

## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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

## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 265.

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, welcome back. We're talking today about something that's so important, and we start to use drinking as self-care. This is so common, right? You have a bad day, you're stressed out, maybe you're grieving a loss, maybe you got a migraine, or you're unable to sleep? And that habit starts to become if I pour a drink, I'm going to feel better, right?

And you look at how you use alcohol and what's behind your desire, and you may discover that, yeah, drinking has become a way for me to take care of myself. It's become a form of self-care, and listen, it makes a lot of sense because we are taught from a very young age go find something outside of yourself to feel better. Here's a cookie, here's a treat, turn on the TV. Right?

We are taught to go on this external hunt to feel good. Let me find the thing outside of myself that is going to help me in this situation. So, we learn that from a very young age. We get that message from a very young age, and we watch most of the adults in our environment do exactly that when they're struggling with how they feel. And this is why I think it's so important not to view the habit of drinking in isolation, not to put it in a silo, but to actually connect it to the big picture.

To just be honest and think how often do I look outside of myself to feel better, not just opening a bottle of wine when I have a bad day, but reaching for chocolate or grabbing the remote or picking up my phone, or

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

## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care

going shopping. How often is that part of my search to feel good? Now, I want to be really clear here. I don't think any of this is bad. I don't think humans are meant to live a life devoid of pleasure. I don't think it's wrong to pour a drink or reach for ice cream or slide into the couch when you're having a crappy day.

But what I do believe is that so many people who come to this work, so many people who want to change their relationship to alcohol and change your drinking because the habits start to feel like hey, this is my go-to way to feel better, when that happens they become very frustrated at change. It feels very difficult because they're in this kind of struggle, like, oh, God, don't take my go-to away from me. Right?

This is my little treat for myself at the end of the day. This is how I unwind. This is how I relax. This is how I deal with a crappy week, and so when they embark on change, it can often feel like okay, well, yeah, I'm being healthy, but now I'm here, and I've got the bad day and the stress and the grief and the boredom and the migraine and whatever, that's all mounting.

It starts to actually feel like they're self-care or their lack of self-care has become an obstacle to change. And so, that's what I really want to help you understand today. It's not about judging whether or not it's right or wrong to reach for the drink. It's really just understanding for yourself, is this getting in the way of you changing the habit permanently?

And I really do think that the real problem is that pretty much everyone operates under the incorrect definition of what self-care means. What it actually is. I certainly was for a very long time in my life. I talk about this in-depth inside Take A Break. We have a whole 30-day class after people complete the challenge. We have a whole 30-day class that really just focuses on self-care.

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

## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care

Because it's so misunderstood and it's so important. I really believe this from the bottom of my heart, you need to have more pleasure, not less, in your life if you want to be successful at changing the habit and changing your drinking. You need to have more. You need to feel like self-care is something that you can access and not like this thing that you've given up on because you're just being really healthy.

So, we're taught that self-care is made up of the external steps we'd take to deliberately take care of our emotional and physical health in the present moment. So, open the bottle of wine, eat something sweet, go get a massage, go for a run, call a friend, find something in the external world to help me feel better. I don't think we have to cut any of this out of your life. I just want you to change up the way you think about self-care.

I want you to change up, shifting from thinking, hey, what do I need to find outside of myself? What do I need to externally, and I want you to switch it up to think, what needs to happen internally? For me, it is so much more powerful to go inside, go inside of myself first and figure out what do I need to do right now? What am I actually in need of? How do I protect my future self because that's what it boils down to?

So, often when we get into these habits of self-care that are creating negative consequences for ourselves, we realize, oh, I'm not actually protecting my future self. I'm creating more problems for him or her. So, here's what I recommend, just for right now, whatever your go-to self-care is, keep it on the table. If it's pouring a glass of wine, keep it on the table. I'm not telling you to cut it out.

I'm not telling you to say like, okay, now, I'm just going to give it up, and I'm not going to drink when I'm stressed out or grieving or in pain or having a bad day, no. I just want you before you reach for that external solution, I want you to pause and take three internal steps first. This is the practice of going to the gym. This is the practice of slowing down the habit, alright?

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

## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care

Step number one, just identify where is my mind hanging out right now? It's kind of a funny question, but I always have people really focus on this. Where is your mind hanging out? Are you actually in the present moment? Are you actually with what's happening around you? Are you ruminating about all the things that happened at work today, or everything that happened yesterday, or last week, or last year?

A lot of times, people find out that they're spending a lot of the time hanging out in the past. And if you're not in the past, you might be in the future. You might be in the future catastrophizing about, oh, my God; bedtime is going to be a disaster later tonight. Tomorrow is going to be a nightmare. I have so much on my plate next week. What am I going to do about next month?

Maybe not in that present moment, but in the future where things don't look so good. So, just ask yourself, where is my mind? It's so simple, but most people never spend any time thinking about where they are. And what people find over and over again, especially when they do this work of changing their relationship with alcohol, is, hey, I'm not in the present moment a lot; I'm hanging out in the past, I'm hanging out in the future. And that's so important for you to understand.

Now, I do want to add this little bit about pain or insomnia because those two things come up a lot inside Take A Break. So often, people are like, no, I'm definitely in the present moment because I'm in pain right now or awake. I'm awake, lying in bed, unable to sleep right now. But even in those moments when I ask people to really think about where is your mind hanging out, I'll hear things like, I just have too much of it.

I have too much pain. I've had too much pain in my life, right? So, it's kind of that focus on the past, or they'll say it's been going on forever, or it's never going to go away, it's going to get in the way of tomorrow. It gets in the way of my life, right? That focusing on the future. So, no matter what your situation is, I just want you to first ask where is your mind hanging

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

## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care

out? Because so often, so much of the reason of why we are reaching for something external is because we aren't actually truly in the present moment.

We are off in the past. We're off in the future, and that's creating a lot of pain that then we're trying to find relief from. And sometimes, we can just focus and bring your mind back to what is actually happening right now. What are the facts of what is happening around me right now? Just that can make a big shift for you. So, that's step one, to really just identify where your mind is hanging out.

Step two is to notice how do you position yourself? Now, this is really important, so you've had a bad day, or you're stressed out or grieving, or you're in pain or lying awake in bed at night, how are you positioning yourself in this situation? And what I mean by this is really simple. Are you the hero? Are you the villain? Or are you the victim? Nine times out of ten, you're going to find that you're always putting yourself in one of those three roles.

Now, mind you, the position that you put yourself in, whether or not you see yourself in that moment as the hero, the villain, or the victim, it doesn't actually change what is happening around you, but it does change how you are relating to it. Right? Are you the person who's figuring a way through whatever obstacle you're encountering? Are you the hero? Are you the person to blame? Right? Are you the villain, or are you the person who's kind of put upon, you're the victim?

What I find is that the brain just loves sorting us into one of these three roles. This is what my brain does all of the time. It's just like, okay, let me figure out which role I'm going to slap you into, and that will happen outside of my conscious awareness. It is really fascinating when you start paying attention and notice which one we default into. I was so often swinging between the villain or the victim in any given circumstance.

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

## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care

Like, everything was my fault, it was my fault that I drank too much last night, it was my fault that I was so stupid. It was my fault that I couldn't learn my lesson. It was my fault that I couldn't get enough work done. It was my fault for spending too much money. So often, the villain in whatever was happening, or I was swinging to the opposite end of the pendulum, and I was the victim. All right?

It was my friend's fault, like, why did he convince me to stay for another round? It was my boss's fault for piling too much work on my plate. It was my parent's fault for never teaching me about money. I was just finding myself going back and forth between these two. Very rarely was I in the hero position. Now, it doesn't matter if you're having a bad day or you're grieving a loss, or you've got a migraine. I want you to pay attention to this.

Because how you position yourself then goes on to have so much influence and then how you take care of yourself? Because it's so powerful when you position yourself as like, I'm the person who can figure this out. Yes, this is hard. Yes, this is challenging. Yes, I don't really know how I'm going to figure it out, but I believe that I can do it. You're in such a more powerful place. Still, you're also alleviating some of the despair, hopelessness, and overwhelm that comes with unconsciously slotting yourself into that villain or victim role.

Let me tell you when you are doing that a lot, you are creating a lot of negative emotion that guess what? You'll need more relief from. So, that's step two. So, really understand, okay, how do you position yourself in this given situation.

The final step, step three, is to just ask yourself what is this urge? What is this craving really about? When you notice yourself thinking like, oh, my God, today was terrible. I just want a drink. I just want a treat. Just to go internally for a second and have that mini conversation with yourself. What is this really about?

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

## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care

I will tell you. It's fascinating how often the mind just wants to bypass spending any time with this question. It doesn't want to think about what the urge is really about. Even though in moments when you're not in the midst of having that desire, you can recognize, yeah, I think I might be reaching for a drink as a way to deal with stress, or deal with anxiety, or deal with a crappy day.

But what so happens for people is that in the moment when they're just kind of on autopilot, when they're annoyed, or stressed, in pain, introspection has a tendency to shut down. And it's just like, I don't care, just give me the drink, right? Just get me some chocolate. I want it. I want what I want, and I want it now. So, that's very normal, but it is so powerful to see if you can start interrupting that just to have a little mini conversation.

It doesn't have to be a huge dialogue, right? Just a mini conversation to be honest with yourself right now and just say what is this urge really about? Is it really about the drink? Or is it about the fact that I'm just kind of pissed off, or I'm feeling kind of anxious, or I'm feeling overwhelmed, or I'm angry, hopeless, bored, in pain? What's it really about? Because when you start to slow down and have that mini conversation, you start to build the awareness of what is happening behind the habit.

You start to build the awareness of the think, feel, and act cycle, the thoughts and the feelings that are connected to the action of reaching for a drink. And from there, you can start to see the loop that it's so easy to get stuck in. Right? Because there's no drink on earth that will forever and ever resolve all of these negative emotions.

Anger, anxiety, grief, doubt, overwhelm, and even physical pain and insomnia, they're part of the human experience. And the more you try to drink over them as a way to feel better and a way to cope, guess what happens? The less you're able to actually cope with them. The less tolerance you'll have for them because you're just trying to use this external

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



## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care

thing as a way to deal with it. But what happens when it shows up the next day?

You have to learn a new way forward, but you can't learn that new way forward until you really have that honest conversation with yourself and just say, what is this really about? And I find this can be a stumbling block for people when they want to say I just really like the taste, right? It's like you want to shut down the conversation. Listen, acknowledging that sometimes you reach for a drink because you had a crappy day or you're feeling overwhelmed, or you're feeling angry, or you're having grief doesn't mean that there's anything wrong with you.

What it does mean is that you have trained your brain to think, hey, this is a solution, of course, it's not. It's making you less capable, less able to cope with how you feel. So, the point is to really go through these steps so that you can start to develop a new understanding of what self-care looks like. So, you can really start to find new ways to cope with very real and very normal human experiences like negative emotions and pain and insomnia without fixating on the past or catastrophizing about the future without making yourself the villain, right, the person to blame?

Or the victim, the person that's just unable to see their way through. This is where you can really start to do that deep work of seeing that changing the habit of drinking is always about learning how to have a new relationship with yourself. I talk about developing a new relationship with alcohol, but when you really boil it down, it's about having a relationship with yourself. And I don't believe the goal is never ever reach for something outside of you externally to feel better.

I just think it's knowing and being fully aware of the true limitations of that kind of quick fix. Because, yes, you might momentarily have that reward. You might momentarily be able to kind of drink over or eat over or numb how you feel, but guess what? That numbness doesn't last forever. You

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

## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care

know that. You know what happens when the buzz wears off. That underlying problem is still there.

Which is why of course, people keep going back for more and more. Because they're not actually teaching their brain this new way forward. They're just stuck in this old paradigm, right? They're stuck in this lie that the solution to how they feel is outside of themselves when of course, the solution is always inside of you. Just no one ever told you. No one ever modeled it for you. This is what you have to learn now.

So, these are the three steps. Step one, pay attention to where your mind is hanging out. Step two notice how you're positioning yourself in whatever's going on, and step three really just have that mini conversation; hey, what is this urge really about? Just get clear on that answer. All of that is going to build so much awareness for you.

Listen, awareness really is the first place that we have to start from. We can't just start from this place of just say no or grit your teeth. You've done that. You know it doesn't work. We have to start by building awareness of how the habit works. Now, I do want you to keep in mind that this is not complicated. You don't need to overcomplicate this.

It does not take a lot of time. You're really just asking yourself three questions in the moment. But the ability to kind of slow down and create some awareness ahead of time is amazing. You don't even have to change what you end up doing. You don't have to say okay, and then I'm not drinking, or I'm not going to have the bowl of ice cream, or I'm not going to get on amazon and start shopping.

You don't have to do any of that. All I'm asking you to do right now is to start building awareness. Now, keep in mind that when you start practicing this, you will want to bypass these three steps in the moment. Like, get ready for that to happen. This will not come naturally at first, especially

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

## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care

because your lower brain is like this is not what we do. Like, why are we slowing down even to ask three questions. No, I want what I want when I want it.

So, especially when you are used to responding to those urges, you're used to having a bad day and heading to the, you know, wine store used to having a crappy day and opening up the fridge, I want you to be prepared for the fact that you're not going to want to go through those steps. That's normal. It doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong. Allow the resistance to be there, and don't make it mean anything.

This is where I see a bunch of people get stuck is that they encounter resistance. They think, oh, this should be really easy, and then they encounter resistance, and they're like, oh, God, what does that mean? It doesn't mean anything other than you have a habit. You have a habit that's very practiced too. I feel this negative emotion. Let's find something external to help me not feel it. The resistance is part of the process. So, that's the first thing. Expect that you will want to bypass this. That's okay. Don't make the resistance mean anything.

Now, the second thing to watch out for is trying to do this perfectly. You know I talk about all of the time on here. We're focused on progress, not perfection. So, what I'll see people do is they'll say, okay, this makes a lot of sense. I can really relate to this, and I'm going to ask myself these three questions, right, before reaching for the drink, food, turning on the TV, whatever, and then what happens? They don't do it. They just come home, and they had a crappy day, and you know they're off to the races.

Now, what most people do in that moment is they're like, oh, screwed that one up. All right. Tomorrow is a new day, clean slate; I'll be better tomorrow. I'll be better next time. Please don't do this. Just go back and ask yourself these questions anyway. This is where people get into trouble is

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

## Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care

they think the moment that they don't follow through, it's the moment to start over.

No, the moment that you don't follow through is the moment for you to start being curious about what happened. Otherwise, you get in this terrible loop of it; it's like Groundhog Day, constantly drying, right to like find that clean slate where you don't have any screwups as opposed to being curious about what happened. So, just because you didn't intervene in the moment, just because you didn't ask yourself the questions, or you asked the questions, but you didn't answer them, it doesn't mean that you have to throw everything out of the window.

Just create the greater awareness now. And what I just want you to consider, what I want your takeaway to be from all of today's episode, is really not to judge what you're reaching for as self-care, not to judge yourself if drinking has become a way for you to deal with the crappy day or to deal with the fact that you have a headache, instead to understand, hey, that's what we've been taught. We've been taught to go on this external hunt to find a way to feel better, but what if we could start to shift it up?

What if we could start to see there's so much power if we just pause and go inside first and figure out what's going on. And figure out that there are ways that we can actually feel better and give ourselves what we actually need that have nothing to do with reaching for a drink. It had nothing to do with anything external that my friend is true power. All right. Everyone, 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.

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

## **Ep #265: When Drinking Is A Form Of Self-Care**

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.