

# Ep #246: Why You Shouldn't Surround Yourself with Sober People



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #246: Why You Shouldn't Surround Yourself with Sober People

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 246.

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, welcome back everyone. Listen, today, we are going to dive into something that really turns on its head a piece of conventional wisdom when it comes to alcohol and changing the habit.

Now, if you listen to the podcast, you know that I love turning conventional wisdom on its head. So we talk a lot here about how alcohol is just neutral. It's not good or bad or right or wrong. We talk about how much you drink, same thing.

It's not a sign of poor moral character. It's the result of an unconscious cycle happening inside of your brain, that think-feel-act cycle. We don't use labels. We don't say that the world is divided into normal drinkers and alcoholics, or that some people just can't handle alcohol, or that if you struggle, that abstinence only forever is the only way.

No, we really let you decide what relationship do you want to have with alcohol? What do you want? What feels good for you? And then you get to decide how to make that happen.

Now, we're going to take on a piece of conventional wisdom today that I hear all the time, and I'm talking about it because it actually came up recently inside the 30-day challenge.

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So a lot of times, people will say, "Listen, if you want to succeed, if you want to reach your goal, you need to surround yourself with like-minded people. So if you want to stop drinking, you need to surround yourself with other people who are also sober, and that is their goal. And if you want to cut back, you need to make sure that your husband or your wife or your friends or your family are all on board too."

This is very common advice that people give out. And someone was saying inside the 30-day challenge, they were saying, "I actually really appreciate that everyone here is doing something different." Yes, everyone is doing the 30-day challenge, but ultimately, everyone's working towards a different, unique goal.

Some people want to drink less often during the week, some people want to drink less in a sitting. Some people want to take a break from drinking. They want to lay off booze for a while. And others want to stop drinking altogether. They're just ready to say, "You know what, I think I've had my fair share."

Everyone inside the 30-day challenge, they come to the 30-day challenge with different goals, and they leave with different goals. This isn't about having some sort of cookie-cutter path that you have to follow.

And I really think that's what makes this approach unique because really, most people are of the view, if you want to stop, you can't be around people who just want to drink less. It's going to confuse you. And if you want to drink less, I mean, why would you be around people who want to stop? You have nothing in common.

I will tell you this; I could not disagree more. And I think that this really goes back to the fact that a lot of times, we don't trust people. When you feel like you're making decisions around alcohol that don't make sense, you know it's not good for you, you know you don't want to be drinking this much,

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every night, a whole bottle, whatever it is for you, but yet you struggle to implement that, you can feel like, "God, well, I don't trust myself."

But then I think the flip side is we also don't trust people as a society when they're struggling to change their relationship with alcohol. And I think that's the bigger problem.

Because when society says, "Hey, you can't be trusted," listen, I know what that is like. Most people who want to change their drinking, they already don't trust themselves. And when as a society we're saying, "Yeah, you really can't be trusted, we don't trust you either, I don't trust you to be around people who have different goals, you need to be in a situation where everyone is on board," that is going to backfire.

And I think it backfires all the time. And I understand for those of you listening right now and saying, "Oh Rachel, you're really missing the point. The point when we say you should be around people with similar goals is so that you find a support system when things get tough, and you find people that will have your back."

And I understand all of that, but the truth is no matter how hard you try, you will never, never, never be able to surround yourself with only like-minded people. It's just not realistic. And telling yourself that you shouldn't be around alcohol, or that you shouldn't be around people who are drinking, it seems like it makes sense.

Avoid temptation. Except underneath that is the message, alcohol creates temptation. People drinking creates temptation. It's powerful. And what you hear me talk about all the time is that actually, none of that is the case.

Alcohol has no power. It's powerless. It just sits there. And being around people who are drinking does not create temptation. That doesn't happen until you have a thought about it.

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I really want you to think about this. So drinking, when you promised yourself that you wouldn't, or getting wasted when you swore, "I'm going to be good tonight, I'm only going to have a drink," it has nothing to do with alcohol being powerful. It has nothing to do with who you were around and being tempted. It has nothing to do with actually whether or not you can trust yourself.

It has everything to do with what was unfolding in your mind. The thoughts and the feelings that led to the decision to say yes. Now, most times that thought and the feeling, that piece is totally unconscious. And it can sound like, "Oh my God, I hate being the only one who's not drinking. I deserve it, one more won't hurt. I've been so good, it's been a crappy week, it's been a shitty year, who cares? Fuck it."

These thoughts, I want you to think about it. These thoughts have zero to do with trust. They have everything to do with how you're labeling drinking as being bad and not drinking as being good or how your brain has learned to consume things to cope with how you feel, or how you react to your stress response, or how you motivate yourself to get stuff done and say, "If I do x, y, z, then I can have a treat."

That's what those thoughts have to do with. They have nothing to do with trust. Saying no to the urge to drink, or by the way, the urge for anything, has nothing to do with trust. I want you to think about the concept of trust for a second.

So trust is all about this expectation that we have about what someone will or won't do. I trust that he will show up, I trust that she will pay her rent. But here's the thing; in reality, trust is all mixed up in morality. He can't be trusted, she's not trustworthy, I wouldn't trust them with my life.

Listen to what those statements are really saying. The way we talk about trust is so much bigger than what we expect will happen. It becomes all

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about whether or not someone is good or bad, and I want you to see if you can understand the problem with this.

Your moral character has nothing to do with how much you drank, or what you do when you're drunk. Those things are about the think-feel-act cycle. And the truth is that those thoughts that drive how we show up, most people adopt them totally unconsciously, and they operate with these thoughts totally unconsciously. Most people never ever question them.

Believing that you can't be around people who drink, or people who don't share your same goals when it comes to drinking, it reinforces this belief that you can't be trusted and that alcohol is powerful, and that things outside of you create temptation.

And also, that your moral character is driving the behavior. And I will tell you this; it was so discouraging for me when I was really in the early days of wanting to change the habit and wanting to change my relationship with alcohol and thinking, "I really do want to figure out a way to do this, but oh my God, am I going to have to get all new friends? Am I going to have to change my partner?"

It was so daunting. And I know so many of you listening feel that way as well because we're so indoctrinated with this idea that everyone needs to be doing the same thing. And that if you're going to be successful, you need to make sure that everyone is in the same place and everyone's on board.

Now, I will tell you this and I talked about it on the podcast before. My friends and my romantic relationships, they have shifted. But not because I was saying no to a drink and someone else was saying yes because understanding the relationship that I had developed with alcohol helped me reassess what I actually wanted out of the relationships in my life.

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So I have people in my life who I used to drink a lot with. And when you took the alcohol away, I discovered there's not a lot there. And then I have other people in my life who I used to drink a lot with, we took the alcohol away, and we discovered very little about the friendship actually changed. It had nothing to do with alcohol.

And I think this is part of the problem that we assume it's uncomfortable to be around people who hold different opinions or who are doing different things. And not just in this arena but in all areas of life. More and more, the world is segmenting itself into those bubbles.

And so as we get more and more online, it's easier and easier to filter out people who hold different opinions or who have different goals or are doing different things. We do it with politics, we do it with religion, we do it with ideologies, and of course, lots of people advocate that if you want to be successful, when it comes to changing your drinking, you have to do it with alcohol too.

But I just want you to consider that what people think creates safety, this idea that okay, if you're around people who share common beliefs and common goals when it comes to alcohol, then you'll be safe, I want you to consider that it might actually make you more unsafe.

Because instead of just moving you into this position of seeing alcohol as it's just alcohol, it's neutral, it has no meaning without the human brain, it just sits there, it doesn't do anything until I pick it up, it has no power, instead of moving into that place, you start to almost kind of radicalize yourself.

You can end up very easily into this position of, oh my God, it's really powerful, and it's poison, and it's evil, and it's awful. And I just want you to consider that thoughts like these aren't keeping you safe. Scaring yourself into not drinking is not keeping you safe.

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Because without doing the work to understand your desire and why you want to drink and the upsides of the habit, without looking there, you're just putting yourself in a defensive position, and it's just always exhausting. No one wants to be in the defense all the time.

And I want to tell you that that position of it's all bad, it's powerful, it's poison, it's evil, it's awful, it's not that different from people who get all worked up on the other side and say, "Oh my God, it's amazing, it makes everything better, I feel sorry for people who can't drink."

Those two groups actually have more in common than you might think because romanticizing drinking is of course the flip side of demonizing it. In both these cases, it doesn't matter if you're romanticizing alcohol or demonizing alcohol, you become resistant to being curious about it and curious about how the habit works and why you developed this relationship and what you think it does for you, and the upsides of drinking and the downsides.

You become resistant to this curiosity because you're so focused in on the ideology. And I just want to say, I have worn both hats. I have been in both of these positions of like, "Oh my God, it's amazing, why would you ever go to a wedding if they weren't serving alcohol? I feel sorry for people who don't drink," and also the position of like, "It's awful. It's poison. It's terrible, I can't believe this stuff is legal."

And I'm just going to tell you this. Having been in both of these positions, having worn both of these hats, neither was very helpful in the long run. Because both of these positions, whether or not you're romanticizing it or you're demonizing it, you're giving alcohol power.

You're making alcohol be this thing that's good or bad and that is the real problem. Because as soon as you give it power, you block curiosity. You've already made up your mind. What I want you to consider is that being



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around people with different views and different goals who may make different choices when it comes to drinking than you would, but everyone's doing the same thing, everyone's working to change their relationship with alcohol and working to be curious, that's actually a really good thing.

It helps you examine your own beliefs on a deeper level. You don't have to hide out with people who are doing the same thing and thinking the same thing. That only leads to responding more radically and feeling more uncertain when your views are challenged or when you're in situations where you're making a different choice from other people.

I really hope that we can start to just together question this idea that in order to be successful, we have to be around people who are making the same choice. I think the greatest success comes when you can be around people who are making any choice and it has no bearing on you.

And it just really helps me to remember, alcohol has been on this planet since before humans figured out how to harness it. Before we figured out how to make beer and wine on a grand scale, alcohol was with us because living things, they grow, and they decompose, and they ferment.

It's just a part of life. It's a fact of living on this earth. And you can be someone who reverts alcohol, or you can be someone who fears it, but neither of those are very helpful.

You can instead see that your relationship happens in your mind. Not in the glass. Not with the thing in front of you, not with what everyone else is deciding to do. It happens in your mind.

And so if you want to change your actions, if you want to change how much you're drinking, if you want to take a break, if you want to explore what life is like alcohol-free, that's where you need to focus. What's happening in your mind, the thoughts and feelings that you have connected to alcohol,

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rather than trying to set up your external environment so that everyone's on the same page and everyone's making the same choice.

When you just let everyone do their thing and you focus on you, that's when you step into a real place of safety. 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](https://RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.