

Ep #227: Taking Credit for Not Drinking



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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 227.

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. Today we are talking about taking credit for the decision not to drink. So what I'm talking about are all the times that you say no to a drink, all the times you could have had a drink, but you didn't and taking credit for these moments.

Most people do not take credit, and I'm going to explain why. Most people kind of dismiss the moments that they say no, but it's so important. If you want to change your relationship with alcohol, if you want to change the habit, you have to start taking credit for every single decision that you make not to drink.

So really think about this. Think about all the times that you don't drink. All the seconds, all the minutes, all the hours when you're not drinking. For most people, that adds up to a whole lot of time. But notice if you're quick to want to dismiss it.

Notice if you're like, "Okay, yeah, so I didn't drink at 10am this morning but of course I'm not going to drink at 1am." We are so used to spending so much time thinking about all the times when we are drinking and not paying a lot of attention to the times that we're deciding not to drink, and that's what I really want you to just challenge your brain to focus on today.

Because only focusing on how much you drank last night, or drinking too much, or how you drank too much this weekend or this week or this month or this year, and how you need to cut back, it seems like that would make

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sense to bring your attention there. It seems like you would actually be serving yourself to focus in on the areas where you're saying yes.

But sometimes, what I have discovered is people actually will be much better served to focus on all the times they're saying no. Because most people spend almost no attention on the moments when they decide, you know what, I'm not drinking.

I think that this is so important because all of us, everyone, we all start out with rules about when it's okay to drink and when it's not okay to drink. And we will go about our lives unconsciously following these rules and not even really realizing that we have a rulebook about when it's okay to say yes and when we should be saying no.

But you have to see that it's there because otherwise, what ends up happening is you don't take any credit because you just say, well, okay, it's not okay to drink first thing when I wake up in the morning, or it's not okay to drink before noon, or it's not okay to drink at work, or it's not okay to drink and drive, whatever your unique rulebook is.

Some people won't drink in front of certain people. So I remember I had colleague who as a rule, they would never drink in front of coworkers, they would never drink in front of their boss. I personally never liked to drink in front of my grandparents. I just didn't want them to see me buzzed or drunk.

What matters is that you just start to identify, hey, what are the rules that I've set for myself? Now, I know that some of you are listening to me go through these kind of hypothetical rules about when it's not okay to drink, and you're thinking, "But sometimes I do drink before noon," or, "I'll drink in front of anyone," or, "I've driven drunk before."

So I want you to know this; if your brain is doing that right now, if your brain is like, uh-oh, maybe I don't have any rules, maybe this means I have a real

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problem, that is not the point of this exercise. I promise you, you do have these rules. You are making decisions about saying no to a drink.

There are minutes and seconds and hours of your day where you are not drinking, and I want you to just start to pay attention to that. We all have been conditioned to believe that it's okay to drink at certain times, in certain places, in certain situations, and not okay in others.

And of course, these rules can change over time. But you have to be aware of what they are because they're going to stay unconscious for most people, and that is part of the problem. Because if you want to change the habit, you have to be aware of why it is and when it is you're making decisions where you say no to a drink.

You have to be aware of these moments and why you say no so that you can start taking credit for it. Because there's no upside to never giving yourself credit for not drinking, which is what I see people do over and over and over again. They come to the 30-day challenge and when we start looking at this particular piece of the work, about all the times they're not drinking, they immediately want to dismiss it and say that doesn't count.

Actually it came up recently as I was coaching someone inside the challenge and she was talking about her specific work schedule. So she had a work schedule that required her to be away from home for two weeks at a time. So she would work for two weeks and then she would come home for two weeks.

And the two weeks while she was working, she wouldn't drink because as she told me, she was working in a dry environment. There wasn't alcohol. And then when she would come home, she would drink. So she was on this two weeks on, two weeks off schedule for years.

And now, you might hear me say that and think that's a pretty unusual work schedule. But truthfully, we've all created these kinds of schedules for

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ourselves. So it's not all that dissimilar from people who say, "I would never drink before noon or I only drink on the weekends or I only drink once work is over." We all unknowingly create these kind of schedules, which end up kind of acting like rules for us about when it's okay to drink and when it's not okay to drink.

Now, think about just when you started drinking. Most people don't immediately start drinking and then turn into a seven-day-a-week habit. Certainly, I didn't. In college, which is when I started drinking, that's when alcohol became a pretty regular part of my life. I had my nose to the grindstone pretty much Sunday through Thursday.

And then Friday and Saturday would roll around and that was time for me to party. And sometimes that partying would maybe slip into Thursday night or even a random Tuesday night here or there, but mostly throughout college, drinking for me was an activity that happened on the weekends.

Now, my college was not a dry environment from Sunday through Thursday. Alcohol was around. I usually even had some in my room. But I had created this schedule, which kind of acted like a rule for me that drinking was for parties and parties happened on weekends, so drinking happened on weekends.

Now, when I graduated from college and I moved in with my roommates, suddenly, drinking became a nightly thing. How did this happen? Well, I would get home from work and we would open up a bottle of wine with dinner every night, and soon my new rule was well, wine is for dinner and dinner happens every night, so I guess drinking happens every night.

The point is really just to be aware for yourself that you have this unconscious schedule that you initially created about when you did drink and when you didn't drink, and it may have evolved over time, but it's still there. There are still times when your brain says no, I don't drink in these

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situations, or at this time, or in these places, or with these people. Drinking doesn't happen then.

So just to bring it back to this woman that I was talking to, we were talking about this two weeks on, two weeks off schedule, and she told me that when she got close to retiring, she was really nervous about not having this schedule anymore because she was thinking like, well, what will happen? I'll just be at home all the time, I won't have the two weeks of being in a dry environment.

And so she was nervous that she was going to give herself permission all the time to drink, and sure enough, once she retired and no longer had to work on this schedule, she started drinking every day. Now, some of you might be thinking this scenario doesn't apply to me, I don't leave home every two weeks and go to a dry environment.

Most people don't. But I promise, what we uncovered together is going to help you too. What we discovered and we were kind of talking through how the habit worked for her, we discovered that what was happening, she was crediting her decision not to drink to her environment.

So she was telling herself that the reason that she would go two weeks of not drinking when she was working, she was telling herself, "Oh, well that's because I was working, and it was a dry environment." So there was this rule, this company policy, it was forced upon me, I wasn't allowed to have alcohol.

Those were all of her thoughts and it sounds very logical. It sounds very logical to be like, yeah, it's just company policy and alcohol wasn't around, so of course, how was I going to drink? But this was actually part of the problem.

Because she, like many of you listening, are constantly giving credit to your environment for the decisions that you make not to drink. But I will tell you,

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your environment has nothing to do with whether or not you drink. Your decision not to drink does not have to do with where you are, or what other people are doing, or what official or unofficial rules there are around drinking.

Your decision about whether or not you drink or don't drink has to do with your thoughts. Thoughts like, "Yeah, of course I can," or, "Oh no, I would never drink right now." That's what's important, to pay attention to what you're thinking. Not to start giving away credit to your environment for when you say no or blaming your environment for when you say yes.

Because here's what I will tell you. If I know anything, I know this, people can always figure out ways to drink. Even if you're saying I'm in a dry environment. I don't care if you're in prison. You can find alcohol. If you're living in a country where alcohol is banned, you can figure out ways to drink.

If you're a sailor on a container ship and alcohol isn't allowed on board, guess what? If you're really determined, you can find a way to drink. Because that's what humans are very good at doing. When we're really determined to get something, we're pretty good at getting it.

I remember - I've talked about this on the podcast before, being in my 20s at a wedding in Thailand. It was at a secluded resort and it happened to be a totally dry wedding. I had no phone, no access to a car, I didn't have any local currency, I didn't speak the language, and you know what, my friends and I, we found out a way to drink.

And I know that I seem maybe like I'm harping on this but it's so important that you pay attention to this. Your environment is not deciding for you. You are making decisions about whether or not to drink, and then attributing those decisions to where you are.

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And that's just as important if you're blaming your environment for why you're drinking, as it is if you're giving your environment credit for not drinking. Because if you aren't drinking at certain times in certain places, or when you're in certain situations, it has nothing to do with your proximity to alcohol. It has to do with what you're thinking. It has to do with the think-feel-act cycle.

So when you're thinking a thought like, "I would never drink at work," or, "I would never start my day with a glass of wine," or, "It's not okay to bring a flask to a PTA meeting," those thoughts are what are leading to the decision not to drink.

Now of course, some people do all of these things. But what I want you to consider most importantly is not the kind of rules I'm listing off here, but what are your rules that you have created for yourself? When are you telling yourself, "Oh yeah, well I don't drink just because I would never drink in this situation?"

Because what I want you to consider is that it's always possible for you to drink. The human brain can always figure out how to get alcohol. It's important to know that so that you can take credit for all the times that you decide not to. And it may not even feel like a decision. It may just feel like, well, I would just never even do it, so I don't even give myself the option.

But it's really important for you to start taking credit. I know it might sound silly to some of you. Some of you are like, I'm not going to congratulate myself because I woke up this morning and I didn't have a glass of wine first thing, or I'm not going to congratulate myself because I'm not drinking at work, or I'm not sneaking a flask everywhere I go.

But I want you to ask yourself why. What is the upside of not taking credit in these situations for saying no? Because this is what I discovered with this woman that I was working with. There's a big downside to not taking credit.

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The downside is that it starts to feel like the decision is outside of your control.

It starts to feel that whether or not you drink is based on where you are or who you're with or what you're doing or what time of day it is. You end up feeling very beholden to your environment, to your circumstances. In fact, you can feel like you're kind of a victim of your environment. And that is not a good thing, that is not going to serve you.

Because it leads to you thinking and telling yourself that in order to succeed, you have to control your environment. That's not a good place to be in. Because as long as your environment is in charge, as long as you're telling yourself that it's your environment that's making the decision for you about whether or not you drink, then you're always going to be really fixated on controlling your environment as the way to succeed.

And what I know is that that is not a recipe for success. You will tell yourself that you need to hide out, or you need to get rid of all the alcohol in your house, or you need to avoid being around people who are drinking in order to be successful.

Now listen, I'm not saying that doing these things is bad. In fact, for some of you, at first it can be really helpful to just say like, you know what, I just need to step back, I don't need it around me right now, I don't need to hang out with these people, that can be really helpful.

The problem is when you think that that is what is creating your success. Because what I know from my experience and from working with so many people is that you cannot hide out forever. You cannot avoid being around alcohol forever. It's just not sustainable.

And if you tell yourself that the only reason you said no is because of where you were, then your ability to say no in the future will feel like it's on very shaky ground because it will feel as if I got to control where I am, otherwise

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this success and my ability to say no, it could slip away at any moment if circumstances change.

And that was the problem that this woman was in. She had told herself that the reason why she didn't drink, why she was on this two weeks of not drinking and then two weeks on, she was telling herself it was all about the environment. She wasn't taking credit for the decisions that she was actually making.

And without taking credit, she couldn't actually then step into a place where she could feel secure and she could feel empowered and she could feel like hey, I'm the one that's in charge here, it has nothing to do with my environment.

This really is the cycle that so many people are stuck in. So they blame themselves for drinking too much, so they'll say like, "I have no discipline, I always think more is better, I just can't resist temptation," so they blame themselves. But then on the flip side, when they do say no, all the seconds and minutes and hours where they're not drinking, they don't take credit for that.

They say, "Oh, well, that's just because where I was or what I was doing." And the problem with this cycle of blaming yourself and then not taking credit for all of the times that you decide not to drink is you miss out on the power of your mind, the power of your thoughts. You end up making yourself at fault if you say yes and never giving yourself any credit for deciding not to drink.

I really want you, if you're listening today, I want you to just as a thought experiment, just tally up all the seconds, all the minutes, all the hours that you didn't drink over the last week. I promise you, it's more than you think. Even if you think that you drank too much last week.

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And then look at all that time and ask yourself why. Why didn't I drink? Did it even cross my mind that I could drink in these situations? And if not, if you're like, no, it didn't even cross my mind that I would drink at work, then just notice how powerful your thoughts are.

Because when you realize that it's always an option, then you start to realize, hey, then that means I get to take credit for when I'm telling myself no. When I'm deciding not to. Notice if you can start to do that. Notice if you can start to take credit for all the times you didn't drink.

Now I will tell you, this will be hard for most of you. You will want to have this knee-jerk reaction of it doesn't really count. It's really silly to congratulate myself for not drinking during the workday, or not drinking when I woke up, or not drinking at 11am, whatever it is for you.

But I want you to start paying attention to this because you have to be willing to take credit for the moments that you say no. They matter. It's how you start to see that you're always making decisions. You're not just a victim of your environment.

Because even if someone says you can't drink, even if there's no alcohol in your immediate vicinity, your decision to say no, to not go in pursuit of it, to not figure out an avenue to get it, still a decision that you're making. That's because of you. And I want you to be able to step into that power, otherwise, it really does feel like you have to control the world in order to be successful, which you don't need to do.

You don't need to control your environment because your environment is not what is deciding whether or not you drink. And when you really understand this, when you really are open to taking credit for all of the times that you say no and not just blaming yourself for all of the times you said yes, when you're really open to doing that, you're in such a stronger position to change the habit.

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Because then you start to see, oh, it's always up to me. It's always the result. My drinking is always the result of a thought and a feeling that led to an action. I don't have to control everything outside of me because I know that I'm the one with the power, I'm the one with the final say, I'm the one making decisions here.

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.