

## Ep #254: Are You Writing Off Change?



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #254: Are You Writing Off Change?

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 254.

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.

Okay, so I wanted to start out today's episode just thinking about why you're here. I know it seems kind of obvious, but let's just pause and step back for a second. Why are you here?

If you're like most people, you're here because you want to change the habit that you have developed with drinking. You want to change your relationship with alcohol. But you probably also want to get a different perspective from everything that's out there.

So really stepping away from this idea that is so engrained in so many of us that drinking too much is some sort of character defect, that we need to hit rock bottom in order to change, that shaming ourselves and feeling bad is the way to start to modify your behavior.

Getting a different perspective on the idea that like, perhaps maybe we don't need to demonize alcohol. We don't need to try to convince you that your favorite drink is really bad for you and really a toxin or a poison for you to cut back or quit whatever your goal is.

But really just to say what is going on with this habit? Why do I feel drawn to drink? Why do I feel compelled to answer my urges? Why does it feel hard to say no? Can I just look at it in a logical way, with an approach that's just free from moralizing or prescribing the right course of action?

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I think that's another important piece here. Yes, I talk about taking a break. But taking a break in service of discovering what is the right path for you. Taking a break is the quickest way and the clearest way to get deep insight on how the habit does. That doesn't mean you have to stop drinking forever.

But if you think about all of that for your reasons for being here, I want to then talk with you about writing off change. This is something that I have a lot of experience with. So when I talk about writing off change, I mean telling yourself, "This is going to be too hard, this is going to be impossible, it's not going to work, I won't be able to do it, it's not going to last."

I talk about this idea a lot with all of my clients, everyone inside the challenge, because so often the reason that people are staying stuck is actually not because they're struggling with their urges or they're struggling with too much desire. It's actually because they keep writing off the possibility for change.

They do this unknowingly. I did this for a very long time. Writing off change kind of sounds like, okay, this is what it would sound like for me. "Okay, I mean, I know I could go on a first date and not drink but God, that sounds awkward and uncomfortable."

Or "Of course I can celebrate my birthday without booze, but no thank you. I'm supposed to have fun. Why would I do that? And yes, I can go on vacation, or attend a wedding, or spend a weekend somewhere amazing like a weekend in Paris, or make it through the holidays and not drink. I can do all of these things without drinking, but why would I do that? Why would I subject myself to that?"

So I want you to think about what those areas are for you. What are the areas in your life where you have written off change? You may relate to what I have said, maybe something that's totally different. But when it

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comes to changing your relationship with alcohol, where have you written off change?

Where are you telling yourself it would be too awkward, or uncomfortable to say no, or maybe you're telling yourself, yeah, sure, I can totally say no but why would I want to do that? Why would I want to do that in this case? Fill in the blank, whatever that is for you.

The reason why it's so important for you to start to notice where you've written off change and be aware of this is because of course, it's not just getting in the way of changing your relationship with alcohol. This is going to reveal patterns in other parts of your life as well.

This is why I think the work here on the podcast, the work that we do in the challenge, it's so important and it's so transformative because it is work that is deeper than just only looking at your relationship with alcohol. You start to notice how thought patterns that you have connected to drinking, connected to your ability to say no, connected to your ability to change, you start to notice how they pop up in areas of your life.

So you can start to think about where else have I told myself, "I don't know, I mean, I don't know that change is really possible." Maybe it's your career, or your relationships, or your body, or other goals. Where have you decided that something can't be done, or maybe it can be done - this is what a lot of people do when they write off change for themselves.

Okay, I could do it, but it's going to cause too much discomfort. Sure, hypothetically it's possible for me to do this thing or accomplish this thing, but I don't really think it's all that realistic, or it's just going to be too much of a hassle.

I want you to be curious about this because in my mind, there really are three reasons why we write off change. And by the way, in the process, prevent ourselves from changing. We prevent ourselves from doing

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whatever it is we want to do, whether it is developing a new relationship with alcohol, or achieving any number of goals.

We do this for three reasons. First, we write off our ability to change because we want to avoid the discomfort that we anticipate. Now, I just want to specify here that in this case, the discomfort that I'm talking about can be total conjecture.

So here's what it might sound like. "Hanging out with these people, it's just going to suck if I'm not drinking." Now, you may actually have no proof that that will be the case. For a lot of people, the discomfort they're imagining is just only discomfort that exists in their imagination.

It's the discomfort that they experience right now thinking about, oh God, this isn't going to be any fun, or this is going to be so awkward. So there's trying to avoid discomfort that you anticipate happening, but you don't actually have proof that it will be that way.

Now, the second reason that people write off change is because they want to avoid discomfort that they have previously experienced, and they didn't know how to avoid at the time.

So, sometimes we're just imagining discomfort that will happen, but we haven't actually experienced it. Sometimes though we want to avoid the discomfort that we have experienced in the past.

So a perfect example from my life, I remember for a long time when I was single thinking, "Okay, I mean, I know I can have sex with a new partner without being drunk. I'd done it before in my life, but oh my God, it's so awkward, especially when you're sober. And what am I going to do with all that awkwardness? I don't want it to be awkward. I might as well just drink and have it be easy and actually enjoy myself."

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So I had actually experienced discomfort with myself and my body in these moments. It was real discomfort. And I didn't know how to avoid it. And what I had taught my brain was like, oh hey, we can just drink over it.

So there's wanting to avoid discomfort that you anticipate but you haven't actually experienced, and then there's wanting to avoid discomfort that you have actually experienced, and you don't know what to do when it comes up.

What you know to do is I'll just pour a drink, but then the last reason I think that people write off change is because they are trying to avoid the discomfort of what they believe they will feel or how they believe they will feel if they fail if they don't follow through.

I see this a lot when people start out in the 30-day challenge. So they will say, "Okay, I'm all in, I'm going to take a 30-day break, this is going to be different from how I've done it in the past, it's going to be about learning about my mind and really understanding how to allow my urges and taking a new approach to commitment, but by the way, I have a friend in town and we have longstanding plans, or there's this event coming up that's been on my calendar for a really long time, so I'm just going to make an exception. No big deal. I'm just going to give myself permission."

Now of course, you can always give yourself permission. But what I want people to really examine is why. Are they giving themselves permission because first, they're anticipating discomfort, but second, a lot of times what I see happen is people will say, "I just don't want to fail. I don't want to make this commitment and then fail and then feel bad that I didn't follow through on my promise."

This is really why we write off change for these three reasons. Because we're anticipating discomfort that hasn't happened, because we are anticipating discomfort that has happened in the past and we didn't know how to handle it other than, I don't know, can someone pour me a drink? Or

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because we're trying to preemptively avoid the discomfort of not following through on our commitment.

Because what happens when most people break a promise to themselves is they go right into beating themselves up. They slip right into being the bad guy. And so it's like, okay, I'll just create this little exception here so I can avoid the potential of failure, and then if I fail, I'll just be rotten to myself.

But here's the thing; here's what I've learned over and over again. Discomfort is coming either way. It's just a part of life. And so the question really is, alright, am I going to choose the discomfort that helps me grow and evolve and embark on change even when part of me is saying I'm not really sure I can do this, I'm not really sure this is possible, or this is going to be too uncomfortable, too difficult, or am I going to stay with the discomfort that keeps my stuck?

The discomfort of, God, why did I drink so much last night? Why is it so hard for me to say no? Why can't I learn my lesson? Discomfort is coming either way. It's just a part of the human experience.

But there's the discomfort that helps us grow, and there's the discomfort that keeps us stuck and has us stagnating. I sometimes really think about it - it's a little bit like we're wearing a tool belt and we have one tool in it. This is what I think was true for me for a really long time.

It was like I was wearing my tool belt with one tool and that tool was pour a drink. Like okay, I can feel stressed and annoyed tonight because of everything that's happening in my day and everything that happened at work and everything that's happening in my relationship, or I can pour a drink.

I can feel kind of awkward and disconnected from the group that I'm with and like I don't really belong or fit in, or I don't know what to say, or I can

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pour myself a drink. I can feel bored with life and kind of down about the state of the world, or I can pour a drink.

That's what it felt like for me for the longest time. My tool belt, it had a lot of spots for different tools, but the only one in there was like, I don't know, have a drink, you'll relax, you'll feel better, things will be easier, things will be more fun.

And this of course is the problem. When that is our repeated kind of way to avoid discomfort, we just end up creating more. And this is where I really want you to consider today, where are the areas of your life where you have written off change?

Why isn't it possible for you to move towards discomfort so that you can learn and grow and evolve and become that next version of yourself, and that next version of yourself who has a totally radically different relationship with alcohol and a different relationship with your urges, and a different relationship with your desire?

Why are you telling yourself that's not possible for you? This is what I see so often is we'll look, and we'll say, okay, so-and-so can do it, this other person can do it, but I don't think that I can.

You have to really listen when you start to write off change and say I don't know, it's the holidays, I've got this thing coming up, I'm going to be seeing these people, I'm just re-entering the dating pool again, whatever your reason is to write off change, you have to start to ask yourself, well, why?

Why isn't it possible for you? I encourage you to actually sit down and answer this question. Here's what it used to sound like for me. Here were some of my previous answers.

Because overindulging is just the way that I am, it's just how I'm built, I'm just someone who overdoes things. Because I've always been this way,

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because I've just had this habit for too long, because I'm too old, because I've tried so many things and nothing seems to work, or if it works, just for a short period of time, and then I go right back to the habit. Because addiction runs in my family.

I had all of these reasons why change wasn't possible for me. And so it's important that you start to ask yourself when you notice that you've written off certain moments or experiences or times or whatever it is as I don't really think this is possible, I don't think change is really possible here.

It's important that you then ask yourself why. If it's possible for other people, why are you telling yourself it's not possible for you? Because here we are, the reason why I wanted to talk about this today, because here we are and it's almost December.

And this is when people go all-in on deciding that change is not possible. It's like, here we are, it's the last month of the year, I mean, nothing's going to happen now, this is not the time to change my drinking. This is not the time to embark on some sort of new endeavor because it's the holidays and there are too many parties and too many dinners and I've got all this holiday stress, and by the way I'm going to be with my family, and they push all my buttons and there's just no way.

99% of people will write off December as impossible to make any change when I actually believe that it's the most powerful time to embark on the process of change because you don't think that it is. Because you think it's the worst time. That's why it's the most powerful.

Because when you disprove that, when you start to teach yourself, listen, it doesn't matter what month of the year I'm in, I can just start change today, doesn't matter what day it is, I can just start today, no matter what's on my calendar, no matter what's coming up, no matter what's in my life, I can just start today.

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When you start to disprove this idea that change isn't possible for all these reasons, or because of who you are, that's when you start to create such deep transformation. And I really remember doing this myself one December. I've talked about this before on the podcast.

I decided that I was going to take a break from drinking, and it was December. And part of me was like, this is the dumbest idea ever. What are you doing? What are you thinking? But the other part of me was like, I hate the way I feel when December is over. I hate that I've spent the entire month just giving myself so much permission to just overindulge in everything.

Not just wine, not just alcohol, but food and sweets and candy canes and all of it. And I was sick of always having December be a lost cause. Like well, I guess I didn't achieve what I wanted to this year. And then just going all in on indulging, which I believed was the pathway to feeling good, but of course, then I came out the other side launched into the new year, and it was like, oh God, it's like I've set myself back already.

I've got these extra 10 or 15 pounds that now I've got to frantically try to work off. And so I remember being like, what if we turned it all on its head and what if we decided that I would get started now? What would happen?

And I really did think that it was a terrible idea. But I also had just spent so many Decembers being like, well, nothing's going to work now so here we go, let's go all-in on indulging. And that didn't seem to be a very good idea either.

And the beauty of it, the beauty of doing that, it actually really had very little to do with not drinking. I know that sounds kind of crazy, but the real beauty of what I did that one December was show myself that I had been wrong. All those years when I said December was a lost cause, all those years when it was like, well, just wait until January, I had been wrong.

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And I think that that is the transformation that is so powerful and that I really want all of you to find for yourselves. It's not about quantity. People fixate on quantity like if only I could just consume the right amount, if only I could just consume nothing, then everything would magically fall into place.

Listen, you have to drop the fixation on quantity. I really kind of believe that quantity is kind of irrelevant. The real power of this work is starting to see the places where you were so sure this would be a problem, this won't work, I can't do it, and you start to see that you're wrong.

That the thoughts that your brain comes up with are not always a reliable source of what you are capable with. There really is nothing more powerful than that. That's why I talk about the last month, the last 30 days of the year being the most powerful days of the year.

Because society really has written off December as a time to change. But when you disprove that, it's like you kind of crack open a door in your mind, just start to say like, well, what else might I be wrong about? When I tell myself that I can't say no because my kids are driving me nuts tonight, maybe I'm wrong.

When I tell myself that I can't say no because my best friend is going to be in town, maybe I'm wrong. When I tell myself that I can't get through the holidays, I can't be around my parents or my in-laws or my brother-in-law, whoever it is, without a glass of wine in my hand because they just push all my buttons, maybe that's wrong.

And then the deeper piece is that you realize maybe I'm wrong that this idea that saying no to a drink is about willpower and gritting my teeth and an exercise in discipline and not enjoying myself, maybe all of that is wrong too.

Because my belief and I believe this 100%, if this change that you're embarking on is all about gritting your teeth and being really disciplined and

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being really good and being really healthy when you say no, guess what? It's not going to last.

Even if you have a ton of health benefits from either cutting back or cutting out alcohol entirely. I watch this happen all the time with myself, I watch this happen all the time with the people that I work with. They say, "God, I feel so much better. I feel so much better and I'm sleeping better and I'm losing weight and I have less anxiety, so why do I still want to drink?"

Because health alone is only one piece of the puzzle. And just feeling healthy and being healthy, to me, that just doesn't cut it. Because we have more desires than just losing weight and a restful night's sleep. We want to be able to sit down and relax.

We want to engage in pleasurable activities, we want to feel connected to people, we want to feel carefree. We want to just laugh loudly and not care and be spontaneous. We want all of these things that if you're not also doing that work as well, it's just not going to cut it.

You're not going to get the transformation that you want. And it is possible. That ability to really be able to settle in and enjoy yourself and feel good and feel satisfied and feel relaxed and feel connected and feel pleasure, anything that you want to feel, it's 100% possible without that drink.

That is the biggest thought that you are disproving, that the route to enjoyment, the way to feel good is in that bottle of wine or in that cocktail or when you crack open a beer. That's the deepest belief, really at the core of the habit, that needs shifting and transforming.

And that's why I say you might as well start with December. Because if we're going to start proving that our brain is wrong, we might as well start proving right now in this month when most people think, I mean, lost cause, let's just wait until January.

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That's what the 30-day challenge is about. It's not about being healthy, although that's a nice side benefit. It's about changing your relationship with alcohol so that you can have a better relationship with yourself.

So think about it today. Think about today the areas in which you have written off change. Think about why it is. Are you avoiding discomfort that you're not actually even sure is there, you just anticipate it will be there? Are you avoiding discomfort that you have previously experienced, and you didn't know what to do other than like, let me just have a drink?

Are you avoiding the discomfort of what you believe will happen if you break your commitment? You're so used to the moment that you don't follow through with a promise, you're used to just beating yourself up and making it mean that something is wrong with you, instead of seeing, hey, how can I learn from this?

And really just asking the question of why you think in these moments change isn't possible for you. What reasons does your brain come up with? I shared a whole list of ones that mine used to come up with. All these reasons why I couldn't do it. Other people could but not me.

And then think about what you want to use the last month of this year for. Do you want to just keep going as you're going? Just keep doing the habit and just say I'm just going to put it off, or do you want to start disproving your thoughts now?

If you want to do it with me, the next challenge starts December 1st. You can head over to [rachelhart.com/december](http://rachelhart.com/december) to sign up. If you're not going to do it with me, think about doing it on your own. But just remember that writing off change will keep you stuck.

The goal here is for you to see that change is always possible. And not just the change of being healthy but the change of having more pleasure, more enjoyment, more connection, more of whatever you want, and realizing it

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has nothing to do with the glass. Alright everybody, that's it for today. 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](https://RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.