

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your 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 241.

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 my friends. We're talking about one specific thought today, the thought, "I'm behind," and how it really can get in the way of changing your relationship with alcohol, changing your drinking habits, but honestly, it can get in the way of a lot in life.

So it's a topic for me that's really near and dear to my heart because I will tell you this; my brain really loves to say, "Hey Rachel, I think you're behind." And it's been doing it for a very long time in my life.

I felt behind when I was in high school, I remember that a lot of my peers were in calculus, but I was only in pre-calc. I felt like I was behind in college. I remember showing up as a freshman and one of my friends that I met that freshman year, she had all these AP credits.

And so a bunch of her required classes her freshman year were waived. I felt immediately like I was behind. I didn't start studying a language until I thought I was too late, too old. I felt like I was behind in my career, and I graduated college without a job, and I had friends who started going to grad school, but I still only had a college degree, and I was behind in relationships.

People were moving in with their significant others, but not me. I was living alone. And then they were married, but not me, I was single. And then I was behind on having kids. I mean, my brain would just do this over and over and over again, and guess what, it also did it around drinking.

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

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your Drinking

I remember for a long time, I would look at some of the people that I had partied with in college and in my 20s and it seemed like, what's going on here? They're kind of growing out of this part of their lives and they're being more responsible with their drinking, and I'm not, I can't figure this out, what's wrong with me?

So once again, I felt behind. And I will tell you, it's just exhausting. It's probably exhausting just listening to me talk about all the things, but I know that a lot of you can really relate. And even now, I'll still watch my brain slip into this habit, this thought habit of telling me that I'm behind.

I'm behind on my to-do list, I'm behind on my goals, and what I have really noticed right now is that unless I really do the work of managing my mind and preventing my brain from just being on autopilot, it's going to look in every direction and it's going to find a lot of evidence for how I'm behind and other people are ahead.

And it does not matter, any of the circumstances in my life or how much I have accomplished, my brain will still do this. And it sucks to feel like you're behind in life. It sucks to feel like you're behind when it comes to figuring out your relationship with alcohol.

I watch this happen for so many of the people that I work with. So they'll join the 30-day challenge to take a break from drinking and they'll start out and they're kind of nervous and excited. And they're really gung ho about doing the work.

They're learning about urges and they're practicing using the think-feel-act cycle that I teach on this podcast, and they're going along, and they've got kind of all this steam behind them. And then they miss a day, or they end up giving into an urge and they end up drinking.

And I watch as they tell me about how they're starting to feel like they're behind and how all of a sudden, it's snowballing. So they skip one day of

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

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your Drinking

homework and now they're not doing any of their work, or they drank one day and suddenly an entire week has gone by.

And they're just feeling more and more behind. And then they're feeling overwhelmed and that they have to catch up, they have to make up on lost time, but how on earth are they going to do that? And I watch people get stuck in this place of I don't know how to move forward without going backwards and completing all the work that I missed or making up for all the days that I drank.

It can be a very overwhelming pattern to be in because when you believe that you're behind, you can easily just throw up your hands and say, "Okay, well, to hell with it, I can't figure it out, it's too much, it's too overwhelming, I'm never going to catch up, let's just pour a drink."

So I really want to help you today understand why it can be challenging to shake this thought and how to start to let go of it. You don't need to keep wrestling with this thought and the way out of it is not to do all the things, it's not to check everything on the to-do list. It's not to be perfect because that's just impossible and pretty exhausting in and of itself.

I will tell you this; if I'm any indication, you actually do not need to banish the thought I'm behind from your brain. You don't have to make sure that your brain never thinks it again, which I will tell you, when we feel like we have to delete a thought from our brain, it can feel really daunting.

Like oh my God, how am I going to do that? But just like we don't need to delete urges, we don't have to banish our urge to drink in order to be successful at changing our relationship with alcohol. We just have to change how we respond to that urge. The same is true when it comes to the thought I'm behind, and really when it comes to any thought that is holding you back.

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your Drinking

I'm behind, it still pops up for me. I am in no way perfect when it comes to anything in my life. The trick is not believing that this thought is the truth. And really, that any thought is the truth.

That's what I'm teaching you here all the time, not just to understand how your thoughts create your feelings and your feelings drive your actions, but actually that every thought that you can have, you can kind of hold it up and you can inspect it and you can question it and you can poke holes in it, and you can see that it might just be one way of looking at your situation. And there are many other ways that you could look at it.

What I want you to start to see is that the thought "I'm behind", it's not an accurate or helpful assessment of where you are in your life. So what you need to do is really see it for what it is, a way to keep chasing this magical destination where you can finally be happy because you aren't behind anymore.

But I really hate to break it to you. I had to discover this the hard way. That place just does not exist. So before we go any deeper into this, I do want to just share with you that one thing I want you to keep in mind, and this is for this episode but it's for every episode that I do.

When I'm talking about a specific thought, I want you to understand that different people can have a different emotional reaction and a different response in terms of what they do to the exact same thought. So as I'm giving you all these examples in here, you have to really get curious and think about how does this apply for me?

When I think this thought, how do I feel? How do I show up? I'm going to give you a bunch of examples but understand that you may be reacting differently to the same thought, and you may react differently when you think I'm behind about your to-do list, versus when you think I'm behind when it comes to your drinking.

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

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your Drinking

When and where it shows up in your life can change how you feel and how you respond. So one example is you think, “God, I’m so behind. I’m too old to change my relationship with alcohol, I’m too old not to have this figured out by now.”

I hear this all the time. People want to use their age as reason for why they are behind. And I will tell you, that feels awful because what are you going to do? Go back in time? Find a time machine? Get younger? You can’t do that.

But I watch people do this all the time. So they believe that their age means that they’re too old to actually change the habit. So they’re just behind by the nature of their birthday.

Now, it doesn’t have to just happen in that area of your life. It can happen because you’re thinking I’m behind in my relationships, or my career, or saving money for a house. It can be anything really. But sometimes what will happen is that thought will appear, that’s how your brain will be interpreting your situation or the world around you, it will tell you, “You know what, you’re behind,” and you’ll start to feel overwhelmed.

And then the action will be to seek out relief. I don’t want to feel overwhelmed, let me just eat something, let me drink something, let me zone out in front of the TV, let me just find a way to feel good about all of my behindness.

That’s what those actions are all about. Let me try to find a way to cover up how I’m feeling. Now sometimes, the response that you have to that very same thought of I’m behind can be different. Sometimes - and I watch this in me, sometimes it will want to be like, let’s just forget about it and zone out, and other times it’s like, this kind of frenetic fast-paced aah energy.

You know what I’m talking about. It’s like, oh my God, I got to do everything. So I’m just going to work crazy hours and I’m going to power

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

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your Drinking

through my to-do list and I'm just going to keep pushing and pushing and pushing and pushing until guess what, I can't push anymore. I need relief, open the wine, pass the chips.

And you may find that you vacillate between these two areas. So you're throwing your hands up sometimes before you really even got started because you're telling yourself you're so behind, or you're trying to plow through at this breakneck speed that frankly your body can't sustain.

And eventually, you have to say like, oh my God, just give me relief. The point really that I want you to understand is that this thought at its core, the problem isn't even that it doesn't feel very good. The problem isn't actually how you show up, what you do in terms of trying to get everything done in a day or opening up a bottle of wine because you can't take it anymore.

The real problem with this thought is that at its core is this belief that we can reach a place where everything is done, everything is checked off, you're exactly where you're supposed to be and that once you're at that place, then you'll feel good, then you'll feel happy and content and satisfied with your life.

And it does make a lot of sense that so many of us are taught to believe this because think about it, how many times have you finished maybe packing for a trip? I remember doing this recently, I was packing for a trip, and I finished that, and my thought was just like, "God, that's good to have that done."

Or you crossed off a bunch of things on your to-do list and it's like, that feels good. It seems like when we complete things, we feel good. Now, the problem is we do get that little dopamine hit sometimes from checking something off our to-do list. But the problem is we're feeling good because of the thought that we're having.

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your Drinking

But what we think is happening is that we're feeling good because of what we're accomplishing. Now, all of this for most people just unfolds completely outside of their conscious awareness. They're not paying attention to the thoughts that they have when they cross something off their to-do list or when they finish packing a suitcase.

That's just all happening behind the scenes. But what ends up happening is that we start feeding this belief system that I'm going to feel better, there's this place that I can reach where everything is done, where I've accomplished all the things, and then I'm going to feel good, and then I'm going to be happy.

But think about it, think about it in your own life. Whatever it is, whatever success, maybe you got everything done on your to-do list yesterday, maybe it was graduating from high school, whatever it was, think about the things that you're like, if I could just get this done, I would feel better.

And maybe you feel good for a little bit, but when what happens? Sooner or later your brain starts to tell you that you're still behind. And that worry starts to creep back in. It really is the promise of this destination where you're going to feel like you've arrived that is the core problem of the thought I'm behind.

You're not realizing that you've already arrived, you're already here, you're already at the destination. And this is true for all of you right now who are thinking, "Yeah, but I haven't figured out my drinking yet." You've still arrived.

There is no magical place and I think this is something that a lot of people struggle with, this idea that if I could just figure out my drinking, then I would feel better. Listen, you can figure out your drinking and you can learn how not to just have this knee-jerk response to all of your urges, and you can get to a place where maybe you're not drinking anymore or you're drinking in a way that you like and you're not waking up with hangovers.

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

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your Drinking

But you know what? It doesn't change the fact that you're human. It doesn't change the fact that you're still going to have all the human emotions. You're still going to feel stress, you're still going to feel overwhelm sometimes, you're still going to feel embarrassed or have regret. You just might be having it about different things.

There is no stress-free promise land where only good, amazing feelings are waiting for you, at least not here on this planet. I don't care if it's completing your to-do list or graduating or getting married or losing the weight or fixing your drinking or buying a house, even if you do one or all of those things, you're still going to be human with a human experience, and that human experience means that guess what, there's always more that you could be doing.

The question to ask yourself is then how are you going to relate to that? How are you going to relate to the things that you want to do and haven't yet done, or the things that you want to change about yourself and haven't yet managed to?

The problem with the thought "I'm behind" is that it reinforces this belief that you're going to arrive at some place where you're going to find great happiness, and that's not what the think-feel-act cycle teaches us. Happiness is not found, you don't arrive at happiness. You practice creating it.

And you practice creating feeling good knowing that you can't do it 100% of the time. You cannot totally shift your mindset to be in this place of permanent bliss. You can however shift your mindset quite a bit to change how you feel and to help yourself get unstuck and to help pick yourself back up when all you want to do is throw in the towel.

And I really do think that one of the problems that we have kind of in society is that we really equate mental health and emotional wellbeing with

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

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your Drinking

happiness. If I'm happy, I'm doing good, if I'm not happy, I'm doing it wrong. And that to me is a big problem.

For me, emotional wellbeing and mental health is the ability to really flow and be at peace and not have judgment about my emotional state. It's being in this place of I feel an emotion and I don't just slip into that knee-jerk reaction.

I notice it, I have awareness about it, I'm able to name it, and then I can practice choosing how I respond. That emotional wellbeing isn't being happy all the time. It's treating the full spectrum of your emotional experience as not just normal, but also necessary.

I want you to think about that for a second. Do you treat your negative emotions as necessary? They really are. If we didn't have that contrast between the positive and negative, guess what, the positive wouldn't feel so good.

If we were happy about everything all the time, guess what, we wouldn't be changing anything. Sometimes it is that tension, it is our discontent that actually lead us to grow and to evolve and to try to change ourselves and the world around us.

It's not a sign that something has gone wrong. And believing that, believing that some of our emotions are wrong, it's precisely why we slip into the habit of numbing. So we drink to try to cover our boredom and we eat to try to cover up sadness, or we grab our phone because we are feeling kind of anxious.

Imagine how freeing it would be in your life not to constantly be reaching for things outside of you to try to mitigate how you're feeling because you know that however you're feeling is just not that big of a deal.

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your Drinking

If that seems like a crazy stretch, I get it. Because when I first started doing this work, I was just like, “What do you mean it’s not that big of a deal? I don’t think you understand my anxiety, I don’t think you understand how overwhelmed I feel at times, I don’t think you understand how unhappy I am.”

What I didn’t realize is that so much of my suffering was actually the result of equating emotional wellbeing with happiness. So I was suffering so much more than I needed to because I was unhappy about being unhappy. I was unhappy about being stressed, I was unhappy about being overwhelmed.

And that is no fun. When you can start to kind of peel away all that unnecessary additional suffering, you start to create so much space for yourself. And it’s so much easier to tackle these kinds of issues, not just your drinking, not just other habits that you want to change. It’s so much easier just to deal with life.

The problem with the thought “I’m behind” is that instead of seeing where you are right now, wherever you are right now in your life, with everything, including your drinking, it’s exactly where you’re supposed to be because that’s where you are.

If you can just accept that where I am right now with my drinking, with my life is exactly where I’m supposed to be, because that’s where I am, instead of telling yourself that you’re behind, you can start to drop all the overwhelm and dropping that overwhelm is so important because that’s what leads to us quitting.

That’s what leads to throwing in the towel or trying to find all these additional ways to escape, which just creates more problem for us. Instead of saying, “God, I’m behind,” instead of trying to believe that we have to get to this destination or this place where everything is done, we can just start saying this is where I am, now what?

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

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your Drinking

What am I going to do with this? If I drop all the judgment, can I drop some of that suffering too? And I will tell you, this is what I've been doing when I practice this work myself because everything that I teach you here, it's all work that I have tested out on myself.

I don't teach you anything here that I'm not also doing. And again, I say this all the time for people who are doing the work with me inside the 30-day challenge. It's not one and done. This isn't like I try out these tools once and then that's it, everything's fixed.

No, these are the tools, these are the exercises that are like the gym for your mind. So I'm always practicing this, right along with all of you. So when that thought appears for me, I'm behind, what I've started doing is thinking of it like a crappy wedding DJ.

That kind of cracks me up to think that in my brain, I have a really bad wedding DJ who only has a setlist of the same five songs on repeat. And those songs are I'm behind, I'm doing it wrong, there's something wrong with me, I'll finally be happy when I fix x, y, z, and everyone else has it figured out.

So I watch these thoughts come up for me and it's like, oh yeah, I've heard this crappy playlist before. I know who's playing it, it's that wedding DJ who's not very good. My brain is very good at returning to the setlist over and over again when I leave it on autopilot.

And so then I practice reminding myself, "Listen Rachel, you're not behind, you're exactly where you're supposed to be." Let's not create unhappiness about unhappiness, let's not create additional suffering here, let's not believe the lie that there's some destination, something that you can do, something that you can fix where you're going to be all caught up and feel amazing all the time. That's not the human experience.

Ep #241: Feeling Behind with Your Drinking

So I'm here, this is where I am right now, and that's totally fine. What do I need to do now? How do I need to show up to keep going? I don't have to go backwards and get everything done and be perfect. I just need to figure out how to take the next step forward. And sometimes that's really all you need to do to keep going on your journey to change your relationship with alcohol.

Alright, that's it for today. You are not behind. I'll see you next week.

Okay, listen up, changing your drinking is so much easier than you think. Whether you want to drink less or not at all, you don't need more rules or willpower. You need a logical framework that helps you understand and, more importantly, change the habit from the inside out. It starts with my 30-day challenge. Besides the obvious health benefits, taking a break from drinking is the fastest way to figure out what's really behind your desire. This radically different approach helps you succeed by dropping the perfectionism and judgment that blocks change. Decide what works best for you when it comes to drinking. Discover how to trust yourself and feel truly powered to take it or leave it. Head on over to RachelHart.com/join and start your transformation today.