

## Ep #1: Why You Should Be Here



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #1: Why You Should Be Here

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.

Welcome everybody. I am so happy to have you joining me here today. I am really excited to get this podcast off the ground. This has been a long time in the making and I am so excited to be bringing this very first episode to you. So, welcome.

So, before we get started, you are probably wondering, who is this person that wants to talk to me about taking a break from drinking. Well, first of, I am recording this podcast live from San Francisco where right now as I am looking out of my office, there is a beautiful blue sky and I can also hear the fog horn, which is one of those things that just still perplexes me, but that's the way it is in San Francisco.

I am actually a new transplant or a newish transplant; I spent a long time living in New York City and growing up in New England and so I am still adjusting to everything in California, but I really like it. I am also a life coach. I am a life coach that works with people who want to drink less and I am just completely fascinated myself with questions about why people drink? Why it can be hard challenging, tricky sometimes even to cut back and not only that but how can we cut back or take a break from drinking without missing out on life?

This was always the million dollar question for me. You won't be surprised to know that I got into this work because of my own challenges and struggles with alcohol myself and so figuring out how I could do this? How I could figure it out, and still feel like I was enjoying myself and not missing out, that was something that I really wanted to solve and I did and I want to show you how do you do it too. So let me give you a really, really short truncated version of my story with drinking. Let's see.

So, I started drinking when I first got to college which was now a long time ago. I loved to drink. I had a lot of fun. I liked the version of Rachel that came out when I was drinking. I thought she was fun and carefree and didn't spend a lot of time focused on her insecurities or hangups and I liked that. I did not like the hangovers. I did not like waking up the next day and

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lying in bed thinking, “God what the hell happened last night, what did I do, what did I say.” I did not like all the recrimination and pain and suffering directed at myself for having had one too many to drink the night before and I spent basically all of my 20s flipflopping between drinking and not drinking and feeling like, I just couldn’t figure this out. I didn’t know why it was easier for some of my friends. I didn’t know why other people didn’t seem to desire alcohol as much as I did.

You know, I enjoyed waking up when I wasn’t drinking, clear headed and not having to worry about the night before, but I also felt like I was missing out on not only a part of me that I liked but I was just I wasn’t able to feel comfortable or fit in. I just felt like that part of me wasn’t fully there and so this was just a struggle. It was a struggle for a long time for me and when I finally figured out the solution and trust me I tried a lot of them. When I finally figured it out and figured out a solution that worked for me and not only worked for me, but left me in a much better place, a much happier place, I decided that I wanted to bring this work to other people and that started my journey as a life coach and where I am today.

I published a book in December; it’s called *Why Can’t I Drink Like Everyone Else* and it outlines my story and also the techniques and tools that I use with my coaching clients, but I am really passionate about this issue and I want to bring this message and these tools as far and as wide as possible.

So that’s where I am now and that’s why I am doing this podcast to share it all with you, but enough about me. You are going to hear a lot about my story and my personal experiences in upcoming episodes, but let’s talk about you. Let’s talk about why you might be tuning in and what you might be struggling with.

So tell me if any of these sound familiar. So, you love the way that drinking makes you feel, right? Like you love feeling happy and confident and relaxed and outgoing. You like feeling at ease and talkative, so you love all of that, but you wish like, I would just wish that may be would it be possible that I could be that way just in general, right? That it didn’t need a glass in my hand or a buzz going on to bring out those parts of me.

Tell me if you have tested out your own solutions, probably privately to try to moderate. So, I know this was a big thing for me. I tried a lot of home grown solutions to try to figure this out and so I tried everything from

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counting my drinks to only drinking on certain days, only drinking certain kinds of alcohol, spacing my drinks apart, alternating with water, only drinking on a full stomach, what else did I do.

Oh, this was a favorite one of mine that really usually never worked. I would try to pick out the person that I thought drinks the slowest, seemed the least interested in drinking, especially when I was out socially and try to see if I could match his or her pace and you know that was never particularly successful, but I always was fascinated just to think, how is this possible, why, like what is going on that this person does not really seem to care about the drink in front of them because that is not the way that I felt and so if you have tried solutions like those or other solutions, I know where you are coming from.

Have you ever woken up from a night out that you drank a lot more than you intended and the only explanation you can come up with is.” I just think my brain is missing an off switch.” This was a big one for me. I used to tell this to myself a lot as if one day in school, they were handing out off switches and I missed that day or I missed learning how to operate mine, but this was something I really kind of believed. I just thought I don’t know and other people seemed to know when to call it quits and a lot of times I desire just feels kind of insatiable. It’s just--it’s voracious, right, and my off switch just isn’t functioning properly. So, I know that a lot of people can relate to that.

Finally, like are you just sick of your drinking being an issue. This was a big one for me. I mean, I mentioned that this was something that I went back and forth throughout all of my 20s and a little bit into my 30s as well. I was just sick of thinking about it and wondering what’s wrong with me. How come this is an issue for me and not for my other friends? How come sometimes I am totally able to call it a night and it’s not an issue and other times it is like all my logic and planning and good intentions went out the window?

Why does that happen, and I spent a lot of mental energy just thinking about this issue and trying to figure it out, trying to figure out what was wrong with me, trying to come up with solutions, researching it and I was just sick of it. I just didn’t want it to be an issue anymore.

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So, if any of those sound familiar to you, I can tell you that you are in the right place and what I am going to do with this podcast, with Take a Break, is teach you the tools that I use with my clients and that I use with myself. They are the same tools that I use so that people can feel in control around alcohol, but not only that they can actually learn how to reduce their desire to drink and I will tell you if someone had told me that that was possible when I was, I don't know 23, 25, I would have just rolled my eyes. I would have thought like I don't think you know me.

I really really enjoy gin and tonics, I just do. That's just how things are. So the idea that you could truly reduce your desire seemed impossible, but I promise you that it is possible and that's something we will talk about in future episodes. Not only that, but do you have a little secret that all the tools that you learn here, they are tools that you can use and apply to change anything you want in your life.

So, this isn't just about learning tools that relate to drinking and I think that that is really exciting because I have found for myself that I first encountered this work as it related to my own drinking, but I have been able to apply it in so many different areas of my life and that's amazing. That I love more than anything. So, if you stick with it, if you work on these tools, if you apply it, you are going to be getting benefits not just in reducing your desire to drink and feeling more in control but in so many other areas of your life.

Okay, so, let's dive in to today's topic, which is why my approach is different. Now normally I am going to focus on tools, I am going to focus on techniques, I am going to give you really actionable things to do in every episode, but I get so many questions about this because I do have more of a unique approach to thinking about why we drink, why it can be hard to cut back that I just want to go over these basics because I know you probably already have a lot of questions.

So, there are four pieces that I think are worth highlighting about my approach that I will go over here. There are other ways in which I think the work that I do is different from a lot of the mainstream work out there but these are sort of the top four that I want to cover now.

The first one, alcohol is morally neutral, alright. Morally, neutral. It is not good or bad. Drinking is not a vice and abstaining is not a virtue. Your

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decisions that you make around drinking are not right or wrong, they are just decisions. Alcohol is morally neutral.

So, may be you think, “Well, why does this matter, why do I care?” I will tell you that in my own experience and also with all of the people that I coach when they start working on this issue, they already have so much judgement about themselves and about their behavior and about their actions and sometimes about judgement of things that have happened while they have been drinking and all of that judgement, right, so, all of that judgement is so wrapped up in our larger societal stories of the story of alcohol and that story is just steeped in issues of morality and culture, religion, race, gender, class, you name it; it’s all there.

You don’t need to look very far in order to make connections between the settlers in New England in the 1600s, the puritans, and the temperance movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment and prohibition in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to understand that morals and religion and right and wrong is so tied in to how we still talk about alcohol today, and it’s so important to try to just recognize that.

Recognize that what you are telling yourself about how much you are drinking, your actions, why you are struggling to control yourself. It’s all enmeshed in these stories, right. And the personal judgement that people bring to this issue is so intense and is so strong sometimes people feel a lot of shame that I think it’s just worth pointing this out.

Alcohol just is, right. It is a substance that has been with us, with humans for thousands of years and it’s probably going to continue to be with us for another thousands of years and that’s okay, right. It’s not good or bad. It’s not a vice. You don’t need to focus on being virtuous, you just need to understand that these cultural narratives, they influence you whether or not you know it, and just to add to that because right and wrong and good and bad are so entwined in the story of alcohol, I just want to add and we will go into this in future podcasts, you do not need to be a better person to solve this issue, you don’t, I promise. You do not need to work harder at being better.

You really don’t even if you have done things when you were drinking that you don’t feel proud of. You are perfectly fine just the way you are, really I



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promise. So, that's the first one. Thinking of alcohol as being morally neutral.

The second piece of my approach is that this is not a binary struggle. I know that flies in the face of almost everything that we are told about the struggle with alcohol, but it is not binary. We are told that either you are in control or you are powerless, either your brain can handle alcohol or it can't.

Either you drink normally or you are an alcoholic, right? It's all black and white, it's all either or and the problem is this binary explanation. There is no room for in between. There is no room for different degrees of struggle and there is no room for sometimes and I will tell you that sometimes, the idea that alcohol is sometimes an issue, but sometimes not is something that a lot of people experience. It is something that I experienced and it does not match with the way it is talked about. It does not match this black or white framework.

Look, sometimes, was the story of my life, right. I felt that I was sometimes kind of pulled to drink more than I wanted. I had this desire, this urge that was just so big and I didn't know what to do with it, I didn't know how to handle it and the desire went out and I also felt other times that I would be out with friends and we would have a couple of glasses of wine with dinner and that was it and my brain was like cool, alright, we are done, let's go home for the night, right?

Like that was so mindbending to me because I couldn't understand. I couldn't understand why there was this lack of consistency and that lack of consistency it really bothered me, it really ate away at me, because I felt like, well sometimes I am responsible and sometimes I am not and how do I make sense of that. It was really disorienting not to feel like I fit into an explanation of how we talk about people who struggle with their drinking and I wanted to find solutions, I was looking for solutions and everything that I came up with seemed to be in that black and white area. Either or, you know in control or powerless.

Your brain can handle it or your brain can't handle it? And I think that that does a disservice to the fact that there are many degrees of struggle, right.

So this is something that I mean I think is so fascinating, right, that you are drinking can change over time and under different circumstances. So what

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do I mean by that? I will have a lot of people that I work with will say, Rachel, "I just don't get it, I wasn't a big drinker in college." This is not my experience, but many people have this experience.

So, I wasn't a big drinker in college. I wasn't really into partying, that wasn't my scene, I wasn't interested and now you know 10, 15, 20 years out, all of a sudden, I feel really pulled to drink, right? I come home at the end of the day and I pour myself a glass of wine and then I have another glass of wine and then I have a third glass of wine and I don't know what's going on because this does not comport with the story that I understood of myself previously, right and that idea that your drinking can change overtime, we don't talk about that a lot because again that doesn't fit into that either or narrative. You either have a problem or you don't have a problem. The same is true for how your drinking can change under different circumstances.

So, I will talk with people who will say, you know, I am totally fine when I am out with people, like going out with people and socializing is not a big deal, it's fine, I am not really struggling with that. What I am struggling with is when I am by myself or when I am around certain people, right like an in those moments, that's when I find myself just drinking so much more than I want, but it doesn't make sense because four days earlier, I can be out, you know, at a family function and it will be totally fine and so how do you make sense of that.

Here's what I want to say and again we are going into this topic in much more detail, but it is okay if your drinking is sometimes an issue. It is okay to be in what I call sometimes land. It doesn't feel good to you right now and it probably hasn't felt good to you, but I want to tell you that there are so many more people in sometimes land in the same boat than you would imagine and so just to recap this is not a black and white issue, this is not an either or issue. There are many different degrees of struggle and that's the perspective that I bring to this work.

Third, I believe that for most people drinking too much is just a habit and it is a habit that they are knowingly or unconsciously taught themselves but because it is a habit, here is a good news. You don't need lifelong treatment. Right? You don't need to wear an identifying label, you just need to figure out how to undo the habit, okay. So what do I mean by this? I think that drinking many times for people is an attempt to feel better.

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Now think about it, because we don't often think about drinking in this sense. We think about drinking as, it's a social thing, it's a fun thing, it's a holiday thing, you know, it's an evening thing, it's a celebration thing, like we think about more the activities that we are doing.

But I really do believe and I found for myself and for so many other people that I work with that so often behind all of that or underneath that is the attempt to feel better. There is nothing more universal in the human condition than our desire to feel good, and when you think about it, everything we do in life is an attempt to feel better.

So, we are either running towards emotions that we want to feel. We are running towards contentment and love and acceptance and happiness and gratitude or running towards emotions we want to feel or we are running away from emotions that we don't want to feel. We are running away from loneliness and boredom and anxiety and frustration and irritation and anger and stress and so all of our actions are helping us to try to run towards positive emotions or away from negative emotions, and when you start to understand life in this way and see it as running towards or running away from all in an attempt to feel better, your choices start to make so much more sense.

We know already alcohol has a long reputation as a recipe for a good time as a surefire way to unwind, as a way to take the edge off, a way to make people more talkative, right? And when we think about it there is no quicker, easier fix to change how you feel. Not to mention the fact that it's also legal and readily available and socially acceptable, right? So many times, people aren't even realizing that alcohol is helping them cope with some negative emotions and feelings and when we learn to use it in that way and when I say 'learn' often this is unconscious learning. We are not even aware that we are doing this. We are teaching our brain that there is a really easy solution to feel better, right?

So think about it. If we are all driven by how we feel and if alcohol is a substance that can change how we feel really quickly, it can quickly change our mood, you start to get a sense of why this can be a habit that is hard to let go of, that is tricky to change? Because we want to feel better, right, and so we are taking away this thing that helps you feel better, that's hard, that's challenging, especially if you don't understand the mechanisms running behind all of it.

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But here's a thing. Your brain and my brain, all of our brains were built to run on the habits, right? Habits are a good thing. Habits are how we are supposed to function. It's what makes human so efficient, right, but the brain does not distinguish between good and bad habits. The brain is not saying, "Oh, don't keep repeating that pattern," right, like stop it there, that's bad. The brain just is noticing repetition and it is seeing repetition and it is noticing the pattern and it is making it so that pattern can start to be unconscious but we are just not aware of it, right? We don't get the lesson on here's how habits work, at least most of us don't.

So, if you are using alcohol to make a part of your life more bearable and that does not mean that you have to be starting it at a really bad place, it can just mean that you have some low level stress or anxiety, boredom, you know, feelings about feeling uncomfortable or awkward when you are by yourself or when you are socializing, when you are dating, when you are dealing with your family members, over the holidays, when you are having difficult conversations with people, when you are having trouble sleeping, when you are having sex with someone for the first time or the fiftieth time, when you are feeling insecure about your body and how you look. Alcohol is often used to make those situations and those feelings more bearable and we don't even realise it.

So you are teaching yourself that drinking solves a problem for you. It makes these feelings go away, it makes the situations a little bit easier, but here's a thing. You know that it doesn't actually eliminate those problems for you, you don't actually get drunk and you know let go of ever feeling awkward in a social event again, right. The next time you go to a social function, that same awkwardness is going to probably come up, drinking once didn't solve it, right?

Drinking just diverts your attention away from discomfort and you repeat this pattern enough, you repeat the pattern of diverting your attention away from discomfort by having a drink and you unknowingly create a habit. It's as simple as that, but just because you taught yourself a habit doesn't mean you don't have control or free will, it doesn't mean that you can't change it, you are not doomed to follow your habits blindly, but first you have to see what it is. You have to see it as an attempt to feel better and you have to understand it in that light and that's how you begin to change it.

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Now before I move on from this, just want to add one final piece because this is a question when I talk about drinking and overdrinking as a habit that we teach ourselves. People will rush in and say, yeah, yeah, yeah, okay that sounds fine, but what about our genes, like what about genetic predispositions, right? What about the fact that alcoholism can run in families, but you know what about that?

Here's my position, genetic predispositions and environmental factors, so things in your life like your childhood and your early struggles and other kind of factors, they can certainly play a role, right, but your genes and your socioeconomic status, your family, your childhood, your past, they are not your destiny, okay. They are not your destiny and I think it gets confusing because so many people have essentially kind of mixed up or they treat as one and the same predisposed and predetermined and there is a big difference between predisposed and predetermined, right?

When something is predetermined, your fate is sealed. Your fate is not sealed here, right, and the reason that we know this is because if you have a family history, if you never had a drink, if you never picked up a beer, if you never had a glass of wine in your life, there would be no problem, right? I mean it's not predetermined, right?

There maybe predispositions that may maybe make it perhaps more likely that you could struggle but also just because there are predispositions doesn't mean that you are fated to struggle and fated to always struggle and that you can't change.

You have free will, you can learn habits and you can also learn how to unwind habits and undo habits. So this is a recap on all of that. I really believe for most people drinking is a habit that you learn and can unlearn and that is a really good news.

Finally, the fourth piece of this, it is possible to lose your desire to drink. I talked about this a little earlier, but I just want to reinforce this because so many people are so skeptical of this and I completely understand why.

You know I always would talk about it in my 20s when this was such a struggle for me. I would say, "You know, I know I can take a break," right, and I took breaks for different lengths of time. I took breaks, my longest break in my 20s was for a year. That was the longest, the other ones,

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maybe sometimes they were for a weekend, sometimes they were for a week, sometimes for a couple of months, but I would flip flap back and forth. I knew that I was able to not drink. I knew that that was possible. I would do it all the time, but what I didn't think was possible was it I could stop wanting to drink, that I could stop desiring it, right, and the want and then desire is what always brought me back. It's what always made me say like, "Ah, screw it. I really want to join in, I really want that gin and tonic," right? It was that want and desire that struggle that I just was not convinced that that was possible.

So, I believed that I could take a break, but I thought, yeah, but I always be wanting in, I will always feel like I am missing out on life. So, if it's a choice between having unfortunate experiences and drinking too much and feeling upset about my actions while I don't like that, but if it's a choice between missing out on life, I don't particularly want to miss out on life. So, I felt very stuck, but I promise you it is possible to lose your desire to drink.

We are not conditioned to believe that and it's not just with desire, it's with all of our emotions and feelings. We are conditioned to believe that our external environment creates our feelings including desires. So you know, it's why we focus on our job, our bank accounts, our bodies, our relationship status as the key to finally feeling happy, right?

If we can just get a better job, if I can just get more money, if I can just lose weight, if I can finally find a boyfriend, right? All of those things are going to make me feel better and remember what I said about running towards emotions, right? The actions we take to try to get these things.

The problem is this all ignores the role of our thoughts in all of this and our thinking is paramount, right? You probably believe right now that that alcohol itself is what is creating your desire, right, that you look at the glass of wine or you look at the cocktail whatever, you look at it and you feel desire, right, and if that's the way it works. If alcohol creates our desire, then if you decide you want to cut back or take a break, then the way not to have to deal with your desire is to avoid it, it's to remove yourself, it's to make sure you are not around it, but here is the thing. Drinking is everywhere and it is part of everything.

Really, I mean, you can be hard depressed for most people to avoid encountering alcohol. It's at restaurants, it's part of celebrations, it's part of

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weddings and holidays and networking events and dating and of course to varying degrees, of course the entire world, not everyone drinks, but alcohol is in lots of different parts of your life and none of us want to feel like we cannot participate in life because if we try to but at the same time, we are also trying to cut back or we are trying to take a break, we have to wrestle with our desire. That doesn't feel good, that feels crappy.

For a long time, I kind of thought like, well, I mean, I don't know, I guess I am just going to have to go to a cabin in the woods, right? I mean if I want to not be tempted, if I don't want to have to deal with temptation and deal with my desire, well the only way to do that is to sequester myself on top of the mountain.

It's not a great solution, I mean, you can do it, but it's not great to feel like that is your only option, but we feel that way when we think external things cause our feelings, especially our desire. But look it doesn't work like this. You don't just spontaneously decide to drink, right?

Your actions are based on the feeling of desire and your feelings and your desire don't just come out of the clear blue sky. They are created by your thoughts. You think a thought, that thought generates an emotion or feeling and as a result you take an action. Think, feel, act. It's that simple and it's not a new concept, right? The concept can be traced back to ancient Greece.

This is a concept that has been with us for a long time, but for whatever reason there is an insistence that no, no it's really the external environment and we would just sometimes almost completely ignore the role that our thoughts play in creating our feelings and driving our actions, but trust me this cycle is always working in the background of your brain, but this is good news because when you use the think, feel, act cycle, it's something that can explain why your desire feels so big and unmanageable and insatiable, but it can also be used to help turn the volume down in that desire, to change your desire, to lessen that desire and to finally get to a place where you are truly not wanting to drink, truly not feeling like, "Oh, my God, this is just all resistance, I am gritting my teeth and pushing down how I am feeling," but really getting to a calm, relaxed place about it and here's the thing.

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If alcohol creates your desire, I mean I hate to say it, but we are kind of all screwed because alcohol isn't going anywhere anytime soon, right? I already told you, it has been with us for thousands of years, it's going to stick around but if your thoughts create your desire to drink, then I got to tell you, you have hit the jackpot because from this position, you can start to observe, to change, to practice and to eventually develop new ways to think and new automatic ways to think about drinking and here's the best part. If you work at this and you work at decreasing your desire, then if you decide that you want to either cut back your drinking or take a break from drinking or just not even drink at all anymore, you won't feel like you are missing out on life because you are not desiring it in the first place.

So if you remember in the beginning of this episode when I was telling you about how I used to study people who just didn't really seem into drinking. I used to kind of try to pace myself with them, that's the place where you can get to. You can get to that person who just kind of not into it. We are taught that our desire is fixed and unchangeable and that the only way forward is to resist it, but there is another way and that way is by using the think-feel-act cycle and that's how you also learn how to feel in control.

So, just to recap. Your desire is not fixed even though I know it may feel that way, I promise you can change it.

Okay, so, that's it. I know it was a lot of information. I am sorry for the brain dump but I get asked these questions so frequently that I wanted to give you all an overview before diving into the tools. The next time we meet up, I am going to start sharing some tools and techniques that you can start putting into action right away and please I really want to hear from my listeners.

So, feel free to reach out to me with questions, concerns, it doesn't make sense, I don't get it, can you talk about this topic, I want to hear it all.

So, send me an email at [podcast@rachelhart.com](mailto:podcast@rachelhart.com) and if you have a moment and you like what you heard and you would like to hear more of this, please rate me on itunes and leave some feedback there, I would really appreciate it. Thanks for listening.

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,

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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.