

## Ep #261: When Drinking Is Reliable



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #261: When Drinking Is Reliable

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 261.

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, my friends, welcome back today we're talking about what on earth to do when a drink feels like a really reliable way to relax or a really reliable way to have fun or to liven up in a boring situation or to unwind or whatever it feels like it is a reliable way or solution for you how on earth then do you go about changing the habit?

This is where I work with so many people who feel so stuck, and I felt so stuck for a really long time. Because you really do need to understand this concept of what it means to be reliable and understand what's actually really happening behind the scenes in your brain if you want to start creating change and creating transformation when it comes to your drinking and your relationship with alcohol.

Now, I know how daunting this can feel at first. I know how daunting it can feel to take even a very small from drinking and the fact of the matter is it's not just with alcohol, right? We face this all the time. People struggle all the time, especially in January, especially when it's a new year, and people want to change their habits. Then it's like, oh, I want to eat differently, or I want to exercise. And sometimes it means like, oh, so I'm not going to have ice cream every night watching TV.

Now, I have to wake up in the morning and lace up my tennis shoes. When you find something in your life to be a reliable way to find comfort, pleasure, or feel better, it can feel daunting, but it doesn't have to be. Now, for the

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longest time, I really, I truly believed that the only option for me was okay. Well, suppose I'm drinking too much, and I'm having trouble reigning it in. In that case, it seems like the only option that society says is out there is well, you have to stop drinking forever. You have to swear it off for the rest of your life.

Now, that's one approach. I don't think it's the only approach, but that was part of what felt so daunting for me. Because the idea of saying no for the rest of my life. Well, frankly, I didn't want to do that, but it was the only option that I was being told was out there. Honestly, when I thought about that, I thought about never drinking again for the rest of my life. I would feel almost like something bubble up inside of me.

It was kind of a combination between like anger and sadness and a little bit like, screw you. You know, you're not going to take this away from me. Mind you, no one was even saying, hey Rachel, you need to do this. No one was even suggesting to me that I needed to do this. It was kind of this internal battle that was happening inside of me. So, I had this piece of me that really desired to change and the piece of me that was like, okay, but the only way to change is to never drink again.

So, it would bubble up inside of me when I was just thinking about, okay, so, what do I do? And it felt sometimes like I was getting backed into a corner. And so, of course, like, when you feel backed into a corner, the only way out is to fight. That's what it felt like inside of me. I remember this so vividly, that kind of internal war that I felt I was in with myself. And I didn't really understand what was going on at the time.

I just understood how terrible the solution felt to me. It really did feel like something was going to be taken away. And in truth, something would have been taken from me because I had taught my brain that pouring a drink was how to relax after work and how to open up when I was meeting new people and how to have more fun and how to make a boring situation more

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exciting, and how to let loose, and how to celebrate, and how to feel adult and sophisticated, and make things special and fancy.

I had taught my brain all of this; pouring a drink was a reliable way for me to access how I wanted to feel. So, while it can seem like getting all riled up about the idea of not drinking can seem like, well, I was a little overblown or a little silly, like really, what's the big deal? It really did feel like no, but this is what I do. This is how I feel good. This is how I unwind. This is how I relax. This is how I open up. I don't want to lose that.

So, even though nobody was telling me to do this. No one was saying, hey, Rachel, you have to stop forever. I was getting that message that's the only solution. If you can't figure out your drinking, if you drink more than you want to, if you don't quote on quote drink like a normal person, then you have to admit you're an alcoholic and stop forever. I was the only one who was trying to figure out, okay, this isn't really working. I am struggling with some of the results I am getting here.

And yet, I was feeling so riled up because I didn't understand that it wasn't just about the idea of not drinking. It was about the idea of taking away from me what I had learned was a very reliable way to feel how I wanted to feel. And now it makes so much sense to me now that I understand. Yeah, there are benefits. There are benefits to the habit. It wasn't just all downsides.

I talk about this all of the time and how transformative this was for me when I started to recognize, like, listen, there are pros and cons. There are costs, but there are also benefits. For the longest time, I thought, okay, if I am going to change, I just have to focus on how it's harmful, and that's not good. It's not good for my health, and it's not good for how I feel the next day, and I regret the things that I did or said. I thought the only way to change was to focus on all of the negatives.

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I see how limiting and problematic that is. It's why whenever people work with me and start the 30-day challenge and start to do the deeper work inside Take A Break, everyone goes through this process. Okay, we have to understand the benefits as well. How is it helping you? And you know what, this actually, even just answering this question, will be something that sometimes people resist.

People will come to me and say no, no, no, it's not helping me. There's nothing good about it; it's only causing problems in my life. But that's not true. Of course, your drinking is helping you. If it wasn't helping you, you wouldn't be reaching for it. I think just so often, we're conditioned to be afraid of acknowledging any benefits because we think like, oh, God, if I think that there's anything good about it, I won't ever possibly be able to change. When, in fact, the opposite is true.

Getting riled up at the thought at not drinking, even if you're just contemplating it yourself, no one's even saying hey, you need to do this. It sounds extreme, like, is it really that big of a deal? But it truly can feel like a huge deal. It truly can feel like you're kind of in this battle yourself. I remember sometimes feeling so stuck that I would come close to tears. This pull to change was so strong inside of me.

I wanted things to be different. I didn't want to keep drinking the way that I was drinking. But then, at the same time, the pull to drink it felt so strong, the desire for it felt like I had so much. I was kind of clinging to it. You're not going to take this away from me. This is how I have a good time. This is how I stop being so caught up and spinning in my head all the time, and I can just find fun, Rachel.

When you feel like all of that is on the line, it really is a storm of emotions inside of you. It really can feel like you're angry and ready to fight and scared and maybe feel close to tears. Because let's just be honest, who doesn't want to feel good, right? This is honestly what the entire world is

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trying to sell us all the time, feeling good. Do this, you'll be happy. Do this, you'll be able to relax. Do this, you'll feel more confident. But this, it will make you feel satisfied.

Humans really crave feeling good. We want that so much, and when your brain learns, hey, I know a way to get there, pour a drink. And on top of it, no one else shows us an alternative to the idea of not drinking, even if it's just for a short break. It really can stir up a lot of emotions inside of us.

I do want to be clear here, just in case you think, oh, yeah, this is like, only about alcohol because alcohol is addictive. People who drink too much, they have problems, or they're addicts. I mean, that's just not the case at all. This happens with so many things. I mean, just watch people's reaction when you suggest like, hey, you know it, you should really cut out processed sugar, or you should really cut out carbs, or give up coffee, or give up soda.

I remember I was coaching someone very early on in my career as a coach. I was coaching someone about diet coke. Now, listen, I'm not a fan of diet coke. It's not my jam, but she really was, and the intensity of her reaction when we discussed like, well, what if you just take a break? What would happen? The intensity of her reaction was so strong, and at the time it didn't really make sense to me, but, boy, it really stirred up something in here. Like, what are you talking about? This is my treat. I've given up so much, I'm not going to also give up diet coke.

Now, again, it's not about looking at the substance itself and deciding like, oh, is this like a logical reaction or a silly reaction. It's really understanding why so much is getting stirred up inside of you and it's because you have taught yourself unconsciously this is a reliable way to feel good even if you have all this evidence, hey you know what, less drinking, less processed food, less sugar, it can help you feel better. It may even make a dent in whatever kind of physical ailments you have.

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It may improve a lot of parts of your life. Even still, lots of people, it doesn't just have to be around alcohol it's like they will shoot daggers at you, right? When you suggest the idea of like, yeah, well, what if you just like, took a break. The fact of the matter, it has nothing to do with the substance humans don't like giving up a reliable source of enjoyment, or a reliable source of pleasure because we don't have any alternative or we don't know of any alternative, no one teaches us the alternative.

And of course, the alternative that I'm talking about here, it's not the alternative of like, what's my substitute, it's the alternative of understanding you can generate inside of you the thing that you're desiring. Whether that is confidence or relaxation, whether that is happiness or pleasure, it's available for you to generate. It's just no one ever teaches us anything about the think, feel, act cycle, or how the brain works.

The question really is for you to consider if you're in this position of feeling like, listen, you can't take this away from me, or just even the idea of even taking a short break makes you feel kind of like, ugh, right? The question then, okay, so, what are you going to do? So, humans are hard wired to seek out pleasure. Having a drink is a reliable way to feel good. Taking it away can feel like it just sets off this storm inside of you, even if part of you knows you know it may not really be helping. It may not be getting me closer to the life that I actually want to live.

How do you do this? So, that's what we're going to talk about today because there are a couple of really simple steps that can really start helping you see what's happening behind the scenes. I want you first to identify when that desire bubbles up inside of you, just identify, hey, how do you want to feel? So often we only understand our desires, like, well, I just want to drink, or I just want the candy bar, instead of really understanding what is the feeling or the emotion that's underneath it? What is the feeling you are after?

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And listen, it's always a feeling, people. It's so funny how much I go back and forth with people on this. People will say, like, no, there's no feeling there, it's just a habit. Listen, once you start to understand how habits work, they don't work without feelings. It's an integral part of the think, feel, and act cycle because that's what's becoming habituated. The thoughts and the feelings that are leading to you to reach for the drink or reach for the food.

Or people will say, you know what, I'm just a wine person. I always have been. I just really, I love the taste, I'm a connoisseur. Trust me, there's still a feeling connected that desire. Even if you're kind of talking about your desires kind of like who you are as a person, that's what will happen a lot, like, oh, I'm just a wine person. I'm just a beer guy. Now, you may not be tuned in right now to what that feeling is because we understand the habit and we're taught that the habit is all about the substance. We are not taught about the think, feel, and act cycle, and also because it does operate very quickly and very unconsciously.

So, people will say, I don't even know how this happened. I don't even know how I drank so much or ate so much. We don't even notice the underlying thoughts and feelings that are there, but trust me if you learned how to pause, if you learned how to do this work and ask yourself, hey, what was that feeling? You will find it.

It's just a one word emotion, right? I want to feel happy, focused, or energized, relaxed, confident, or satisfied. And once you find that, once you find, like, this is what I'm desiring to feel right now. It gives you immediate access to how you're currently feeling. Right? You get immediate access to the contrast. So, maybe you're currently feeling a little annoyed, distracted, low energy, stressed, uncomfortable, or deprived. Really just taking that first step to say okay I notice that desire, what's the feeling?

Instead of just thinking it's all about the substance, what's the feeling? What's that one word emotion? It really just unlocks so much inside of you.

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Because all of a sudden you also get access to how you're currently feeling. Now, this is also where I find a lot of people will say, yeah, but what if I feel fine? I'm not stressed out all of the time when I'm drinking. I'm not drinking because I am unhappy. I am not bored, I just want a glass of wine. I just want to crack open a beer, is that such a big deal? Is that so wrong? Can't I feel fine, and have it be okay to want to drink and not have it mean that something is wrong with me?

Now, I want you to understand what's happening here when people kind of you know, push me on this, what they're trying to do is sort drinking into kind of these are the good reasons to drink and these are the bad reasons to drink. And if you listen to this podcast you know as soon as we enter the world of good and bad we get into a whole lot of trouble. I don't think that there are good reasons to drink or bad reasons to drink.

I think we need to take right and wrong and good and bad out of the equation entirely because it just prevents us from actually being curious. When we're trying to sort our decisions to drink into like, this is a good reason and this is a bad reason, it's always going to block your ability to examine what's happening in your unconscious. It's going to prevent you from understanding the habit.

If you can't understand it, if you can't see how that habit is unfolding you can't change it. If you're still clinging to no, no, no, but I'm drinking for a good reason I just happen to be drinking too much. Listen, that is going to prevent you from change. You have to be willing to let go of these ideas of it's good to drink when it's a celebration, or it's good when I'm with others, and it's bad to drink when I am alone, or it's bad to drink because I'm having a shitty day.

We're so desperate for this rulebook to tell us when it's okay. But what I want you to know is that rulebook doesn't exist, and if you're clinging to a rule book to tell you like when it's good, or the right amount vs. the wrong

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among, you know what's going to happen? All of these rules are just going to disconnect you from yourself. I don't offer people a rule book and frankly I don't want you to create a rulebook for yourself, because you know what, what happens with rules? They end up being broken.

How many times have you laid down the law with yourself when it comes to drinking, eating, or whatever, and then you know, only a day, week, or a month, or six months later you break it. The goal here when it comes to transformation is not to become a better rule follower. I really want you to see if you can embrace that. It's not to become a better rule follower. The goal is to get to know yourself better so that you can understand why you've been making certain decisions so you can start to make decisions that are more aligned with what you want.

That is not to do with following the rules. That is about intimacy with yourself. The goal here is not to create a rule of like, okay, but, p.s. I used to do this all of the time, by the way. I really thought that I just needed to find the right rule and be better at following it and that was going to be the solution. But the goal here is not to create a rule of like, okay, no more than two drinks ever in a sitting, and then get really good at following it.

Because guess what's going to happen? All your energy will be spent trying to be a rule follower and fixated on the number instead of becoming someone, transforming into someone who understands how to respond differently to your urges and your desires and your excuses and understands what's happening behind the scenes when you feel the desire?

You feel the desire when you're making the excuses. Changing the habit is not about being a rule follower it's about the opportunity to get to know yourself better. It's to have a deeper relationship and intimacy with the things that you're desiring. This is why we have a step one, just like, hey, how do you want to feel right now?

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I'm going to tell you what you're desiring, it's bigger than a glass of wine. It's bigger than a bowl of ice cream. This intimacy with your desires, you know, the reason why we want that is not to sort them into like, these are the good desires, these are the bad desires, and these ones are right, or these ones are wrong. The intimacy that I want you to develop with your desires are because your desires are here to propel your life forward.

That's what our desire is really truly for is not to be burned up on drinking and eating and false pleasures and believing that's going to get us to a place of happiness. Without that kind of intimacy, without that knowledge, that willingness to just ask yourself, instead of saying like, it's just a habit, I'm just a wine person, without that kind of knowledge of what you're truly desiring it's going to be very difficult to truly transform the habit and truly transform your drinking and your relationship with alcohol.

Because you're going to try to operate from this place of rules rather than this place of like, really knowing yourself. That's what I think we get so disconnected from when our brain thinks we have a reliable way to feel good. We get disconnected from really understanding what am I truly searching for in this moment? Because I was always like, I just want another drink. That's what I am truly searching for. I just didn't know how to have this kind of deeper conversation with myself. And habit change really is about a deeper conversation. It's understanding what's going on beneath the surface and then how to respond differently and that's never going to come from a rule book.

It's never going to come from trying to figure out you know, these are the good times to drink, and these are the bad times to drink, or this is the right amount, and this is the wrong amount. So, step one is really to just be willing, and it is a willingness. Just be willing to identify the feeling you're after, and then by extension that immediately gives you access to like, hey, what's going on underneath, what am I actually feeling? If what I am after is

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connection, what am I actually feeling in this moment? Oh, maybe I am feeling a little disconnected.

So, we're getting that information without judgment, without trying to label right or wrong feelings. It's just an exercise in curiosity. Step two then, is to ask yourself with the knowledge of like, oh, I want to be feeling more of why. So, I guess I am kind of feeling X right now. Whatever that looks like for you. I want to feel relaxed because right now I am kind of stressed, or I want to feel connected because right now I'm feeling disconnected, or I want to feel satisfied because right now I am feeling deprived, I want to feel entertained because I'm feeling bored, I want to feel numb because right now I am feeling a lot of pain or grief, I want to feel sophisticated, I want to feel normal because I am feeling kind of like I am not. Whatever the answer is for you in the moment, and p.s., it's always changing. Once you have that understanding you can start to see oh, my brain is so certain that the drink is a reliable way to access what I am truly desiring.

And so, once you have that information the next step for you is to ask yourself, why do I think that pouring a drink is more reliable than me, in this situation? Why do I believe that the drink is a more reliable way to feel happy, relaxed, engaged, confident, or whatever it is, than I am? That's the real question, and I want you to spend the time answering it because you will be amazed at what happens when you actually sit down and engage with that question. Why do you think that pouring a drink is more reliable than me in this situation? What you are going to discover if you are truly willing to answer that question, is how much power you're handing over to the drink, how much power you are handing over to the liquid in your glass, and how much power you are inadvertently removing from yourself. When you really start to see it in those terms it's so eye opening.

Now, people will tell me, well, Rachel, I just can't relax. I just can't snap my fingers and feel good. I can't just you know, immediately loosen up or entertain myself, or magically make myself feel more confident or stop

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feeling deprived. That's what people will say, but the fact of the matter is because no one has ever shown us how. People have just said, hey, drink this, eat this, you'll feel better.

There is something so profound when you start to acknowledge the limitations that you have unconsciously placed on yourself. The limitations of saying, I can't do this, the wine's going to do this. I can't do this, the cocktail can do this. You might discover, there's a part of you who will say, okay, I mean, technically, maybe I can do this. You know, technically, maybe I could figure out how to feel better and feel the way that I want but not reliably, not without working at it really hard, not quickly.

But when you spend the time to answer this question, why do I believe right now that the drink is more reliable solution than me, you really do start to understand how much of your power you are giving away, and that my friends is the real problem. Because if you want to feel in control, if you want to really feel like, yeah, I can totally take it or leave it, you can't do that and believe that the drink has more power than you.

But this is a dilemma that all of us have created for ourselves totally unconsciously but when you go through these steps you start to see, wait a minute, I am giving away a lot of my power. There is a part of me that does believe that the drink is more reliable than I am in these situations. And I will tell you it is very hard to feel in control. It is very hard to really truly know that you are someone who can take it or leave it, when you also believe what's in your glass, the thing in front of you, the substance in front of you, has more power than you do.

Again, this isn't just for alcohol. This is for anything where you notice yourself being like, oh, God, don't take that from me, whether it's sugar, coffee, diet coke, phone, or whatever. When the idea of removing something from your life, even for a short while gets you kind of feeling like, you can't take that away from me, or makes you kind of want to fight, you

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get a little riled up. I'm not giving this up. There's so much power in the realization of what's actually happening under the surface.

It's why for so long, I just felt so pissed at the idea of never drinking again. I was so angry, I felt like it was so unfair. It made me kind of want to cry. And even if it wasn't for the rest of my life, even when I considered doing it for short periods of time it felt really like something truly was being taken from me. And what I didn't understand is it was stirring up all of these emotions because I truly believed that to feel the way I wanted to feel I couldn't do it.

I had unconsciously made the drink way more powerful than me. When in truth was, it wasn't, it never was. The crazy thing is that once you go through these steps and you start to realize what's happening behind the scenes you're actually in a better position to consider the reliability of drinking in the long run. You start to see, yeah, my brain totally believes like, the drink is the reliable way to do it, or the food is a reliable way to do it.

This is how I'm going to get closer to my desires. This is how I'm going to feel good. This is how I get how I want to feel. But here's the thing, the more we rely on something outside of us to feel good, the less reliable it becomes. Right? Think about it with drinking. The more you drink, what happens? The more of a tolerance you develop. The more you drink, the more it takes to reach the feeling you're after.

You have to consume more to produce the same effect. I work with people all of the time who say like, I don't know what happened. I was just like, having a glass of wine at night and all of a sudden I'm polishing off the bottle, like, what's going on here? That's what happens when something is truly reliable we can trust that it will behave the same way every time. But if you just stop and think about it you see, God, that doesn't really apply to alcohol at all.

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How quickly people end up drinking more than they intend because actually it's not all that reliable. Think about how unreliable drinking can be at times. How many times have you said to yourself, I don't know this doesn't make sense, like, last week I had the same amount to drink, and I was fine. And like, I don't know what happened last night. This is why you have to be open to letting go of the idea that you just need to find this magically rule or this perfect quantity and that's going to be the solution.

Because two glasses today may not feel the same or react the same way tomorrow or the next day depending on your mood, sleep, immune system, where you are in your cycle, what you had to eat, quantity and rules are always going to disconnect you from how you actually feel in the moment.

So, step one, you have to identify how you want to feel when that desire to drink appears. That means letting go of like, it's just a habit. Letting go of oh, I'm just a wine person. How do you want to feel? That's going to give you the insight to understand, oh, I want to feel this way. So, this is how I'm actually feeling in the moment, and again, it doesn't have to be a negative emotion. You can say, yeah, I'm having fun, but I feel like I could be having more fun if alcohol was involved. So, that's step one.

Step two, is really interrogating, okay, why do I believe that drinking is more reliable than me? When it comes to getting to where I want to go or how I want to feel? Why do I believe that? Because then you'll start to see all of the power that you have given away.

Then, step three is committing to learning how to create the reliability you want on your own. And let me tell you it is possible. This is not about finding substitutes. This is believing that you, inside of yourself have the ability to unlock a part of you that can help you relax, open up, feel at ease, have more fun, let loose, keep up your feet, deal with pain, and deal with grief. You can become that reliable source of relief, pleasure, and enjoyment for yourself if you learn how to do it.

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If you start to master the think, feel, act cycle, and let me tell you that's true freedom. Most people don't even believe that it's possible because we aren't taught the true source of our desire. We don't understand that the answer to feeling differently in the moment does not lie outside of us, it's actually something that can come from within. No one has ever shown us how to do it. That's the power of really starting to understand and study how your brain works, and really study the think, feel, act cycle.

And you'll notice that the focus is not on becoming a reliable rule follower or reliable at only drinking this many days a week or this many drinks in a sitting. It's not about making rules because guess what? You know you're going to break them. We all do. It's about putting the habit into a bigger context. The context of your deeper desires, and learning how to address those desires on your own. That is true freedom. That is true power.

That freedom doesn't come from not drinking. It doesn't come from saying no or from never drinking again. It also doesn't come from only having one, or only having two, or never getting drunk, that freedom comes from knowing that you can give yourself the thing that you're actually craving in the moment. That feeling that you're truly desiring you can provide it. You can learn how to do this. You can become a reliable source of support, enjoyment, pleasure, relaxation, whatever it is that you're after, that's the freedom I'm talking about.

We get so stuck in this idea that ugh, I just need freedom from alcohol or freedom from drinking too much. No, the freedom really comes from the discovery that drinking is kind of the red herring. It's a distraction. All the years I spent trying to drink the perfect amount or never drink again or becoming better at following rules all of that was a real distraction. The distraction from what I really wanted which was the freedom to just have my back to just know that I could support myself. I could feel good no matter what was going on in my life.

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So, this isn't about deciding that you're never going to drink again. It's not about becoming more disciplined. It's not about becoming a perfect rule follower. It's not about being perfect at all. Perfect is the enemy of change. It's the idea of really committing to looking below the surface of understanding that desire as connected to a feeling. Understanding how you've handed away your power, and that you can learn. You can be a reliable source of what you want, and that always comes with greater intimacy with yourself.

A greater intimacy will change everything, and that's what will lead to lasting transformation. Alright, my friends, 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.

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