

Ep #243: What's in Your Glass?



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 243.

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.

Welcome back everyone. So listen, today I want to talk to you about what you're actually drinking when you pour yourself a drink. Now, this is different from how it's usually discussed out in the world.

I find that it's usually discussed one of two ways. The first is that we tend to romanticize what's in our glass. And so it looks a lot like conversations about the taste. Is it sharp or sweet or smoky or bitter? Is it assertive or citrusy? Maybe you start hearing people talking about hints of caramel or fig or vanilla.

We talk about the body of a drink, the nose, so we really will romanticize the unique aspects of a specific drink. Maybe you're talking about the growing process, so the climate, or the soil, or the region that the drink is from, or the type of grape.

Or you're talking about the aging process, the type of container or barrel that it was aged in. A lot of that goes along with how we romanticize what's in the glass.

Now, I find that the flip side of this, especially when people are trying to change their relationship with alcohol is they go all the way to the place of no, I'm not romanticizing it, I'm demonizing it. So you focus all about the harmful effects of what's in your glass and how it's bad for you, it's bad for your brain, it's bad for your body, it's hurting your liver, it's hurting your heart, it's wrecking your sleep, it's impairing your judgment.

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We go to this real place of everything about alcohol is bad and it's a poison and it's toxic and it's evil. So we end up having I think as a society, this very black and white approach when it comes to alcohol and what's in the glass. Either this kind of complex endlessly interesting and fascinating liquid, or it's just bad. It's bad for you, it's bad for others, it's bad for everyone, it's bad, bad, bad, shouldn't do it.

And this kind of thinking, where so many people find when they want to change their relationship with alcohol, they find sometimes that you're kind of ping-ponging between these two places. It's really not helpful when it comes to changing the habit.

So what I want to talk to you today when we're talking about what's really in your glass, I don't want to talk about ingredients or the taste or the vintage or the growing process, but I also don't want to talk about the harmful effects. I don't want to spend this episode talking about alcohol is really bad for your body.

I want to talk about for you specifically, what is in the glass for you when you reach for a drink? What do you think you're actually drinking? And the reason why this is so important is because if you want to change the habit, you really have to understand the belief system behind the habit.

This is something we talk about on the podcast all the time. It's not just on the act of drinking. Picking up a glass, uncorking a bottle, buying it, it doesn't just happen. There's always a thought and a feeling connected to the decision to drink.

So you have to understand your belief system behind the habit. It's not as easy to just say I don't know, I have a habit because I drink wine. That's what most people think. Most people think yeah, I have a habit because of alcohol.

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No, you have a habit because of a thought. And in fact, really an entire belief system that then for most people is totally unconscious, especially when you start out doing this work. You start out to try to change your relationship with alcohol and change your drinking.

Not only is that belief system unconscious, but what we don't realize is that it's a belief system that every time we say yes, we are continually rewarding the brain. We're teaching our brain, yeah, think these thoughts more because every time you do, I'm going to take a sip.

That's really what's creating the habit. It has nothing to do with alcohol. You really have to focus on what are the thoughts that are connected? That's how you get really at this deep change.

Now, most people, when I introduce this concept to most people and I start to say, listen, it's not the alcohol that created the habit, we have to really be curious about what's in your glass, people will kind of say I don't know, I like red wine, I just like a good IPA, I really enjoy a perfectly mixed cocktail, I like the taste, I like how it makes me feel, it's fun, that's why I drink, end of story.

They really want to have a very short, brief conversation about this. But I want you to consider that the story connected to the habit, the belief system is so much more than a couple of sentences. It's something that you've been accumulating your whole life, well before you even started drinking.

In fact, there might be a couple chapters in there. And I know this because this was the exact same process that I went through on my own journey. So I started drinking when I was 17, when I got to college, and I really thought there was a very simple story there.

It was just like, I don't know, I'm just someone who likes to drink, it's fun, it tastes good, I like how it makes me feel, the end. I talked about my drinking in this very superficial way for a very long time, even when I overdid it.

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For a long time, I would just chalk it up to like, I don't know, I guess I like having fun too much, I don't know, I just like the taste too much, I just didn't want the good time to end, that's it.

Now, the problem was I didn't know how to see my way out of the results that I kept creating for myself with alcohol. I couldn't figure out why do you have all this desire and how do you put a cap on it? I didn't know how not to be at the mercy of my urge for more and it felt like my brain was always telling me more was better.

I didn't understand how to stop not just drinking too much but stop the repercussions. Waking up the next day and feeling bad, not just physically but also emotionally. I think for so many people, that is actually what so much of the suffering is around.

Yes, you can feel bad when you drink too much physically, but for so many of you, it's that kind of next-day regret and why did I do that and why can't I learn my lesson and why did I say that, and I don't even remember what happened. It's that emotional suffering that can be so intensely painful.

And I will tell you what really changed things for me was starting to go deeper, beyond that kind of superficial response to why I like to drink and to really question what did I actually think was in the glass. What did I actually think I was reaching for every time I had the desire to drink?

I had to go beyond that knee-jerk of I don't know, it's just what I do when I get home from work, it tastes good, it feels good, the end. I had to be willing to peer a little deeper into the glass.

What did I really think was in there? Was it really just the taste? Was it really just the story of the vintage? Or was it something else? Something more profound that I wasn't yet acknowledging that I was after?

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I'm going to tell you, it's something that I want all of you to ask yourself. What's really in that glass? What are you really desiring? What are you really after? But I will warn you that I was very resistant to this for a very long time.

I didn't want to scratch beneath the surface. I wanted it to be a very simple story. I wanted the story to be I drink, everyone drinks, it's normal to drink a bit too much sometimes, why do we have to make such a big deal out of it?

I wanted it to be this very simple story, but of course, the big deal was that as much as I wanted it to be simple, it didn't feel simple inside of me. It actually felt kind of confusing and perplexing. Why did I feel like I needed a drink in certain situations?

When I was meeting people for the first time, when I was at a party, when I had a really crappy day. Why did I have so much desire? Why did I notice I often drank faster than many of my friends? Why did I notice people in my lives who were able to call it quits but my brain was like, I don't know, I think another would be better?

Why wasn't I able to learn my lesson? Why did I find myself swearing, oh my God, I'm never going to do that again, I'm never going to drink that much again, I'm never going to be that stupid again? And then I would repeat the same mistake over and over.

I wanted it to be very simple, but the truth was deep inside, when I was really honest with myself, it didn't feel simple. And I think the desire to have this very simple explanation for why we drink and why we have a habit and why we like to drink, I think that this desire to keep the story simple and ignore the question of what is really in that glass for you is because what we think might be going on, it can be kind of scary.

Because beneath my saying everyone drinks, I just drink because I like the taste, beneath all of that was this little part of me, this gnawing on the

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inside that thought like, I don't know, what if I can't figure this out? What if I can't rein in my drinking? Does it mean that something's wrong with me? Do I have a problem? Am I an alcoholic? Am I someone who just can't handle alcohol? Is there something wrong with my brain? Am I never going to be able to drink again? Am I going to have to tell people that I have a problem with alcohol for the rest of my life? Is this how I'm going to introduce myself?

I will tell you these thoughts were in there. I didn't really want to acknowledge they were in there but they were in there and they freaked me out. Because the truth was that when you really start to look at the habit, you will often find - in fact, I will say you will always find thoughts that are much deeper than I don't know, I just like the taste.

You may find thoughts like drinking is something that everyone does, normal people drink, normal people can drink without it being a problem, normal people know when to call it quits. And also, not being able to drink, not having alcohol in my life would be terrible.

That's what was really freaking me out. The prospect, not only of there being something wrong with me, but being sentenced to a life that didn't look very fun, didn't look very enjoyable. Not to mention with this label slapped on me.

And I know for some of you it might sound really dramatic, but I will tell you that's what was happening. When I was really honest with myself in those moments, that was really happening. That's why I wanted to keep it a very simple story.

Because all of that was beneath the surface. And by the way, all of that was impacting my ability to actually create change. So if you are resistant to really asking yourself, hey, what is in the glass? What am I really reaching for? What is my desire really about?

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And if you know that there is a part of you that's also struggling with some of these fears, oh my God, what is this going to mean? What I want you to know is we can just really for the time being set all these fears aside and just acknowledge this: you did not come out of the womb loving alcohol. No one does.

It's not an innate taste. It's something that humans were not wired to desire. We have to teach the brain to love it. We learn our desire, and this is true even if it feels like your desire for more came on very quickly and your love for drinking came on almost as soon as you started drinking.

It's still something that your brain had to learn, and this is good news. Because if it's not innate, if it's not an inborn desire, it means you can change it. Nothing is wrong with you if you find yourself drinking more than you want to, nothing is wrong with you if you find it difficult to say no to your urges, nothing is wrong with your brain.

In fact, your brain is actually your greatest asset. It's just that no one has shown you how it works or how to use it or how habits work or how alcohol triggers the reward centers in your brain and what to do when that happens.

But I really think before you learn all of that, you have to be curious about okay, so if it's not innate, if I was not born with this desire, why did I learn to desire it? What's connected to that question? What's really in your glass, what are you really reaching for when you reach for that drink, what's connected there is digging beneath the surface to understand how the habit works.

So instead of just saying I don't know, it's just what I do when I get home, I pour myself a drink, it's like no, you learned to do this. Instead of telling yourself I don't know, I just like the taste, no, you learned to like the taste. Why? It's not just fun. You learned to associate drinking with certain behaviors and showing up in a certain way. Why?

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What does your brain think can be found in a glass? What have you taught yourself to believe about drinking? Now, I will tell you, some of the answers can sound like, you know what, when I really am honest with myself, inside that glass is a reward for a shitty day or a terrible week, or just a life that will not let up.

It's stress relief or it's a signal to my family that mom or dad is off the clock. Maybe it's permission to stop looking at your work email, maybe it's relief from physical pain or discomfort. Maybe it's the ability to open up or permission to be more of yourself or less of yourself.

Maybe it's liquid courage or something to get you in the mood or something to help you drop your inhibitions, or to say what you mean or to ask for what you want. Maybe your answer is in that list that I just read off, maybe it's not, but I really want you to think about this question for yourself.

What are you really pouring when you pour yourself a drink? What are you really reaching for? What are you really desiring? What are you really after? What's in that glass that you're telling yourself right now is going to give you something that you don't yet feel you can give yourself?

You've got to be willing to answer this question because it really is the only way to truly see how the habit is operating at the deepest level. Because here's the deal and I say this all the time but just saying no does not create long-lasting change. It cannot undo a habit.

If all you do is say no, you're not going to gain awareness of the deeper desire that has created the scaffolding that supports the habit. That's why it can feel so hard to change these patterns because you're just dealing at the surface level of say no, say no, say no.

So really think about it this way. So if the deeper desire is that you need to unwind from the stress of your day but you don't like how much you're drinking, you don't like that opening a wine bottle or popping opening a

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beer has become your go-to when your day ends, and you try to then start just saying no, if you have this deeper desire that's there, which is dealing with the stress from your day, what are you going to do?

What are you going to do when you just say no? So now you're not having the drink, so you have this unmet urge, but then more importantly, you have this unmet desire to relax that also is not being answered. That's why it can feel so challenging for people to change because just say no doesn't get them to the thing that they're really after.

So what I want you to think about every time you look at your glass, maybe every time you look at someone else's glass and you notice that desire bubble up, and you notice that the conversation in your head is just kind of like, I want that, that looks good, that would be fun, I want you to just be willing to dig a little bit deeper.

Ask yourself, what do I really believe is waiting for me in that glass? If I said yes, what do I think I'd really be getting? Now, a word of caution when you start to do this, and you start to get these responses. It's relaxation, it's permission to say no to other people's demands, say no to my family, it's freedom to be loud and extroverted, whatever your kind of answer is.

You may immediately start to think, okay, well, great, now what? Now I have to figure out that too? When you start to understand what your brain believes is inside the glass, you start to see that deeper desire, that's where people can be like, okay, well now I really don't know what to do because now I've got these urges to drink, and I also see that there's this desire that I have no idea how to fulfill without the drink.

And that's what happened for me. I didn't know how to unwind after a shitty day without a drink. I didn't know how to meet new people and not feel totally self-conscious and weird and awkward without a drink. I didn't know how to ask for what I wanted in a relationship or in bed without a buzz.

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I didn't know how to do any of that. But what I want you to know is this is a good problem to have. When you get to this point, this is really a good problem. In fact it really isn't even a problem.

I think that is part of it. People mistake this moment for like, oh my God, something has really gone wrong now. Now I have this insurmountable thing that I have to figure out.

What really is happening is you are being shown the path to change. You are being shown your work and what you really need to do in order to change your desire permanently, in order to change the habit at its deepest level.

That's why I focus on teaching all of you how to manage your mind. That's why we talk so much about the think-feel-act cycle. You aren't just mastering the skill around your desire to drink and your urge for more. You're learning how to manage your mind when the stress and discomfort and awkwardness and insecurities and boredom and grief and inhibitions, when all of that is also there.

You're learning how to manage all of that without pouring a drink. And I will tell you, that work, that is the work of changing a habit. And that cannot be learned through just say no.

I really do believe that the point of all of this is it's really irrelevant to me whether or not you drink. Because who cares if you're saying no to a drink and you feel healthy, but you're not enjoying life and you feel like you're missing out.

Who cares if okay, you're not drinking right now, you're saying no, but then you're trying to meet all of that desire that you still have, now you're trying to fill it with food? A lot of people will disagree with me on this point. They'll be like, no, you don't understand, saying no to alcohol, it's always better. It's always better if someone isn't drinking.

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And it's really where I disagree with a lot of people. Because what I want for you to have is sustainable change. I don't want just a temporary time in your life where you were saying no, and you felt physically better. I want you to really be able to change your desire and change how you respond to urges and change how you actually go after what you're truly seeking out, what you're truly wanting when you reach for that drink.

I think there's a reason why our society has this trope of an unhappy sober person. Because so much of what is out there when it comes to helping people figure out how to change their drinking focuses on just say no. We don't actually give people the tools that they need to go after what they really want, what they're really desiring when they reach for a drink.

And I don't think a life of being physically healthy but mentally kind of feeling like, I don't know, just not as good, feel like I'm missing out, I feel like I can't get my needs met, I don't think that that is a success. It wasn't successful for me. It's why I kept flip-flopping back and forth with my drinking. It's why I was always stuck in this kind of binge and restrict pattern.

Because I would feel physically better when I would say no, but you know what, physical health isn't everything. Humans have emotional health too. And our emotional health doesn't just fall magically into place because we've decided to stop consuming a substance or because we're not getting drunk any more or because we're limiting ourselves.

It happens only when we really start to understand what are we actually truly desiring and how do I meet those needs on my own without a drink, without food, without any kind of substance. It's possible. It's just that no one shows us how to do it.

So I want you to know when you think about today's episode, when you think about what's really in my glass, what am I really after? Whether it is relaxation or fearlessness or connection or confidence or excitement or fun,

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whatever it is, whatever that deeper desire is, and it may be different desires at different times.

They're all totally valid. But you can't get them, you're not going to find them just by gritting your teeth and willing yourself to say no. You have to learn how to access these things on your own. You have to learn how to teach your brain a new way forward when what it learned was hey, the way that we get this desire is by pouring a drink.

And that's what this work is about. That's why we focus on the think-feel-act cycle. That's what the 30-day challenge is about. It's about setting aside time not just to say no but to really unpack that habit, to really understand it at its core and then learn a new way forward.

So really ask yourself, the next time you feel the urge, the next time you notice a desire, what do you really think is in that glass? Why do you think you need a drink to get what you're really desiring? Those two questions can change everything for you. 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.

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