get them on paper and start to really examine the thoughts that you have and what you’re making it mean.”

You have to start to understand, okay, if my thoughts create my feelings how do I feel when I think these thoughts? And then knowing that your feelings drive what you do or don’t do in life, how am I showing up? Any time you’re hearing me on the podcast talk about, “What are your thoughts? What do you think about it? What are you making it mean?” It’s an invitation for you to start doing the work yourself, to get out a pen and paper.

I don’t want you to just sit and passively listen because I can teach you a lot of concepts but until you start doing the work yourself, until you start looking at what’s in your brain, and you cannot do that by just thinking about what’s in your brain. You have to get it down on paper. You have to get some distance from it. Until you start doing that work you won’t be able to start shifting the patterns that created the habit.

So often what you’ll end up doing is focus on other people and what they think, which really doesn’t matter. And I know this because I used to do this too. I neglected to examine what I thought. I wasn’t asking myself, what do I think about the decision to take a break. I was very focused on what I believed other people would think about the decision to take a break.

Now, when you start examining what you’re making it mean you’re going to start to find the thoughts that are fueling the habit. Thoughts like well, I shouldn’t need to take a break. Maybe this is a sign that something is wrong with me. Maybe this means that I really have a problem. I think that I’m not going to be much fun for the next 30 days. I think that I’m going to

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

be boring. I think that my life isn't going to be as enjoyable. It's so important that you uncover whatever your version of these thoughts are for you. That's the real work that you need to do.

Now, when it comes to talking to people about your break, I really recommend that you get very clear on all of this first. So you really do the work to understand it's not their opinion about my decisions around alcohol that's creating how I feel. You really have to do the work to see, no, it's what I'm making it mean. Really do the work to examine your own thoughts to remind yourself why it is that you are so worried about rejection and that what rejection is really about.

Your lower brain is thinking if she's rejected, if he's rejected our survival is on the line. You have to remind yourself, no, that's not what's going on here. So I really recommend that you do that work first. Then when it comes to talking to people about your break, the fact of the matter is you don't need to tell anyone. It's not a requirement to succeed. Because first and foremost what's just really important is that you're honest with yourself, you're paying attention to your thoughts.

Everyone that I work with makes different choices. Some people tell everyone that they're close to, that's important for them. Some people don't tell anyone. There's no right or wrong here. What's really important is what's motivating your decision to either tell people or to keep it to yourself. What you need to be clear on is what are you worried about?

And if you do decide to tell people, it's really not complicated. All you need to do is say, "Yeah, I've decided to take a break." And if they ask why then you just tell them the truth, "Because I didn't like how much I was drinking, or because I want to reset my relationship with alcohol. Or because I just wanted to see what my life would be like without it. Or because I didn't like the habit of opening up a bottle of wine every night." Whatever your truth is you can just tell them.

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

Now, any and all questions that other people may ask you about your break, their questions of, “Well, how long are you going to do this for? And can’t you just moderate? And are you going to keep doing this even when it’s my birthday?” You have to remember that those questions are all about the other person’s thoughts about alcohol. They have nothing to do with you.

I really want you to think about alcohol being totally neutral. It’s something we talk about on the podcast all the time. It has no meaning, it existed before humans existed. It has no meaning until the human mind attached meaning to it, which by the way, we’ve spent about 5,000 years creating stories about alcohol and what it means to drink, and what it means not to drink. So we’ve had thousands of years practicing these stories. When in truth alcohol means nothing and your decision to drink or not to drink means nothing until the human mind comes along and starts to judge it.

I’ve talked about this a lot before but I think it’s really easy to fall into the trap of thinking oh my God, it’s such a big deal if I don’t drink, or if I’m the only person at dinner not having wine. And I understand this because my brain thought this too. But you really have to start to challenge this and question this. I started doing this by saying, “Really? Really, Rachel, is it such a big deal? What if I just talked about grapes instead of wine?” That’s what wine is made from.

If I was the only person at the table not eating grapes would it be that big of a deal? No, of course not, but why is that? Because we don’t have a story about grapes, we haven’t been indoctrinated with beliefs about what it means to eat grapes or what it means not to eat grapes. We aren’t told, “Everyone, everyone eats grapes, normal people eat grapes. If you don’t eat grapes it means that you’re boring, or you’re uptight, or you’re going to ruin the party.”

And if you used to eat grapes but now you don’t eat grapes it means you have a problem and that something was wrong with you, and that you

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

couldn't control yourself. No, we're just like, it's grapes, who cares? I don't care if I eat grapes. I don't care if you eat grapes. What I care about is do I like this person sitting across the table from me? Do I want to connect with them? Do I want to know more about them? Do I like myself as I'm sitting at the table? Do I feel comfortable? I don't care what someone else puts in their body.

I think really that work of starting to see that the beliefs and the stories that you have around alcohol and what it means to drink and not drink, you didn't come up with them. You were taught to believe these things. We were indoctrinated to believe certain things about alcohol and drinking. And these stories are operating in our unconscious. And unless you surface them, unless you see that they're there, and that they're totally made up by the way, completely made up, you don't have an opportunity to challenge them and question and you know what? Decide what you want to think.

I'll just end on this note because over the holidays I watched the new Wonder Woman, so Wonder Woman 1984 and it was okay, it was a fun watch. But I will tell you I really loved the Wonder Woman that came out in 2017.

And I was thinking about that movie, the 2017 Wonder Woman a lot when I was preparing for this episode because I watched that movie and there's so many great scenes where – if you haven't seen it, Wonder Woman. Diana is living on this island paradise. She is princess of the Amazons, only women live there. They are all warriors. They are all powerful. They are all strong. They can do anything. And in that movie she arrives to London in 1918. So she has grown up as this Amazon princess who can do anything.

And all of a sudden she is in turn of the century London. And she encounters all this sexism, so women can't vote and women have no business being in a meeting unless they're a secretary. And men whistle at her on the street and she's expected to wear a corset. And her opinion is

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

not taken seriously. People are kind of confused, the men around her are kind of confused when she talks and shares her opinion.

And the thing that I love so much about that movie and I think really applies here is that when she encounters the sexism she isn't angry, she isn't trying to convince people that she really has merit and they should value her opinion. And that people should take her seriously. She's just confused. She's just like, "What's going on? I don't get it." Because she has no context for sexism because it doesn't exist, she lives in a world where the human mind didn't create sexism, it didn't create the story that men are superior and women are inferior.

And I just love this so much, I was just watching her not angry, not trying to convince people but just being totally confused by it because her brain has no context for it. And I think that this applies so beautifully when it comes to alcohol. If you grew up without any of the stories that we have about what it means to drink and what it means not to drink, and what it means to struggle with saying no.

If you didn't have any of the stories and you were at a dinner party and you didn't have a drink and someone made a big deal about it you wouldn't be angry or trying to convince them that no, actually my decision not to drink is really great and it's very important to me and I don't have a problem. You would just be confused. You would just be like I don't get it, what's going on here, because you wouldn't be indoctrinated with this belief system.

I also think that this applies when it comes to if you started drinking and then you notice that you were struggling, you were drinking more than you wanted to, you were struggling to say no. It wouldn't be this huge big deal. It wouldn't be this thing that you had to be really worried about necessarily, or this thing that you had to hide from other people, or that you didn't want to talk about. You'd just feel like I need to figure this out, what's going on, because it wouldn't have all the story attached to it.

Ep #208: Talking to People About Your Break

Really if you take away anyway, it's not what people say, it's not how people react to the decision that you make around alcohol, it's what you make it mean. And when you truly feel good about your decisions around drinking, and that goes both for taking a break and drinking a bottle, when you feel good about your decision then what other people think is irrelevant.

And if you don't feel good right now, no matter what decision you're making, if you don't feel good that's okay too. It just means that you now need to focus on you. You need to focus on what's happening in your mind. You need to pay attention to your thoughts. If you focus on other people it will just divert your attention away from where you really need to be. It's not other people's opinions that are so important, it's yours.

And if you want to start putting everything that I'm teaching here into practice, get a piece of paper, get a pen and start writing it down. Start asking yourself what are these thoughts creating for me? How do I feel? How do I show up when I think this?

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 and start your transformation today.