

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 263.

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, we are talking about feeling defeated today. So that might look like feeling defeated because you're drinking more than you want and nothing seems to work, or feeling defeated because maybe you're not drinking but you're frustrated like why am I not feeling better yet? I will tell you this, that it will seem on the surface like these are two different problems because of course what we want to do is fixate on alcohol consumption. But what I want you to consider during today's episode is that really it's the same issue at work behind the scenes when you feel this way.

So, learning what to do when you feel defeated, it's not just the key to changing your relationship with alcohol and the key to maintaining momentum. Because of course if you feel defeated, what's going to happen? You're more likely to drink. You're more likely to go back to the habit. You're more likely to throw your hands up and say, "Well, this isn't working so I might as well just enjoy myself."

So, it really is important to understand why you can fall into that place of feeling defeated and how to address it in a productive way rather than just kind of push your way through which never works in the long run. So that's all important. But it's not just a key to changing your relationship with alcohol and the habit of drinking. Mastering the skill and really understanding at the deepest level what defeat is and how to address it in a productive way, it's such an important skill for life.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

This is why I talk about how amazing it is to do this work in relationship to changing your drinking because what most people don't realize is they're laying the foundation really for skills that they can apply to every area of their life. When you really understand how to recognize what defeat really is and learn a productive way to start to change it then you all of a sudden have the key to changing anything in your life that isn't working, whether it is your drinking, or your eating, or spending, or relationships, you name it.

Because of course defeat doesn't just show up in the realm of what you drank last night. It shows up in all areas of our life. So, I want to back up for a second and just talk about what it means to feel defeated. And you can kind of understand it from what it sounds like.

This is what I will hear a lot. I will hear, "I've been trying so hard to drink less, or I've been trying so hard to take a break, or to not drink, nothing is working." Or "Okay, yeah, I'm not drinking but I still have all these urges, I have all this desire, I feel like I'm missing out. I'm hiding out. I'm avoiding certain people or certain social situations and I just feel like I'm never going to feel normal."

Or it can sound like, "Okay, yeah, I'm not drinking but I have replaced my glass of wine with snacking at night. Or I have discovered that now that I'm not sitting around drinking my life feels kind of blah. Or I don't really enjoy these relationships in my life anymore and now I feel like I just have so much to fix." And this is what defeat sounds like. It sounds like nothing is working, things aren't getting better and where I'm overwhelmed by everything there is to change and fix. And it is so easy to slip into feeling defeated.

So, no matter where you are in your journey with alcohol, this is something you have to really be on the lookout for. And lord knows, it was something that I struggled with for a really long time. So, everything that I was just describing, those were all thoughts that I had as well. So, so often I was in this kind of mindset of oh my God, I'm trying so hard, I'm doing all these

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

things. I'm putting in all this work. Why can't I make progress? Why aren't I feeling better now? Now I see there's so many things I have to change in my life, what gives?

Now, the issue here is not how do I avoid feeling defeated for the rest of my life? I know that's what we think on the surface. It's like, okay, just tell me how to never feel this way again. That's really not what you need to do. What you need to do is how do you start to change your understanding, not only of what it means to feel defeated, but how do you change your understanding of what it means to shift and change a habit, what it means to rewire your brain.

Because the way most people will talk about habit change sounds a lot like this. It sounds a lot like, yeah, you've got to beat the habit. You've got to fight your urges. You've got to win the battle. We understand habit change in terms of going to war with an enemy. But what happens when you're at war? When you're at war you can only claim success when the enemy has been defeated otherwise you have been defeated.

And what I want you to consider for a moment is that this is the real problem. Treating habit change like you're going to war or fighting an enemy is actually the problem here because let's just think about it. Who's the enemy when it comes to the habit of drinking? Who's the enemy? Is alcohol the enemy? Because if alcohol is the enemy, well, that might be kind of problematic because suddenly that drink in front of you, it's your nemesis.

And if it's your nemesis then it's capable of your downfall. And then guess what? All of a sudden you've given it a bunch of power, when in reality that drink has no power. It just sits there. And I want you to consider this because a lot of people will say, "Oh yeah, but okay, but what about, you know, it just sits there but what about when I have that first sip?" Listen, you've taken a sip of a drink, you are not suddenly powerless. But you may

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

suddenly have a lot of unconscious thoughts like, oh, well, there goes me being good, there goes my streak.

Because we have so engrained in us this belief that one sip will set you back as opposed to one sip doesn't have to mean anything. One sip can be the moment that you decide to say, "No, I'm done." When you make alcohol the enemy, when you make the drink the enemy that is part of the problem because then you start to believe that your success has everything to do with your proximity to alcohol, or your consumption of alcohol.

And sure, you can try to avoid it but what happens the moment that you can't? What happens the moment someone offers you drink, or you go to an event and there's an open bar, or the moment that you say yes? What happens then? What happens is we slip into feeling defeated. And sometimes it's not alcohol that we make the enemy, sometimes it's our urges and our desire that we label the enemy.

Now, I used to believe this a lot. I would tell myself, God, if I just didn't have so much desire, if I didn't have so many urges this wouldn't be such a struggle. I really believed that that was the problem. And then so then I also believed as a result that the way to feel better was to defeat my urges, and to defeat my desire, and figure out, how do I just delete them from my life?

Now, again the problem with this is that when you've developed a habit, when you have unconsciously trained your brain to expect the reward of alcohol, whether because it's five o'clock, or it's Friday night, or you're celebrating, or you're bored, whatever. We train our brain to expect the reward in lots of different situations. Trying then to delete all your urges is a really tall order because what are we going to do? We can't avoid five o'clock, or Friday nights, or celebrations, or boredom forever.

So, the belief that your urges or your desire is the enemy puts you in this place of trying to wage war. And then it also puts you in the place of making the presence of the urge, the presence of your desire is powerful.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

And that's something I talk about a lot, not just on the podcast but when I'm working with people inside Take a Break is to change into that place and shift into that place of the urge has no power, my desire is not a problem, it's totally normal. What's making it a problem is my thinking.

I can learn how to allow it. I can learn how to open up to it and not just react to it, not just try to respond to it. So sometimes we label urges, or our desires, enemy. And sometimes what we label as the enemy is our brain. That part of you that craves the reward, that part of you that just wants to feel good, it just wants a little pleasure. So, I will talk a lot about the function of the lower brain versus the higher brain on the podcast. And I do think it's really important for all of you to just understand, hey, how does the brain work.

But it is very easy to slip into, okay, so my lower brain is the enemy. That part of me that just desires pleasure and wants to avoid pain, and wants to do things as easily as possible with as little thought as possible, that's the enemy. You can see how this can happen, but you can also start to understand how problematic this is because what are you going to do, it's not like you can just request a new brain, if you think your brain is the enemy.

And I think a lot of times what happens is that when people start embarking on this work they start to feel like, well, I don't know. I just have this brain that won't cooperate. My brain is the problem rather than, no, my brain is just this tool that no one has ever shown me how to use. So, what I want you to consider is that the idea of habit change as going to war with something, defeating an enemy is actually the foundation of the problem here. When you feel defeated this is where the problem is starting.

You have to be willing to drop this framework because as long as you are in that framework of I'm going to war, I'm going to battle, I have to defeat this nemesis. As long as you're in that framework it's only going to diminish

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

your power. Because now there is something out there that has the power to defeat you when in truth, alcohol is not the enemy.

Your urges and your desire are not the enemy. And your brain is not the enemy. They don't create defeat, they can't defeat you. They're simply a conduit for your thinking, your thoughts that are fueling the habit, your thoughts about alcohol, your thoughts about your desire, your thoughts about your urges, your thoughts about your brain. When you start to really understand that the foundation of the habit is built on that think, feel, act cycle you start to see all these things are not the enemy, they're just the conduit for our thinking.

And I will tell you, I was so used to being in this mindset of no, no, no, I need to fight. I need an enemy, that at first for me I really did resist dropping the mindset of needing to go to battle. I was so used to thinking of this is just me battling it out with my desire and battling it out with my cravings that it felt very foreign for me to kind of let go of that. I was in this place of, okay, then what? If I'm not fighting these urges what am I doing? If I'm not going to war how am I going to change my drinking? How am I going to change myself?

I really only understood this kind of war analogy as the way to change a habit. But I will tell you that really dropping this mindset really is the secret to stop feeling defeated no matter where you are on your journey. If you want to stop feeling defeated you have to stop looking for an enemy to go to war with. And you have to start seeing whatever it is, the drink in front of you, the urge that you're experiencing, the desire that you have, the excuses coming from your lower brain, you have to start seeing them as the conduit to notice and examine the thoughts that are fueling the habit.

Because not only are there are thoughts fueling the habit but there are thoughts that are fueling you feeling defeated. When you tell yourself, nothing I do works, nothing I do changes anything, this is impossible, I've got too much to figure out, I've got too much to fix here, that's the real

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

problem. But if you are willing to drop the need for an enemy and just examine what is happening with the sentences in your mind, you start to see what's really creating feeling defeated.

And it's not how much you drank last night, and it's not how many urges you had, and it's not the brain that you were born with, it's this approach to change. This approach that it's a war that I need to win, that I need to defeat the enemy or be defeated. That approach that we've all been taught, that's what actually is causing the problem. Instead of understanding habit changes, like, hey, I've got a brain that no one ever taught me anything about. And skills that no one ever taught me anything about.

And maybe I just need to learn a little and learn how to practice. This is how you let go of feeling defeated. Instead of being in this battle about winning and losing, it becomes a journey of learning and growing. And really this isn't about just taking a kinder approach with yourself because if you understand this, when you look at how the think, feel, act cycle works.

When you look at what happens when you have thoughts like nothing is working, I can't figure this out, things aren't getting better, there's too much to fix and you then feel defeated you just have to ask yourself, well, then what do I do? What's showing up in my action line? And I will tell you and I know this from my own experience, that's when you're more likely to drink. That's when you're more likely to seek out that temporary escape and pour yourself a drink.

Changing your approach to habit change and changing your approach to feeling defeated and understanding what creates the feeling of defeat, that actually is the only way to keep momentum going. So, I'm going to give you three steps for this. They're really simple and they really will change everything for you.

So, step number one, when you're feeling defeated, no matter where you are on your journey, when you're feeling defeated you have to figure out

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

who you've made your enemy. Who's the enemy when it comes to changing your relationship with alcohol? Who are you trying to defeat? Maybe it's alcohol. Maybe it's your urges. Maybe it's your desire. Maybe it's your brain. Maybe it's all three. You have to as a first step identify who you've made the enemy because as soon as you have identified that you can go to step two.

And step two is really shifting that mindset from instead of I need to go to war with my urges. Or I need to go to war with saying no to my desire. Or I need to go to war with my brain. Or I need to avoid alcohol at all costs. Instead of going into battle step two is to really shift into that mindset of learning something. In that moment when you go into the mindset of learning instead of going into battle you can start to really ask yourself, okay, so what is the habit trying to teach me right now? What is it trying to show me that I haven't been able to see?

This is why I often talk about the power of shifting from this focus on all the ways that drinking is bad for you and drinking too much harms you. That's what a lot of people tell you to do, just focus on the downsides, focus on the cost. Well, I want you to pause for a second and consider the benefits. It's not a trick question. How is it helping you? I promise you that if you're willing to be curious there are benefits that go beyond, I don't know, I just like the taste.

What upside do you get from reaching for that drink or reaching for another that you find difficult to get elsewhere? Maybe it's the ability to stop thinking about work after a long day. Maybe it's a reward for making it through the week. Maybe it's permission to say, "Hey, you know what, mom is off the clock for tonight. I've got this glass of wine in my hand and I'm off mom duty." Maybe it's the freedom to socialize without the anxieties or hang-ups that would normally kind of tag along with you.

There is always a benefit to be found. And that benefit can lead you to uncover what the habit is trying to teach you. Instead of trying to fight your

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

urges and fight your desire, how can they be your teacher? What are they trying to reveal? I talk about this a lot, I have a whole episode on this thought, I deserve it. What is the it? What are you really after? What are you really desiring? Is it possible that you can consider that it has to do a little bit deeper than what's in your glass?

Maybe it's a sense of relaxation, or connection, or camaraderie, or enjoyment that otherwise feels kind of lacking. Maybe your urges and your desire is trying to show you how much you just avoid feeling restless, how much you just don't like the discomfort of sometimes being in your body. And so, you've gotten into the habit of reaching for something to kind of take that feeling away, whether it's a drink, or turning on a screen, or grabbing something to snack on. What are your urges and your desire trying to teach you?

And instead of being at war with your brain, instead of feeling like you're going to battle with your lower brain, what can you practice right now? This is the thing that people really don't realize. We just think that our brain should work with no effort. And it's a little bit like believing the body should work without moving it. It's like, no, you've got to move your body, we can't just sit around all day and expect that it should just function perfectly. You've also got to learn how to exercise your brain in productive ways.

But what do we do? We sit around, and by the way, I did this for a long time, just sitting around being like, "Well, why isn't it working the way I want it to?" Well, I wasn't exercising it in very productive ways. Most of us have no idea how to do this. I had no idea how to do this because when on earth did you learn anything about how your brain works, or how habits work, or how rewards like alcohol work in your brain? I didn't learn anything about any of these topics in school.

All I learned was just say no, which I will tell you is pretty crappy advice unless you plan on never experimenting with drugs and alcohol. And it's not even drugs and alcohol because we get big rewards from sugar and

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

processed food. But we're just told, "Hey, no, you should just be able to drink normally and eat normally, and be able to say no to these desires." So, I think it's important to just recognize that no one teaches us about this.

I learned nothing about my brain, or habits, or habit formation, or how to change them in school. So, I was working with zero knowledge here. And what happens if you start to understand your desire to change your relationship with alcohol and change your drinking, and drink less or stop drinking? Whatever your unique goal is, what if you start to shift that into this is the opportunity to finally learn the subject that everybody skips in school?

Like, hey, maybe I should learn a little bit about my brain, and habits, and the reward cycle, maybe that would actually be useful. Instead of, I just need to go to war with this enemy that PS, I know very little about. So, step one is to identify, okay, who have you made the enemy in this situation? Step two is to shift into, once you've identified who that enemy is, what might they be trying to teach you? What might your habits, or your desire, or your urges, or alcohol be trying to show you that otherwise you don't actually see right now?

And then step three is to take that information and to start applying it to practicing new skills, the skills of observing your mind, the skills of riding out the think, feel, act cycle, the skill of learning how to welcome and allow an urge. Instead of using willpower, and gritting your teeth, or distractions, or just giving in. There is so many skills here that most people just don't have. And I think because no one teaches us to kind of understand habit change in this way, through the lens of learning, it's always through, okay, let's just go to war.

What we often end up doing is we sit around and just wait to stop feeling defeated. We're just waiting for something to magically change and so we'll magically feel better, and we'll magically feel motivated. And I say this as someone who did this for years, and years, and years in my own life. I felt

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

like I was trying to constantly change my drinking. I was setting new rules for myself. I was saying, “Only one, or only two, or only on a full stomach, or only on weekends, or only with friends. And these friends, not those friends.”

And waiting an hour in between and only ever drinking wine and not hard alcohol. I mean the list would just go on and on. I was so sure that I was trying to do so many things to change my drinking. And then it seemed like nothing was working. And I often felt defeated. And then I was like, “Okay, well, screw it. I might as well have a drink.” But in reality I was just trying the same thing over and over again. It just was a different flavor every time. I was just trying to become better at following rules.

Those rules just kind of looked different but underneath it, it was the same thing, just dig in, find that willpower and just say no. That’s what kept me stuck for so long. I had to let go of this idea that changing my relationship with alcohol, changing my relationship with urges and my desire, was about becoming a rule follower. That’s not what it’s about. It’s about learning skills that I didn’t have. So, what I needed and what everyone I work with also needs is an entirely different approach.

Instead of focusing on saying no, instead of focusing on following rules or willpower, it’s understanding, hey, why are you saying yes? It’s understanding that think, feel, act cycle. It’s understanding that your drinking doesn’t just happen. And that doesn’t mean we blame you. It just means we get to be curious. It’s really letting go of this idea of I don’t know, I’ve just always been this way. I’ve always had too much desire for things. I’ve just always been someone who loves to drink.

It’s letting go of it as an identity and understanding, no, there’s just a thought and a feeling that leads to that decision. And the more you can’t see it the more engrained it becomes but that doesn’t mean you can’t change it. There is always a logical framework unfolding in the background

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

that explains what can feel very inexplicable about our habits. Why do I keep reaching for this thing when I know it's not serving me?

Really taking this approach, and this approach has nothing to do with going into war, it has nothing to do with defeating an enemy, or battling it out with a nemesis. It has to do with learning, and growing, and evolving, and practicing skills. But it also means that you have to stop waiting to no longer feel defeated. And see that it's something that you're actually creating with thoughts like, nothing works, I'm never going to be able to figure this out. I'm never going to feel normal, I've got too much to fix now.

And whether that's coming up right now because you feel like, well, every morning I wake up and I say that I'm going to be good today and then it goes out the window come five o'clock, or six o'clock, or seven o'clock. Or you're in the position of, okay, so I'm saying no but here I am, and I don't feel like I'm having the enjoyment or the connection that I want. Wherever you are in your journey it is really shifting into this different mindset.

The only reason you feel defeated is because you've bought into this idea that habit change is going to battle and there is an enemy that you have to defeat. And the more you believe this the more you will feel defeated by this enemy that you're unable to conquer. And from there the more you will say, "Screw it", and look for relief, and reach for the drink, and reach for food, and try to find the reward. The only way to shift this is to drop the framework that all of us have been taught. It's a framework that gives everything around you power and diminishes your own.

It's a framework that only allows for success when you just always say no, and you never again have an urge, and you're perfect. That framework is unwinnable, it's an unwinnable battle. The only way to free yourself from feeling defeated is to switch into this place of learning, to switch into this place of understanding that the habit is trying to show you something, that there's something here for you to understand. There's something maybe that it's trying to teach you. That's how you release defeat. And because

Ep #263: What to Do When You Feel Defeated

then you can stop being perfect and just figure out, what do I need to learn next?

Alright, that's it for today, I will see you next week.

Okay, listen up, changing your drinking is so much easier than you think. Whether you want to drink less or not at all, you don't need more rules or willpower. You need a logical framework that helps you understand and, more importantly, change the habit from the inside out. It starts with my 30-day challenge. Besides the obvious health benefits, taking a break from drinking is the fastest way to figure out what's really behind your desire. This radically different approach helps you succeed by dropping the perfectionism and judgment that blocks change. Decide what works best for you when it comes to drinking. Discover how to trust yourself and feel truly powered to take it or leave it. Head on over to RachelHart.com/join and start your transformation today.