

Ep #249: When One Isn't Enough



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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 249.

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.

Hello, hello, hello, everyone. Welcome back. We are talking today about when one drink isn't enough. I will tell you this came up recently inside the 30 Day Challenge. I was talking with someone who was recounting an experience of being out with friends who said, "Hey, you want to split a beer?"

This person was like, "Oh my God, are these people crazy? Why on earth would I split a beer with you? What is the point in that? That isn't enough." And I will just tell you, when she was relating this to me, I mean, I could so see myself having these exact same thoughts. And that's what I really want to talk with all of you today, is about really understanding why one isn't enough. And what is the enough that we're actually after?

Now, I will just add as an aside, I think that humans do this, we often split things as a way to kind of assuage our guilt. So it's a question that's often posed to the table and not just with alcohol, right, "Does everyone want to split a dessert? Do we want to split a bottle of wine?" It's this kind of unspoken like, "Hey, if you're going to do it, I will do it too."

And I always think it's very interesting to think about, well why is that? And also, what happens when someone at the table turns down the request? When someone says, "You know what? I'm not really into dessert tonight." Or "I'm going to skip the wine."

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Now often, not always but often, you'll see that the person who posed the question about sharing, they will go on to skip the wine or skip the dessert too. Why is that? Why don't we just get the dessert or get the glass of wine or order the bottle, regardless of what other people want to do and what their preference is?

I really do believe that part of that is our internal judgment. We have this kind of internal unconscious judgment that we shouldn't. We shouldn't be so indulgent. We shouldn't be bad. But, you know, if you're going to be indulgent with me, then maybe it's okay. It's like we have this kind of collective agreement that we can consume things if other people do it with us.

And I just think it's really fascinating. When she was mentioning this to me inside of the 30 day challenge, I think it's really fascinating and I really encouraged everyone, you know, pay attention to these kind of group dynamics. Watch them play out, not just with alcohol, but with everything that we consume.

What happens if someone you're with is vegan, but you eat meat? Do you change what you order around them? Some people will, some people won't. What happens if someone that you are eating with has celiac? Do you change what you cook? Do you change what you order for the table? Again, some do, some don't. I don't think there's a right or wrong answer here.

Same with splitting a dessert or splitting a bottle of wine. I just think that these are fascinating opportunities to watch what we're always talking about here on the podcast, the think, feel, act, cycle, the idea that whether or not we say yes to something or say no, it doesn't just happen.

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There's this cycle at work that's at work inside your mind, at work for other people as well. And the more that you can become fascinated by it, the more that you can start to pay attention to what's happening for you.

So all of that brings me back to this question. Why on earth would I split a beer? Why on earth would I split a glass of wine? This really was definitely a thought that I used to once have. Like kind of what's the point? What is half a beer going to do for me?

And I really do believe that one of the most important pieces of the work that I teach when it comes to changing your relationship with alcohol is that you have to start to contend with the question, what is enough? And what does that mean for you?

Now a lot of times, people just skip right over this question. They want to go straight to like, "Okay, I'm drinking, or I'm not drinking. I'm either on the wagon, or I'm off the wagon." So we go straight to this place of like black and white thinking, saying yes or no to a drink.

But when you stop to actually say what you're going to do is change your relationship with alcohol, you start to engage with a question like this. What is enough? What is enough has you explore this gray area that is so often overlooked and skipped over.

So inside the challenge, we talk about taking a break from drinking as being a tool, not a rule. What do I mean by this? A rule is, here's what you must do. This is the rule that we're setting in place. And whether or not you succeed depends on how closely you follow the rule.

We use taking a break from drinking as a tool. So it's a tool to help examine the relationship that you developed with alcohol and examine the thoughts

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and feelings that are fueling your desire to drink and the permission that you give yourself to say yes, and say yes, again, and yes again.

So we use the break as a tool to really look at the patterns you've developed with your urges and examine the unconscious relationship that you have formed with that drink. That's what the break is really there to do. It's not about following a rule, it's about showing you your mind. Because I will tell you this, your relationship to anything, anything, not just alcohol, it becomes crystal clear the moment that you step out of your routine.

So it doesn't matter if you take a break from drinking, or sugar, or Netflix, or Facebook. When you remove something temporarily from your life with the goal of noticing, "Hey, what's going to happen for me inside my mind? How am I going to feel? What's going to happen when urges appear?" When you have as your goal, curiosity, so much will be revealed to you.

Now the problem is most people remove things from their lives through force, and through discipline, and creating restrictions and telling themselves, "The goal here is to be perfect." Which completely shuts down curiosity. It's all about just grit your teeth and say no.

I talk about this all the time, people will come to me again and again and say I just never believed that this would be the case. But I discovered that I learned so much about how the habit works. Not when I went through the 30 days perfectly, but the moment where I broke my commitment. The moment where I gave in.

Because instead of just going straight to beating myself up and throwing the towel in and like, "Oh, well that didn't work." I for once in my life used it as a moment of curiosity and a moment to learn and a moment to find what was happening beneath the surface that I had never noticed before.

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Now remember, people come to the 30 day challenge with different goals. So some would want to drink less in a sitting or less frequently during the week or the month. Some people want to see what it's like to just remove alcohol from their lives for a period of time. They want to see how that improves their sleep and their health and their anxiety or energy.

Some people use a challenge because they actually are really curious about exploring life without alcohol. So maybe it's been such a big part of so many things in their life and they want to start kind of dipping their toe into, "Hey, what would it be like to come home and not immediately go to the fridge and get out the bottle of wine or get out the beer? What would happen if ordering a drink wasn't just an automatic part of going out to a restaurant or watching a game? What would that be like?"

And then we have other people that come to the challenge, and they say, "You know what? I'm just done, I've had enough. I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to drink, I don't want to desire it. I'm over it. But I don't know how to get there and feel like it's just easy. And feel like I'm not missing out or that I'm like healthy, but not having as much fun in life."

So everybody has very different goals. So everyone has these very different goals coming into the challenge. And I think that most people expect that the only people who are going to have to contend with the question "what is enough" are those who want to keep drinking, but drink differently. But what I want really everyone to understand is that this question, "what is enough," it's for everyone, no matter your goal. It's so revealing.

It's so revealing to see what comes up for you with the idea of having a five ounce glass of wine or splitting a beer with someone. Or what has or hasn't felt like enough for you in your life.

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And, of course, I promise this will come up outside of the context of alcohol. So it really is a question. What is enough is a question that every person has to really reckon with. And again, it's going to be something that you have to contend with, not just in the realm of drinking.

So you may have it come up for you in relation to food, or money, or sex, or stuff. What does enough actually mean for you at any given moment? There's so much power in exploring that and really understanding what enough is actually driving at for you. It's not a question that a lot of people really spend time thinking about.

I know I certainly didn't spend time thinking about it, even though I had a very deep sense of like, "Why would I ever split a beer? What's the point in that?" Because here's the thing, we drink for all sorts of reasons. We drink to relax, to help us fall asleep, to help us stay awake, to loosen up, to connect, to signal, "Hey, the day is done, I'm off the clock."

We drink to rebel, we drink to fit in and blend in. We drink to celebrate and to dance. And to forget and to drown our sorrows. We drink to be more or less of who we want to be. We drink because we like the taste, because we like the story, because it signals that, "Hey, I'm an every man." Or it signals, "Hey, look how fancy I am. Look how elite this is."

All of these reasons can apply at different times for different people. Your reason for when and why and how much you drink and what is enough can change depending on how you feel. Who you're with, where you are, what happened earlier in your day. Which also means your answer to the question, what is enough and what enough actually means for you is also always changing. It's something that you always get to be curious about.

So I came across a couple different definitions for the word enough. You guys know that if you listen to the podcast, I love doing this, I love really kind of digging into the meaning of words. And I came up with a couple at

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first, that I thought, "Well, these don't really fit." So defining enough as, "Well, it's as much as necessary," or, "the amount of something that is needed."

And I thought, well, that doesn't really work here because of course, alcohol is never necessary. It's not a need, it's a want. And so I kept looking through definitions to find one that I thought would kind of fit more precisely what is going on here and kind of connect with what we talk about and how enough fits into the habit of drinking.

And I came across a definition that said, "Sufficient to satisfy a desire." And I read that I was like, "Yep, bingo. That's it. Satisfying a desire." Because to me, that is such a powerful definition. Instead of saying that enough is the quantity of something, where we often want to focus, like half a beer, or a glass of wine, we often want to focus on the quantity.

When it comes to enough when you use the definition of satisfying a desire. All of a sudden, you take your brain to a very different place. Instead of quantity, or amount you start to consider, "Okay, so what's my desire? How do I want to feel in this moment?"

That's such a different conversation than the conversation you have about quantity or how much. Because then you start to ask yourself, "What am I desiring? Am I desiring to feel relaxed, to feel energized, to feel connected to feel like I belong, to feel like I can rebel, to be a little bad? Am I desiring sophistication? Or to feel satisfied? Do I desire to feel happiness or silliness or feeling carefree? Do I desire feeling numb? Do I desire not wanting to be in pain? There are so many answers to this question.

And there's no right or wrong here. There's just curiosity about, okay, what is enough for me in this moment? And is alcohol, is the drink in front of me or the bottle, is it ever going to actually create that desire? Is it ever going to actually satisfy me? Will it ever be enough?

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If you teach your brain that the way that you get all these desires, the way that you feel relaxed, or energized, or connected, or whatever it is, if you teach your brain, "Hey, the way that I do that is I have a glass." And so I think that that's a really powerful thing to start to consider and to consider why on earth do so many of us believe that alcohol is the way to access these desires?

Again, I'm not saying this from the place of drinking is good or bad, or right or wrong. I'm saying it from the place of why do we think when it comes to our desires that the solution is external, it's outside of us? I certainly thought this for many, many years, I thought, "Hey, just pour me a drink. I'm going to feel better. That's going to be the solution for what I am desiring right now."

Except, the more that I believed pouring a drink was the solution to what I really wanted in the moment, which was more than a glass of wine, it was how I wanted to feel. The more that I believed that was the solution, guess what happened? The more I needed it, or believed that I needed it. Which was actually the exact opposite of what I wanted.

Instead of it being this kind of magic pill, just have a glass of wine and it would set you free, it actually kind of clipped my wings. Because this thing that wasn't necessary or needed at all, I started to believe that it was. I started to believe that all of these desires wouldn't be possible without it.

This is why I say to people all the time, "It's not enough to say, okay, well, I didn't drink, and I just feel really proud of myself. And I'm just doing the real healthy thing for my body and for my life." I mean, that is all good. But the fact of the matter is, all of these desires that you have, whatever the thing that you are wanting in the moment, all of these are normal. All of these are very human.

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And saying that, well, I guess I'm just never going to feel like I can relax or feel like I can connect, or feel like I can be silly or carefree, or whatever it is. If you feel like you can't do these things, if you don't have access to these desires without a drink, but you sure feel healthy when you're not drinking, there is a part of you that is just never going to be satisfied.

What I really discovered that it wasn't the desire to drink that was the problem. The real problem was the intolerance that I had developed to so many of my negative emotions. So I had this intolerance for stress, and awkwardness, and boredom. I had an intolerance to saying no to my urges.

I had an intolerance to normal human emotions and the normal human experience because I was so used to just saying like, "I don't want to deal with that, let's just have a drink. I don't want to feel that way, let's just have a drink." And that's why I think when you start to really see that's what's going on, that's what's happening at the deeper level, it really does set you free in this very powerful way.

I think that for me learning about the think, feel, act, cycle, and that idea that the drink just sits there. It doesn't say anything, it doesn't persuade me to pick it up. It doesn't create my desire. So why do I keep reaching for it? Really understanding and really working with this question of what is enough? What is the desire that I'm actually seeking in this moment?

It was so powerful, because all of a sudden through this work, when I had been so kind of frustrated and fixated on my drinking, all of a sudden, I could see that drinking really was not the point at all. Alcohol did not need to be my focus at all. Because once I started going into the question of what is enough, I started going down this path to really understand what was I really desiring in the moment, and what was getting in the way from me accessing that desire, whatever it was.

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And trust me, it had nothing to do, I realized, with what was or wasn't in my glass. It always had to do with what was happening in my mind. And learning that, understanding that, understanding that the thing that I was actually desiring The thing that I thought, "Oh, if I had that it would feel like I had had enough, that I was satisfying a desire." When I started to see, "Hey, I don't need a drink, or food, or any of these external things to actually access it." That, to me, was so powerful. That to me was kind of magic.

And so this is really something that I think no matter what your goal is listening to this podcast, asking yourself the question, what is enough and thinking about it through the lens of what is it that I'm actually desiring? Rather than a question of quantity, rather than what most people do, which is think about like, "Okay, so what's the number of glasses or how many beers will it take until I've decided I've had enough?"

Going down that path of quantity, it's just never actually going to lead you to a place where you can really see what is driving the habit that you've developed, and the relationship that you developed with alcohol. That's just not the path to go. The path is to really understand, how do I want to feel in this moment? Why do I believe that the drink is going to get me there, and that I'm not able to get myself there on my own?

And I just want to close with this because I was talking with someone in the challenge, who I was helping to really understand why in certain situations in her past, she was much more likely to get drunk than others. Now, this is something that I find is very confusing for a lot of people. It was very confusing for me the ways in which my drinking was unpredictable.

So I kind of felt like, how come I can rein myself in over here, and then in this other instance I'm like off the rails, what's going on? So it was totally mystifying for her. And as we were talking about it, she kind of said, "You

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know, I think the place that was really kind of the stickiest for me, when I would tend to really overdo it was social situations.”

So instead of having this whole conversation about how much she drank in social situations, we started exploring how she felt. How she felt before she headed out to a party, or to a restaurant, or to meet new people. And when we started going down that path, she realized, “Oh, I would often feel really insecure.” And she didn't want to feel that way. Right? She wanted to feel comfortable and at ease and have a good time.

And so we discussed the kind of unconscious pattern that she developed, which was okay, I feel really insecure. And I don't want to feel this way. And I don't know what to do about my insecurity. So I'm going to start drinking. And we talked about what enough would feel like in those situations.

Especially when this feeling of insecurity was on full blast. And we talked about, okay, so you're feeling insecure, and you have that one glass of wine, or the one cocktail, or the one beer. And I asked her, is that actually going to be enough to make that insecurity completely go away, or numb that feeling?

And I remember I could kind of see like a light bulb go off for her, because she, in that moment was like, “Oh, no way. One drink was not going to do it.” And so what, as we talked about, she started to uncover was that in those situations, that one drink wasn't enough to help her when her insecurity was kind of full blast.

So she would drink that first one really fast, and it wouldn't have the effect that she wanted. And then she'd go back for that second one. And drink that one fast as well. Like she was really kind of like, “Okay, when can I stop feeling this?”

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So she had this desire to feel calm, and confident, and rooted, and enjoy herself in these situations. But she had so often practiced that the answer to the insecurity was, "Okay, have a drink, that's going to be the solution."

And she didn't even recognize that this is why she was more likely to over drink in these situations. She kept reaching for her glass because her desire to get rid of her insecurity was so strong. And let's face it, five ounces of wine was not going to do it. But the less that she could tolerate this insecurity on her own, the less that she could actually address it.

And to me, that is really the goal. And it doesn't matter if your situation is completely different. If you feel completely at ease in social situations, but it's when you're by yourself that you notice that you're drinking more. I just feel like no matter what the situation is, when you have as your goal, not a goal of quantity, or a goal of a number of drinks.

When you have as your goal, "Listen, whatever comes up, whatever emotions surfaces, I know how to have my back. I know how to handle this. I know how to show up for myself. I know how to see how to start to shift this emotion without trying to drink over it." That, to me, is the magic.

And that is why I think the question of what is enough is so powerful for everyone to spend some time thinking about. And to get out of that mindset of quantity and number and start seeing it as asking yourself, "What's my desire here? What's the real desire I have? And what would be sufficient to satisfy it?"

When you start doing that, when you start heading down that path, you start to see, "Oh, this really doesn't have much to do with alcohol at all. It has to do with learning how to satisfy what I'm desiring, what I want." Which is something that is possible, you just start to take alcohol out of the equation. What is enough? Spending time with that question really can do that for you.

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Okay, so that's it for today. Spend some time thinking about what enough means for you. All right, 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.