

Ep #213: How a Sommelier Changed Her Desire



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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 213.

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.

Alright, so welcome everyone. I am so excited because we're actually going to do something a little different today. A couple of weeks ago my team got an email from a woman named Molly who had completed the 30 day challenge and wanted to share her experience. And I will tell you, we get emails from people who completed the challenge all the time but this one really was different, it really stood out. And I want to read a little bit of what she wrote to us.

So she said, "I took your 30 day challenge and it changed my relationship with wine after two decades of struggling with overdrinking. Now, this was really miraculous because I am also a certified sommelier. And I spent a long time pursuing a love affair with wine. Your program helped me step by step change the habit especially the part about creating new types of pleasure. When I tell other people about it they are amazed that a certified sommelier could accomplish this."

So I will tell you, I read this email and I thought we've got to talk to Molly because I hear from so many people and I remember myself thinking for a very long time it's going to be impossible to change the habit of drinking. It's going to be impossible to change my relationship with alcohol. But I do hear in particular from people who say, "I really can't do it because I'm a chef", or, "I work in the restaurant industry", or, "I own a winery", or, "I write about wine for a living." And I really do think that Molly's story is such a powerful example that truly anyone can change the habit.

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So I'm so excited to have you here today Molly.

Molly: I'm just thrilled. I can't wait to share this story with your audience.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean I think in particular it sounds like you thought it was going to be impossible for you to change your relationship with alcohol. And other people are surprised to hear that you are able to do it as someone who is a wine expert and certified as a sommelier.

Molly: Well, Rachel just to give you a little bit of the history because I don't feel like that even gets to the heart of it. I grew up in an Italian family where my grandparents and my great grandparents literally made wine in their basement. So wine, it has just been so much a part of my identity from the very beginning. And it started there, my parents love food, my dad in particular, so I also grew up in a family where we talked about food all of the time. My parents had wine time every day at 5 o'clock.

And this was just very much a part of our culture so much so that I decided to leave graduate school and become a professional chef. So then there was the association of good wine and food which was another layer of all of this. And I loved wine so much that I decided to become certified as a sommelier. And it was just a huge part of my identity.

And so the idea of not drinking was something that I just literally could not imagine because I truly believed that good food was meant to be paired with good wine, that the way to unwind at the end of a day was to have one or two glasses of wine, that was just something that I was used to. That was just a part of me. But I also reached a point in my life in my 40s where I realized that something really needed to change.

Rachel: Yeah. Tell me a little bit more about that, realizing something didn't feel good about how you were drinking or something didn't feel good about the habit, what did that look like for you?

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Molly: Well, I started – I mean I'll just describe it as kind of an intuition. So I guess about in my mid 30s I was waking up every night with insomnia. And just I was thinking well, maybe it's because I'm getting older.

Rachel: Right. This is what we always tell ourselves, because I will say I had that experience as well, that I would – I'd usually wake up around two or three in the morning. And I was like well, I guess this just happens when you get older.

Molly: Yeah. And that's what I believed. And I also believed that my anxiety was because it was just something that was in my family. It wasn't until I changed my relationship with alcohol that all of that changed. I just had no idea at the time what was causing it. But I did have this kind of intuition that alcohol was not helping me. It was really just sort of this knowing. And it was, I'll be honest with you Rachel, it was scary because I didn't want to let go of wine. I didn't want to change that relationship.

But it's sort of that intuition that I had was there and I kept coming back to it. I would wake-up in the middle of the night and there was just something that was saying, "This needs to be changed." And I couldn't imagine how that would happen. I didn't tell anybody by the way. I didn't talk to my husband about it. I just thought no, I mean I can't imagine not having a couple of glasses of wine every night. I enjoyed drinking, it helped me decompress. I thought of it as my time, my time away from the kids, my time to just relax, my time when I was cooking dinner.

I mean there were just so many aspects of my day that I associated with drinking. And let me also just tell you, I mean I was having maybe two to three glasses of wine a night so I didn't consider myself to be an alcoholic. I didn't think that it was a huge problem. But I certainly got to this place in my 30s where it was affecting my life. And I thought this is something that needs to change. But it was several years until I was really willing to do something about it. And it got to the point where I was just so exhausted. I was tired of not sleeping well.

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I had on and off anxiety and I remember sitting on my couch one night after I had brought the kids home from school and it was my usual routine of having a couple of glasses of wine. And just really feeling dissatisfied and thinking is this what midlife is supposed to feel like? Because I wasn't actually happy or satisfied, so as much as I had that pull every night of I really want that glass of wine. And it really did feel like a strong pull. It wasn't really providing relief. And I think that's where it was sort of a breaking point for me where I just thought something needs to change here.

Rachel: I really have to say I love the way that you describe it as an intuition because I have never used that word myself. But as you say it, it really resonates with me. That there was this knowing, or this little part inside of me, a little niggling that was just like, Rachel, something's not right here. This doesn't feel good, for all that I was kind of like I love to drink, I love a fancy cocktail, drinking is amazing. It was a part of me that was just like it doesn't feel good. And much like you, I didn't want to talk about it with anyone. It wasn't something that I could conceive of for different reasons.

I didn't grow up in a family that particularly drink a lot. I mean my parents really don't drink that much. But it was so something that I saw as part of my identity. And so I had that knowing. I had that intuition of something is not sitting right about this. But then I would look at my life and be like, well, how is this even going to work? How is this even possible? It felt so impossible. And because I didn't want to talk to people about it because I had so much shame connected to the idea that there are normal drinkers and there are alcoholics and there's nothing in between.

And so I also went many, many years of having this knowing and feeling very stuck. And so I can really identify with what you're saying. And I think a lot of people who are listening can identify with that piece.

Molly: And the difficult thing is that it's hard to translate that intuition into an actual solution. I think because it can feel scary. I mean that's how it felt to

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me. It's like okay, I have this sort of sense of the direction I need to head in. But I have no idea how I'm going to get there. And so it's just the sort of thing where I would just put off and put off but it didn't go away. And then I just felt worse and worse.

And it was around that time that I was listening to your podcast. I had tried just not drinking. I thought okay, because this is what I had done before with kind of eating and other things, was like I'm just going to try and do it on my own. I thought the solution is I just have to stop and just not have it be part of my life. The problem that I ran into was that I still had the desire there. And so it felt like the habit was changing a little bit but I just, I kept getting drawn back to it.

And then what happened is I would have weekends, instead of drinking during the week I would drink over the weekend but then I was really overdrinking because it was almost like I was using willpower during the week. And I just couldn't wait to have a couple of glasses of wine over the weekend. So that didn't really feel that much better.

Rachel: Well, I think what happens for a lot of people is, so we have this knowing, we have this intuition, we don't want to talk about it with anyone because we often have a lot of kind of, it either feels impossible and/or there's shame, or embarrassment, or guilt, why can't I figure this out? What's going on with me? What's wrong with my brain? That was a lot of the kind of narrative that was running inside of my head.

And then I would look out into the world and for a very long time the only options I saw were you have to stop drinking for the rest of your life. You have to put a label on, declare yourself that you're an alcoholic. And that you are powerless when it comes to alcohol. And basically do the 12 steps. And none of that was appealing to me. And so I really did feel like I was in this place of no man's land. What on earth am I going to do? And so I also did what you talk about, I talk about this in my book and on the podcast, how I would take breaks from drinking.

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So I'd be like okay, no more, I'm not going to drink. My desire wouldn't change. So I would feel better. I would feel good. I would wake-up and be like okay, I am sleeping better and I have more energy. I'm not waking up in the middle of the night. I notice I don't have as much anxiety. There were so many things about my health that felt better but I still had all the desire there. And so that's why I would always then get to the point where I would just say, "Screw it. I don't want to do this anymore", because I was just battling with the desire.

And so I'm curious to hear from you, what helped start to shift your desire? Because clearly it wasn't just about saying no to a drink, you knew that you could do that. But you would do that and then you'd have all the desire.

Molly: Well, one of the things was that I felt like I was changing the habit but I still had the desire there. And there was just like a huge void. In fact the way I thought about it was well, this isn't fun. I'm not having any fun. Because I hadn't really – and this was one of the things that really convinced me to sign up for your program was this, I listened to one of your podcasts about cultivating pleasure. And I thought okay, it's not – you don't just change the habit and then think, well, I'm going to figure out how to have fun or it will just happen naturally.

You actually have to create a new habit of self-care and enjoying things in a different way. And deliberately directing your brain towards that because for me it just felt like it was okay well, if I'm not drinking what is there? I hadn't learned how to create pleasure in new areas. And I remember one thing that you had asked was, "How did you used to have fun when you were a child before you started drinking?" And that was just a moment of awareness for me because I thought yeah I do know how to have fun. In fact before alcohol was even around it didn't even occur to me to drink.

Rachel: Right. I had so created this schism that there was boring Rachel and fun Rachel. And fun Rachel came out when there was alcohol involved. And so it really did feel like okay, if I'm going to say no to drinking

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or change this habit, it felt like I was packing away the part of me that was fun, which no one wants to do.

And I think so many times people will say – I was actually just coaching on this inside the challenge. She was saying, “I feel better. I feel healthier. I see that there are so many benefits but I’m still really struggling.” And my question to her was, “Okay, how much fun are you having? How much pleasure is in your life?” Because being healthy is great, but I think it can only take us so far.

We are meant to experience pleasure. And I don’t think that it’s ever sustainable to try to change any habit and just do it from this place of virtue, and “good for me,” and healthy. It’s like we want to have pleasure, and connection, and fun, and spontaneity, and enjoyment. And I had to learn that actually I could do that without alcohol. And I think that’s one of the – why that exercise is really powerful because we start to remember, right, I did actually know how to do this at one point in my life. It’s just like the brain became lazy once I brought alcohol into the equation.

Molly: Absolutely. And I remember you asking, there was something that was really powerful for me in the program, this was sort of a starting point was okay, you need to look at how alcohol is helping you. I mean what is it solving for you? Which is a question that I had never asked, I never looked at how it was benefitting me from a really curious place.

Rachel: Yeah. You only want to look at how it’s bad. We only want to look at like I don’t feel good, and there’s extra calories, and it’s screwing up my sleep, and I wake-up feeling regretful. Yeah, we only want to look at how it’s harming us and the bad things about it. But it only gives us such a small; it’s like such a narrow part of the entire picture.

Molly: Yeah, absolutely. And I thought well, I just know I shouldn’t be doing it, instead of just thinking well, let me just understand myself on a deeper level and see what is it that I really need? I mean I’ll tell you, if there was

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one major shift that happened it was that because I started to look at, okay, how do I need to relax? How can I decompress? How can I have me time? And I started getting creative about ways to do that. And it was a process of exploration.

It wasn't like every single thing I tried was the right fit. But it got my mind at least exploring other ways to relax and to have fun. And to enjoy food without alcohol and things like that. I think that's a piece that's really missing for most people is they just can't imagine well, okay, if I take this out then what? It seems like it's going to be boring, it's not going to be fun. They don't realize well, actually the process, in order to really have it I think take root is kind of creating that pleasure and creating new avenues for self-care.

Rachel: And I'm just curious what it means for you. You did get certified as a sommelier. So what does that then look like for you? Because I do have a lot of people who say, "Listen, I own a winery. I write for a wine magazine. I work in the restaurant business." So I think there is this sense of my entire life has to have a radical overhaul in order to make this work.

Molly: Yes. That was a huge issue for me because I had this belief I have to become a different person if I'm going to do this. Here I am a certified chef. I'm a professional chef, I'm a certified sommelier. How am I just going to transition into a life where I'm not overeating or overdrinking? Because overdrinking was also a big contributor to me overeating, I mean I want to make that point too. So I really had to grapple with this. And I'm going to say, I want to be honest that it took a couple of months of me thinking about, okay, who am I without these things?

And again it was scary but in the absence of alcohol, in the absence of all the extra food I had a lot more energy and mental clarity to explore other things that I really love. And I'll tell you that my life has just kind of exploded as a result of that in ways that I never imagined. I mean my level of

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creativity is just completely different. I love to write so that's something that I spend a lot of my time doing.

And so I think that in the beginning it can be hard to imagine what your life is going to look like. But again it was for me at least through that process of creating pleasure in new areas, refocusing my desire and my mental energy into new things. I mean I'll tell you, I feel like I am a much better mom. I'm a much better spouse because I'm so much more engaged. So it's little things like that that just my life has completely transformed.

But I know in the beginning it felt like a huge reach. It did feel like I have to change my identity because I couldn't imagine what all of those steps would look like. I think this is one of the real stumbling blocks for people, is they feel like they need to be able to anticipate every single step along the way. And then sometimes when we can't picture that we just don't try at all. Instead of just trusting, okay, I'm going to take the first step and I'm going to start to understand myself. Or I'm going to start to understand how drinking is helping me.

And then connecting to yourself, understanding more about who you are, I mean that's sort of what it looked like for me, is kind of incrementally I learned more about myself. I started focusing my time and energy in new ways. And I still, at my core I'm the same person. But I also have, I feel like a much richer life now because it's not bogged down by thinking about drinking, focusing on it, having a lot of that mental chatter, having the desire, feeling ashamed, I mean all of those things that come with it.

Rachel: Yeah. I think how often people, and myself included, felt like this is going to be a journey of giving things up. This is going to be a journey of loss. And not understanding, I mean I had no idea, when you talk about how your life exploded, I had no idea that things could explode. I had no idea that I was going to free up so much mental energy that then I could put to use. And it's so interesting because I really remember thinking this is

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who I am. I am just a girl who's always up for a good time. If you want to get a drink after work, pick me, people knew who to ask.

And to now be in this place of I just became more of me and more of someone that I really like. And that I think was very hard for me to wrap my brain around because I was so judgmental of myself, in large part because I often was very judgmental of this habit. Why did I have it? Why was I struggling with it? Why did I drink too much last night? Why can't I figure this out? Why doesn't my best friend struggle with it? So I was so judgmental of myself and I remember thinking, I don't want to be more of me, I want to be less of me.

But then here I am in this place of like it's really stepping into, I really like who I am, I really enjoy spending time with myself. I really enjoy what I'm interested in. And feeling like – that I think is often the missing piece. When you're just locked in the struggle of okay, well, fine, I'm not drinking but I still have all this desire it's just not sustainable. But when you start to do this work and I think everything that I ask people to do, why I'm always saying, it's not crossing days off a calendar.

Let's just look at the habit. Let's look how it's helping you. Let's look how you think that alcohol is connected to your identity. Let's look at beyond the idea of it's good for my health. Start to really connect with yourself in a way that I think a lot of people don't even realize is possible and might not even want to because they think well, I don't really want to connect with myself. I don't really like who I am.

So I love kind of hearing that from you about this, you know, your life has kind of exploded and you just had so much more mental, I think a bit like mental space because we're just not thinking about drinking all the time.

Molly: Right. And I think that most people probably aren't used to spending time with themselves. And what I mean by that is, really even understanding how they feel, I certainly wasn't. And by the way I never

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thought of as myself as an emotional person because I just wasn't even in touch with how I felt. But that was one of the sort of the miraculous things that happened when I changed my relationship with alcohol is all of these emotions came to the surface.

And that's actually how I started to understand myself more because I realized, okay, this is what this particular experience means to me. And I started learning how to validate some of those feelings. And it was interesting because not only did I feel a lot more confident about what I felt but also about my beliefs personally, because I was learning how to take care of those feelings without turning to alcohol or turning to food. But I think there is this uncertainty, because most people don't have experience in that and we don't even realize what's there.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean one thing that I know a lot of people who are listening to this and thinking because I of course get this question all the time. They'll be like, "Okay, so what does this mean, Molly? Have you sworn off alcohol for the rest of your life? Are you never drinking again?" I talk about you can change your relationship with alcohol and that means what feels right for you. So what feels right for you?

Molly: Yeah. And what feels right to me is not to swear off alcohol for the rest of my life. In fact I was in a place in the beginning of this journey where I thought I just need to swear it off. And what I found was even just saying that made me feel resistant. Okay, it's just forbidden. This is something you talk about, Rachel a lot, is like the forbidden fruit. When we say, "Okay, it's bad or you can't have that", there's more of an intense desire. And so I realized that, it's just not useful for me to say I'm swearing it off.

What I have decided is that on special occasions I'm just going to be very deliberate about how much I drink. So I don't drink most of the time. I don't drink during the week the way I used to which has just had a huge impact on my energy and my ability to sleep. I can't remember the last time I had

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an issue with anxiety. That's almost completely disappeared, which has been amazing. I haven't sworn it off.

For me it's like, okay, if it's New Year's Eve and I want to have a glass of champagne I'm going to really think deliberately about it and decide. And then just be very mindful when I drink it. So that's the decision that I have come to.

Rachel: I think it's just really – it's really important for people to hear that and understand you really do get to decide what feels right for you. You really do get to come to a decision for yourself. And it's not about you're really going to be better off if you never have a drink again. I just know that for me that was just so intimidating. It was so intimidating to be like really, never again for the rest of my life? Especially when I had so much desire, so the idea, I had all this desire and then I was like okay, so the only solution is to never drink again.

I really do believe that people can change their relationship with anything. And part of it is actually learning how do I trust myself? And what does that trust look like? So a lot of people will say, "I just want to learn how to moderate." And I always push back on that because I think it's really important that changing your relationship and learning how to trust yourself, and making deliberate decisions is not about a number. It's not, like people will sometimes say, "I just want to be someone who can have two glasses of wine and be done with it."

And the fact of the matter is, is that number, if we're just focusing on a number it's really like diet mentality. It's just going to have us paying attention to the number rather than our body. And the fact is do you know what? Two glasses doesn't always feel the same in your body. It doesn't feel the same on Monday as it does on Wednesday, or depending on how much sleep you got, or what emotion, you know, what emotional state you're in before you start drinking.

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And I think that is the piece that I think has – we talk about it much more in terms of food and people changing their relationship with food. I hear much more of that conversation. But I think when it comes to alcohol people are really afraid to kind of think that people can do that. To think that people can be like, yeah, you can learn how to trust yourself and your own knowing, just like it was your own intuition that said, “Hey, Molly, I just don’t think something’s right here.”

If that was the intuition that started you on this path, part of it was okay, how do I listen to that part of me? Because I had trouble listening to that part of me because there was so much fear, so much worry, so much like well, there goes my life, there goes fun, there goes the first dates and intimacy and everything with it. And so I just think that’s something that we don’t talk about enough and really can be something that people can learn and recapture, and figure out what is right for them.

Molly: Right. And I think that that’s something that’s really unique about Take a Break because it begins with this idea of just accepting yourself where you are. For me that’s what integrity is. I didn’t realize it at the time. I thought integrity is just doing the right thing which means giving up alcohol. In fact integrity was about just meeting myself at this place where I really wanted to drink every night. And then knowing, okay, there’s this other part of me that wants something different, but how can I understand both sides?

And understand okay, the part of me that has benefitted from this and that really wants it. And then there’s this other part and they can both be there, instead of the division that oftentimes we create of, you know, you’ve talked about this on your podcast, one person is the enforcer, and then the other person is rebelling. But I think trusting yourself means listening to both sides and saying, “Okay, how can I really understand the whole me?” And that, I really agree with you, I think that really is the missing piece, because you drop the resistance then.

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And from a place of acceptance and compassion it's just so much more effective to take care of yourself, and to kind of honor both desires. You talk about competing desires, so honoring both of those desires without just saying one's good and one's bad.

Rachel: Yeah. I love how you say it. I think it's so beautifully put to say, "Meet yourself where you are." And so sometimes it really just is acknowledging, listen, I'm drinking a bottle of wine every night and that doesn't mean I'm a bad person. And I don't have to hate myself. And there's no need to beat myself up. But I'm doing this so let's understand why. And for a lot of people where I see that initial resistance is just like, well, I just love wine or I just love the taste. I'm just really into craft beer.

And so I think a lot of times that's that initial resistance. But if you really are like, if I just am curious that maybe it could potentially be bigger than I just love the taste of this, and I just can meet myself where I am. And say, "I'm doing it and I don't really like the results and I notice that I really want to do it." It's just that to me, it's such a kind of an easier place than where I think a lot of people go is I'm going to beat myself up.

And a lot of approaches out there really want people to start to believe, you know what? Alcohol is a poison. It's really bad for you. Let's talk about all of the terrible things that it does to your body. And it's not like, listen, alcohol does have a negative impact on your body. I just think when we label it as a poison and we still really want it, we still have a lot of desire, it just makes it so much more difficult to start to unravel what's going on.

And if you do drink after labeling it as a poison you are just going to go so much deeper into I should have known better, what's wrong with me? It's hurting my body, why would I do that? And I was just like we don't need to do that. We don't need to hate something and label it as evil and bad in order to decide, you know what? It's not really working for me and I want to change this.

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Molly: Yes. I mean you talk about this just kind of neutralizing it saying it just is, it's just something to drink. And I think people, we're so attached to this idea that we should beat ourselves up. The way to improve or to change is to just punish ourselves. And I think most of us don't realize that just creates so much more resistance that makes it so much harder. I didn't realize that until I just made this conscious decision, okay, I'm not judging myself anymore. It is what it is. And there was so much freedom in that.

It was so much easier for me to just kind of consciously make some changes and start to understand the habit more. So yeah, I think that's a big stumbling block for people.

Rachel: Now, you said that you had taken breaks before. So when you did the 30 day challenge it wasn't the first time that you had taken a break from drinking. Were you nervous about it? Were you thinking I've already done it before and why is this going to be any different? What was that like for you to kind of say, "Yeah, I'm going to try this challenge?"

Molly: Well, I had like I said earlier I tried just stopping on my own. I said, "Do you know, I'm just going to take all the wine out of the house. This is going to be cold turkey." I'm going to abstain is the way, which I really don't like that word because it makes me just feel restricted. But that's the way I thought about it. And what I realized is that I still had a lot of that desire there. And I'd been listening to your podcast and I'd been thinking about these ideas of cultivating pleasure.

I think it was just, it was scary for me because in some ways I thought okay, if I sign up for this program – I mean I wasn't sure what to expect. I don't know that I fully understood what the coaching aspect was going to be like. But what I did realize is that I just wasn't successful doing it on my own. And the truth is this is one of the areas now in retrospect that I identify was my biggest struggle was learning how to really handle urges for drinking.

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And I thought that I was allowing urges the way you kind of, you talk about it some on the podcast. I thought I was doing it the right way but I wasn't really feeling any kind of relief. And so I thought I just need some kind of tactical support with this. And that's really what I got on the program. I remember I did one of the live calls with you and I talked to you about a situation where one of my family members was in town. And I had this urge to eat and I had this urge for a glass of wine. And I also felt really irritated. So it's like I felt I had these competing emotions.

And you described to me your three step approach, stop, drop and breathe which was just gold because then I sort of knew how to think about urges differently. And nobody had really explained it to me that way. That's the sort of thing that you just don't figure out on your own. And so knowing okay, when this happens, here's something practical that I can do to first identify what's happening, to kind of step myself through it.

So at that point I just knew it was kind of a no brainer. I really need somebody showing me what's going on in my mind, showing me how I can feel empowered in the moment, stepping me through it. But the key for me was just in a non-judgmental way. I think that's what appealed to me the most was not feeling like I had to swear off alcohol. Or I had to just admit that I'd done something wrong or any of those. Let's just kind of understand where the habit is coming from and let me sort of show you step by step how you can think about it differently.

Rachel: Yeah. I think I love hearing all of this because I know that so many people who go through the challenge really say so much that's very similar. Okay, is this going to work? And then what if I do it and it doesn't work, then am I really going to have a problem? And then there is fear. I think people have a mixture of excitement, I think this sounds different and it resonates with me. It's an approach that makes sense so I feel excited. But there's also this trepidation of but what if I can't do it? What if I don't succeed?

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And that, you know, I talk about this a lot, this idea that you can't fail. I know people hear me say that and they're like, "Okay." But I think one of the things that you really learn inside Take a Break is it really isn't about being perfect. It's about if you make the decision to drink we're going to use that moment. I'm going to teach you how to use that moment to understand what happened. And that's what I never understood how to do.

I would make all these promises to myself and swear up and down that I was either not going to drink or I was only going to have one drink and I was going to be good. And then I wouldn't follow through and that was just more ammunition for me. That was just I'd wake-up the next morning and see, you're a screw up, I knew you couldn't do it. I knew something was wrong with you and then I wanted to hide from that because I felt so much shame.

And that's why I say, I talk about if you take away one thing from the challenge, if you can change and redefine your relationship with failure and how you show up when you don't follow through with what you said you were going to do and how to actually learn from it. It's a skill that you can apply to everything in life. That and I think also with urges, because the way that you handle the urge to drink is the way that you handle every urge.

We have urges around everything and that's, to me this is about learning skills that are going to apply well beyond changing your relationship with alcohol. That's what I think is so powerful. That's why I always say, "Why don't we learn this in school?" It would have been so much easier if I had been taught this in addition to algebra and history. If I had learned about my brain and how to handle urges, and how to deal with failure in a way that was actually helpful instead of burying my head in the sand, that just would have saved me so many years of so much suffering.

Molly: Yeah. I completely agree. In fact when I started really identifying what an urge felt like by doing this work I realized just like what you're

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saying, okay, I'm having an urge right now to yell at my kids. It feels exactly the same as this urge to drink. I'm having this urge right now to not do my work. And it's just amazing because it's so powerful to have that skill. And then I actually just want to touch on what you were saying prior to that failure.

When I learned how to just bring awareness to situations where I had a setback, let's say I planned a glass of wine and I ended up drinking two or something like that. Or I had a desire and I wasn't able to allow it. When I started thinking about failure differently some of my most profound experiences happened then because I started to understand why I was really motivated to have the drink. And when I was able to understand it and then recommit, I was so much stronger on the other side. But you're right, I had never thought about it that way before.

In the past it was like okay, if I fail I'm just going to give up. It means there's something wrong with me, I just am never going to be able to figure out, instead of wait, this is just another opportunity to understand what's happening, what's going on in my brain. What's the association that I have here? And so that is such a key distinction to begin to just think about those setbacks in a different way. So it doesn't mean that you're giving up on yourself especially when you learn how to talk to yourself differently.

I think why most of us are afraid of letting ourselves down, because we're anticipating the negative self-talk on the other side, the beat down. But when you learn to just kind of drop that and be like, okay, I don't have to be afraid of that anymore, I can just be curious about what happened. It just makes all the difference.

Rachel: Yeah. And I will tell you, so inside the challenge there's of course everything that you kind of can do on your own in the self-study component. And there's also the life coaching calls and the workshops, and I think a lot of people are very intimidated at first to kind of participate in the

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life coaching and to basically raise their hand and say, “Hey, I’m struggling.” So you were intimidated too?

Molly: It took me I would say it wasn’t until maybe the third week. But I also realized – I mean this is what you’re there for to just kind of help people through it. But I understand that, to feel intimidated and not know what to expect and yeah, I get it.

Rachel: Especially if you haven’t talked about it with a lot of people, so, so many people have this experience, they don’t tell their partners. They don’t tell their best friend. This isn’t something that people will share because there is this level of shame. I will say that I always see on one of those calls when someone has really understood this tool that I teach around starting to redefine failure, when they are like, “Wait a minute, so this is actually really helpful that I drink?” Because it’s showing me a piece of the habit that I never knew was there.

We get to kind of work through it together. And it’s like yeah, the reason why you went on autopilot is because your brain didn’t have awareness of this piece of the habit. And afterwards using this tool, bringing awareness all of a sudden you’ve now gotten insight into a part of the habit you couldn’t see before. And you’ll just see people; you’ll see the shift happen from that.

And then all of a sudden it’s like, I really don’t need to beat myself up over this because had I not made that ‘mistake’ I never would have then gained the awareness, it is showing me this piece of the habit that I didn’t realize was there.

Molly: 100%.

Rachel: And then we don’t need to be obsessed with did I do the 30 days perfectly? It’s not about that. It really is about how are you showing up with yourself. And I love how you say, “I learned to talk to myself differently.”

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That's a huge thing. I really do think it's like going from being the constant critic and the critic on your shoulder.

To really learning how to be your own best friend or how to be the coach on your shoulder that can have your back when your brain wants to default to you screwed up, you did it wrong again, you're never going to figure this out, this is too hard, something's wrong with you. It's like no, you can actually learn how to coach yourself. That's what I want for people. I want people to walk away with skills so that they can coach themselves, not that they have to be well, if I'm ever going to solve a problem I have to work with Rachel. That's not my goal.

My goal is to get people to the place where they're like I know how to guide myself.

Molly: I think that's one of the biggest benefits is – I mean I think a lot of us start out in this work just thinking okay something needs to change like we talked about in the beginning. But the real change for me came with really just changing this relationship that I have with myself to a place where I enjoy being on my own even when there's not wine around or even when there's not chocolate cake or whatever it is. Which I think sometimes we get confused because we get used to this idea, well, the alcohol makes it more fun or this is part of me enjoying myself.

And then we get, we realize after enough time you know what? I just feel worse. I don't really feel like I have a true sense of who I am. I don't like the way I talk to myself. I don't like the way I feel. But it can be scary to imagine how you change that. But I do think that that has been one of the big benefits for me is really changing my relationship with myself. The other real benefit to the group coaching for me was even on the times when I felt apprehensive I learned so much from seeing other people being coached.

In fact a lot of the shame that I felt in the beginning kind of dissipated because I thought you know what? Everybody's going through the same

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thing. And I think that's one of the beauties of what you offer is witnessing other people sharing their stories and realizing, this is exactly what I'm going through. And so that helped me a lot actually feel more confident about coming on and being coached live.

Rachel: Yeah. I really do think when you hear other people sometimes what happens I think is you listen to someone say something that you previously thought I'm the only person who thinks this, or I'm the only person that can't figure this out. And so it's just like hearing another person, it just makes the shame dissolve. And I think that to me so often is the first barrier. And when we talk about, you talked about in the beginning, you had this intuition, you had this knowing, but you weren't talking to people about it.

We don't talk to people about it because we have shame and because we're hiding. And so, so often what needs to happen beyond anything else is let's just figure out a way to cut through the shame because it's just going to keep you hiding. It's going to keep, you know, it kept me with my head buried in the sand, not talking to people, not asking for help, trying to figure it out on my own. Every time I couldn't figure it out, beating myself up even more and then beating myself up would eventually lead to, well, if I'm this screwed up I might as well just drink, I might as well just eat whatever.

And so I was just creating that cycle over and over again. And I love hearing you say that, that hearing other people inside the challenge was so powerful for you because it really is like, I remember thinking I'm pretty sure I'm the only one that thinks this. And they're like this seems like another normal person who's having the same thought. Maybe I'm not so weird. Maybe this isn't so unique to me.

Molly: Yeah. And that's the hard part about trying to do it on your own. And that's what I experienced. I didn't feel comfortable talking to my husband about it. I mean there wasn't really anybody who would give me any guidance. In fact most of my friends drink all of the time, and my family who

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certainly did not understand it. So it was very difficult and I just really benefitted from getting an outside perspective of somebody like you who was not coming from a judgmental place.

But then also the community of people on the program to understand we're all doing this. We're all struggling with the same things. There was that sense of support. But there is also just a sense of understanding where I felt I could kind of in some ways maybe validate how I was feeling more without feeling ashamed, or feeling like I had done something wrong, or feeling like nobody understood.

Rachel: Yeah. And it sounds like you didn't have to give up your family, or your friends, or your partner, or get them all to change their drinking in order to make it work.

Molly: No, actually I imagined it to be so much worse than it actually was. And I think that's true for so much of this. I mean part of the way; I think about all those years when I had that kind of intuition of something needs to change but not acting on it. A lot of it was me imagining how hard it was going to be. Who would I be without alcohol? People came to me for wine advice. I mean that was part of my identity. And so I thought how am I going to – a big thing for me was how am I going to connect with my mom every night if we're not having a glass of wine? Is she going to judge me?

I mean all of those thoughts were there and I imagined it I think in a way that just made it feel really difficult to I think take the first step. In reality it was a lot easier than what I expected. And I don't want to say that it's easy though. I don't want to pretend to say okay, it was easy to just completely change. No, it was challenging but not in the way that we're used to doing it, not in the way that we're used to with willpower and kind of gritting our teeth through however many days of abstaining. It wasn't hard in that way.

It was just hard because I had to learn how to do things differently. I had to learn how to handle urges. I mean all of these things that as you said have

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turned into kind of really important life skills. So no, everything is wonderful with my family and they've actually been very supportive. In fact I don't know how much they really even care, I mean to be honest. But of course in my mind I thought it was a huge deal.

Rachel: Right. Which it's hard to wrap your brain around that, especially I remember for me thinking no, this is going to be a huge deal and everyone's going to care a lot. And really it just it has not been. So I have to say Molly, I am so thankful that you wrote in and shared your story. And I do think that a lot of people will just hear what you have to say and think well, she can do it, maybe I can too. Because we do put these kind of beliefs that it's just like, but wine is just who I am, it's part of my identity.

And I've worked with people who have huge wine cellars. I have worked with writers who cover the wine industry and it feels like it's such a huge part of my life and everything's going to change. And it's just I can't imagine what it's going to look like. And I think you really offer an amazing hopeful story for a lot of people who are in that place of this feels impossible and I don't know that I can do it.

Molly: Well, I am just so happy to share it because honestly, I mean if you asked me five years ago I would, even though I knew that was – I mean I think of drinking as kind of the big domino in my life. I had this idea that once that changed everything else would fall into place. But it really felt impossible. And so I just – I mean I hope your listeners, you know, I know there are people out there thinking yeah, this is something that I feel I should do but I just really can't imagine doing it.

What I just want to offer is that yeah, it feels a little scary but it's really just kind of taking that first step and listening, if you have that intuition, if you have that sense that something needs to change. Knowing that you don't have to have it all figured out, knowing that it's not going to be perfect, that it's just going to be kind of taking that first step and getting support. And it's just life changing.

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I mean that's really why I wrote in to you Rachel, because I thought if I thought it was impossible and I was able to completely change this habit in a way that honestly I look back on now and it feels like a miracle, then other people can too. And I want other people to know that, I mean I'm not special. In fact I felt like I had to – I mean of course I believe my struggle was harder than most people, but a lot of people think that. The truth is, is that it's possible for anybody. And so yeah, I just I'm so just grateful to have the opportunity to share this with everyone.

Rachel: Yeah. Well, I'll just add, the final thing I want to say because I think how you put it really, I very much connect with this, this idea that figuring out my drinking was a domino that affected the rest of my life because it helped me figure out my relationship with food. It helped me figure out my relationship with my body, and with sex, and romantic partners. It helped me figure out my relationship with failure and why I was always trying to be perfect and why I would spend all of my time at work.

I would kind of give up my life to work around the clock. It really was it was so much bigger. And I often think that's what 30 days can kind of start for you in your life. It's not just about alcohol. It really is about just starting to take a look at everything and starting to see this habit, it's connected to a lot of things. If you can just wiggle that first domino, it's kind of amazing how much impact and how much change you can create in your life. So thank you so much, Molly. I really appreciate you sharing this story with everyone.

Molly: Well, thank you so much, Rachel, I'm so excited to be here. And I just want to say I think of the Take a Break program as just how you described it, as just the space, the space of 30 days to just be curious. That's what it was for me but it really is the beginning of kind of understanding yourself, understanding the habit but it's such an incredible gift, so thank you for creating it and everything that you do to help people with this.

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Rachel: Well, I loved having you on.

That is all for today everyone and 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.