

Ep #253: The Purpose of Overdoing It



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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 253.

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 everyone, so it is Thanksgiving week in the US, so I'm going to keep this episode short and sweet because I know a lot of you are busy preparing, as am I. I am planning three pies for eight people, which my husband thinks is crazy.

But I'll tell you, my family, we always went all out when it came to Thanksgiving and all out when it came to the pies. There was always an abundance. We had minced meat, and pumpkin, and apple, and banana cream, and chocolate cream, and so I told my husband that I think three is a really good compromise.

But you know, it's also kind of wild to know that I can be surrounded by an abundance of food and an abundance of wine, and that doesn't mean that I'm going to wake up the day after regretting any of my choices, or feeling like I was missing out.

I think that's one of the most misunderstood parts of changing your relationship with your desire, whether it's the desire to drink or eat or just consume anything. The advice is usually, "Listen, you should avoid temptation. If you're trying to stop drinking, just pour out all your wine. If you're trying to lose weight, just throw all the junk food in your pantry out. Throw it into the garbage."

The problem of course with this advice is that we inadvertently teach ourselves when we do this, oh, so wine has the power, the junk food has

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the power. These things that we desire become the villain that we have to avoid in order not to fall under their spell.

But what if you can break the spell? What if there is no spell? What if we only fall under a spell of believing, “Oh my God, I can’t stop, once I start, I can’t stop,” what if that only happens because we’ve been taught a lie that the object of our desire has the power to make us consume it and then consume more?

Now, I know for some of you this is not popular, what I’m saying. In part because I think when I talk about this, when I talk about the glass of wine, or the slice of pie having no power, it just sits there, what happens is I’m misinterpreted. And I understand why because I misinterpreted this for a very long time.

So here’s what I kind of heard when people would say, “Okay, the glass of wine just sits there, this idea that once you start you can’t stop, it’s not true, the slice of pie just sits there,” what I would hear when people would say that was okay, so if I’m the one with the power and it’s possible for me to stop, and the glass of wine and the slice of pie, they hold no power over me, then if I’m drinking too much or eating too much, then it must be my fault. Must be to blame.

That is what I heard. And listen, this is part of the problem. Part of the problem when it comes to how we talk about change as a society is that we’re always looking to assign blame somewhere. So someone or something is always at fault.

Either I’m at fault because I lack discipline, I lack willpower, or the wine is at fault because it takes away my decision-making power, or the food is at fault because it’s been modified to make it more enticing and more addictive to my brain.

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It's always someone or something is at fault. And this is part of the problem. Because what I'm offering for all of you to consider is what if how much you drank or eat or consume of anything is no one's fault? It's not a wrongdoing and it's not a failure.

Because that's what fault means. What if it isn't a weakness or a failing how much you end up drinking or eating? What then? If you remove right and wrong and good and bad from the equation, then what are you left with?

I think you're just left with math. This idea of thought equals feeling equals action. This is what I'm talking about all the time on the podcast. You have this equation, think-feel-act, playing out all the time over and over again in your unconscious.

Because for most people, it is very, very unconscious, think-feel-act. So for example, you think I deserve it, which makes you feel entitled. So what do you do? You reach for the drink. All happens unconsciously.

Or you tell yourself, "One more won't hurt," which makes you feel empowered to have more. So what do you do? You ready for another. And then afterwards you think, "God, I was so bad yesterday." And you start to feel defeated. So what do you do? You decide to dig yourself in deeper and go back for more.

It's like, well, I screwed up my streak so I might as well just go all in on overdoing it. These are the unconscious equations playing out again and again.

And what I want you to consider is yes, you have the power, not only to start to observe what it looks like for you, but also learn how to intervene, learn how to change it, and that doesn't mean that when you don't change it, when you don't intervene, when you find yourself drinking more than you

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want to, or eating more than you want to, that doesn't mean that it's your fault.

You can have the power to change, and you can be blameless, even when you drink or eat or consume anything more than you want. Because this isn't a matter of assigning blame.

I will tell you this; shame is the antiquated recipe that we have all been given for thousands of years on how to create change. Just feel bad enough and finally you'll do something differently. But guess what? It doesn't work.

Even if you do shame yourself into saying no, guess what happens? You still feel really bad. And your worthiness is hanging in a very, very fine balance. Because God forbid, if I drink again, if I go overboard with food again, then there goes my worthiness.

The way of thinking about change as a product of shame, it really is something that I believe we have to let go. Because the only way to create sustainable change that feels good - this is important, it has to feel good. If it's not going to feel good, you can't do it in the long term.

And what I see time and time again is people will be able to say no to the thing they're desiring, but then they'll just turn and redirect that desire in another area that is unhealthy. So if you really want to create sustainable change that feels good, then you have to focus instead of assigning blame and making someone or something at fault, you have to focus on practicing skills, building skills.

The skill of observing your mind and your urges, the skill of being with the emotion that you'd rather not feel right now, you'd rather drink over and eat over so you don't have to experience it, the skill of removing all the judgement, all the thoughts of I'm bad, I'm a screwup, why can't I learn my lesson by now, and seeing just the facts of what happened.

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There was a thought that happened in my unconscious mind that maybe I didn't even see, and if I could see it, I didn't know how to challenge it. There was a desire that bubbled up that I didn't know how to make peace with. There was an emotion that I felt that I didn't know how to feel, and I wanted to drink over or eat over. And there was a decision to reach for that drink or reach for the food that I'm still learning how to disentangle from my worth as a human.

Those are the skills that you have to start practicing and mastering. And I will tell you this; I remember when I published my book in 2016, *Why Can't I Drink Like Everyone Else?* When I published that, there were a couple members of my family who read it and their reaction was, "I'm just so sorry that you went through this."

It's a really normal reaction, right? We don't want our loved ones to suffer. We want them to be happy. But here's the problem; suffering is a part of existence. No one gets to avoid it. I don't care who you are, you don't get to avoid it.

And being unhappy is a normal part of being human. No one can outrun it. And one of the things that I realized when people had that reaction is they couldn't see and I hadn't yet articulated how my overdrinking and my overeating and everything that I was overdoing in life because I'll tell you, I was overdoing it a lot, it was no longer a source of suffering for me.

Not because I was suddenly being good. Because I now understood it to have a purpose in my life. So there's a book called *Man's Search for Meaning*. It's by Viktor Frankl. And if you haven't read it, I really encourage you to. It's so good.

It's very brief but it is very, very impactful. So Viktor Frankl was a Jewish doctor living in Vienna who survived several concentration camps. Many of his family members did not. And he writes this book after surviving the Holocaust and he writes about suffering, and he writes about meaning.

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And he says, “If there is meaning in life at all, there must be meaning in suffering.” And my overdrinking, my overeating, my overdoing everything, that’s what it felt like for the longest time. I just didn’t have an off switch in my head.

For the longest time for me, it felt like meaningless suffering. I would wake up and I would feel awful, and I would believe that all of my actions the night before were the result of being stupid, or me being a glutton, or me being unable to learn my lesson. None of that was true.

This was just me assigning blame and believing that my actions were equal to my worth. But I spent the longest time believing that none of this had any purpose. This was just me being bad.

And Viktor Frankl goes on to write and say that if suffering has meaning, then suffering ceases to be suffering the moment you find its meaning. The moment you understand it has a purpose.

And that truly was the case for me. The moment that I could see that everywhere in my life, where it just felt like I couldn’t get enough, I couldn’t get enough to drink, and I couldn’t get enough to eat, and I couldn’t get enough attention, and I couldn’t cross enough things off my to-do list.

All those things, where it felt like I couldn’t get enough and I was always overdoing it, as soon as I understood, oh wait, this isn’t a moral failing, this isn’t a sign that I have something wrong with me or a character defect or that I’m to blame, this is actually a path for me that I can follow. It’s a path for me to show me the areas of my life where I am missing skills that no one had ever taught me.

It was a pathway for me to discover, hey, what are you actually really desiring in the moment when you reach for the drink, and you reach for another? Is it satisfaction? Is it confidence? Is it connection? Is it calmness? What is it?

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It was a moment for me to really see that I could stop hiding from myself. I could actually inhabit my body. So often, me overdoing everything was an inability to just be with myself and be in my body. And when I understood this, that's when my suffering felt like it had no purpose at all. It was just a sign that I was stupid, and I couldn't learn my lesson. That's when it took on meaning.

And instead of regretting being 10-years-old and eating so many donuts that it would make me physically hurt inside, or being 17-years-old and getting blackout drunk at college parties, or spending my 20s working crazy hours fueled by coffee and cigarettes and then rewarding myself at the end of the week by getting wasted, and allowing myself to eat whatever I wanted, instead of looking back on all of that and thinking, "God, I wasted all that time and why did it take me so long to figure it out," all of a sudden, I could see it all had purpose.

It was all to put me on this path. To understand myself, and to learn these skills, and to make peace with my desire, and to understand the unbelievable amount of power that I actually had. And to stop feeling like I was at the mercy of my urges.

As soon as I saw that it all had a purpose, I stopped suffering. And I could actually be thankful for all of the times that I overdid it because to me, it was like, over and over again, some part of me was trying to get my attention and say, "Hey Rachel, pay attention over here, we really need you to pay attention. There's something that you can't see but there's something that you need to see."

And once I saw all of the ways in which I overdid it as a pathway to evolving into a new version of myself, not a better version, just a new version of myself, I could stop using it to beat myself up for overdoing it. I could stop feeling afraid of my cravings and my urges or being tempted. I could stop believing that I was powerless, and I had to hide from my desires, and I could stop reclaiming myself.

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And that is what I wish for all of you. That is what I hope all of you get out of this podcast each week. To see that there is a purpose here, there is a pathway that is available for you to walk down.

This isn't about assigning blame. This isn't about being a better person. This isn't about learning your lesson finally. It's about really reclaiming a part of yourself.

So that's it for today. Happy Thanksgiving to everyone in the US and 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.