

Ep #12: Perfectionism and People Pleasing



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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

Ep #12: Perfectionism and People Pleasing

You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 12.

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.

Hey everybody. How are you? How are you doing? How's your day going?

I want to tell you how my day is going - actually, I want to tell you how my day started off. I woke up this morning at 5:30, that's when my alarm went off. I actually set it for 5:30. I like to wake up early, I find that I'm really much more productive in the morning than I am in the afternoon or the evening, so I try to wake up early. But I woke up right when my alarm went off and I looked at the clock and I thought to myself, I should have gotten up earlier.

5:30 was already really early but I thought to myself, I should have gotten up earlier, and I've noticed the past couple weeks, I've been paying attention to this. I notice that no matter how early I wake up, my brain still tells myself you should have gotten up earlier. I have this sense of feeling behind, feeling like I haven't done what I need to do before my feet even hit the floor in the morning, and I wonder if that is familiar for any of you out there.

Do any of you have that sense like I do, that sometimes from the moment that your eyes open in the morning, your brain is already on overdrive? You're already running through a never ending to do list, and it's not just about what needs to get done. For a lot of people, it's also about what you want to improve, what you want to do better. Eating better, exercising more, figuring out your relationship, finally signing up for that class, improving something. There's so much to do and so much to fix and for many of us, we haven't even stepped out of the door.

On top of that, so many people will tell me on top of everything that they're trying to do and trying to accomplish, there's all the needs that they're trying to meet. Your partner's needs, your children's needs, your boss' needs,

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

Ep #12: Perfectionism and People Pleasing

your friends' needs, trying to make sure that everyone around you has what they need to be happy while what you need takes a backseat.

I know a lot of you out there can relate to this and this has a lot to do with today's topic because today we are talking about perfectionism and people pleasing, which I'll tell you, I more and more see articles about these two mentalities, and actually really they're coping mechanisms but I'll get into that a little bit later.

I see articles and blogs and experts talking about perfectionism and people pleasing. Perfectionism being that do perfect, be perfect mentality, never let yourself make a mistake, never cut yourself slack. And people pleasing, that idea that you need to make sure that everyone is happy, everyone's needs are met, often at the expense of your own happiness and your own needs.

So not a week goes by without seeing a new article talking about how these two mentalities really hold people back and if you pay attention to this at all, you'll see that a lot of experts talk about these two mentalities as potential reasons why women in particular hold themselves back, why they hesitate to apply for the job that seems like a stretch or they fail to negotiate higher salaries or they keep quiet when they have something to say. It's not just that they infect the workplace, but that they infect our personal lives as well.

But here's the thing. I want to talk about something a little bit different. I want to talk about how perfectionism and people pleasing are connected to drinking and they are because I believe - and I have seen in myself and in the many people that I work with, how we find things in our life to hide from our perfectionism and our people pleasing to cover up the underlying emotion that are driving these two mentalities.

I think it's really both interesting and important to explore this in terms of drinking. Now, if you're listening and you're thinking, "Okay, that doesn't apply to me, not dealing with perfectionism or people pleasing", I want you to hang on. I want you to keep listening because I have not encountered a single person who does not do something in their life to hide from uncomfortable thoughts and feelings.

All of us, no matter what it is, have developed what I kind of think of as an unconscious toolbox. It's this toolbox that we have unconsciously

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

Ep #12: Perfectionism and People Pleasing

developed to try to cope and distract and cover up from the things that we don't like to feel. And if you're not sure of what that unconscious toolbox is for you, all you have to do is ask yourself how do you take the edge off? How do you muffle your inner critic? How do you distract yourself from the thoughts that tell you you're not good enough, you're not smart enough, you haven't accomplished enough in life?

For many people, perfectionism and people pleasing become part of that unconscious toolbox. They become part of the ways that we try to deal with those feelings, deal with the need to take the edge off, deal with the need to muffle our inner critic or distract ourselves from the thoughts that frankly, are pretty painful. So the question is, how then does drinking fit into this?

Drinking fits into this because perfectionism and people pleasing, they are coping mechanisms but they are rooted in the same emotion. They are rooted in the emotion of insecurity, not feeling confident, feeling deficient about something. And when you feel that way, when you feel insecure, when you feel deficient, one thing that often can happen is you start to tell yourself, "Well, I need to try to be perfect. I need to try and compensate for everything that's wrong with me" or, you need to try and make sure that everybody is happy and everybody likes me and gets along with me and I don't disappoint anyone. We think that if we can master these two things, that that will be what helps us feel less insecure.

Now, it's an impossible task and you know this. I'm impossible to do everything perfectly. It is impossible to make sure that everyone in your life is happy and their needs are met and they are never upset with you. But even though it is possible, we still run around in this frenzied state, trying to do it, trying to be perfect, trying not to make mistakes, trying never to fail, trying to make sure that everyone is happy and no one is ever disappointed in us. I will tell you that it is exhausting. It doesn't work and it wears you out.

So, you start with that feeling of insecurity, you start with that feeling of not measuring up, you unconsciously start trying to compensate and deal with it through perfectionism, through people pleasing. It's an impossible task, it's impossible to do, you run around crazy, you exhaust yourself, and then what happens?

Now you feel even worse. You have that sense of at the end of the day, just needing a break from your life, like you cannot deal with anything

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

Ep #12: Perfectionism and People Pleasing

because you are so frazzled. You are so frazzled trying to hold up all the things in your life that you're trying to do perfectly and everyone's needs except for your own.

So now here comes that quick and easy fix, and I talk about this all the time. Alcohol is such a quick and easy fix to feel differently, and for so many people, when it comes to the exhaustion that they feel at the end of the day, opening up a bottle of wine or pouring yourself a drink, not only seems like a really easy way to feel a little bit better, but - and here's the thing. This piece is so important. For many people, when they do that, it feels like you are putting your needs first finally. This always blows my mind. It really does, because we have it so backwards.

We feel like we are putting our needs first because we are finally saying, "No, I need a break, time out, I'm going to take the edge off, I need to escape a little, this is for me." But the crazy thing is that what you're doing is just covering up how you actually feel and how you're actually feeling is usually exhausted from trying to cover up the original feeling of insecurity, and guess what? This cycle does not look good and it does not result in anything good.

So you're starting off with a negative emotion that you try to get out of through perfectionism and people pleasing and you exhaust yourself doing that because frankly, both of those things are impossible so you exhaust yourself and you turn to something outside of yourself to try and feel better. You turn to something like pouring a drink that can quickly change how you feel. But here's the thing. It does not resolve the root issue. It does not magically make your exhaustion or your insecurity go away.

Then you start this cycle where you start making this a habit and looking forward to it, right? You train your brain unknowingly, "Well, you're exhausted, you're trying to juggle all these balls, you can't keep everything up in the air, but at least you'll get a break, at least you'll get a reward at the end of the day." So then your brain starts to anticipate that you're going to reward yourself, but now here's what happens with that reward for most people. When it becomes their go-to solution to try and make themselves feel better, what will happen is that they'll start feeling worse.

You might feel better in that moment when you have that first sip or when you finish that first glass, but for a lot of people they find that they physically

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

Ep #12: Perfectionism and People Pleasing

start not feeling great. Maybe they're not feeling great later on in the evening, maybe during the night when they find that their sleep is disturbed, maybe when they wake up the next day and they feel so tired and so exhausted but they're already feeling exhausted the night before. And now on top of that they're emotionally not feeling great because they're saying, "Why did I do this? I shouldn't have had that much to drink last night. Why do I keep doing this? Why is this habit so hard to break?" So you start having an emotional toll as well.

Many people will find that there are all sorts of repercussions when they start drinking more than they want in the evening. Maybe their mindless drinking turns into mindless eating. Maybe they notice that they are quick to get in a fight with their partner because the things that they really want to say in their relationship, that they feel that they're holding in all the time seem to bubble up once you've had two or three glasses to drink. Maybe you're feeling less productive. So many people that I work with will tell me that they have such limited time. They're stretched really thin. They have busy jobs, they have families and they have very little time for themselves at the end of the day. There are things that they actually want to work on, things that they are actually interested in and they want to pursue but they find themselves not pursuing these things, they find themselves just plopping down on the couch and pouring a couple glasses of wine and that's their evening.

Now again, not every person who struggles with perfectionism and people pleasing turns to drinking, but we all have our distractions of choice. There are a lot of people that are overeating, for others it's overworking, right? The idea that you make yourself so busy - and I know a lot of you out there can relate to this. You're so busy that you don't have a moment to really look and see what's going on in your mind or how you're feeling.

Those are two of the most common that I see, and what will happen is that when we decide that we want to change our drinking, when we decide, "Okay, I don't like how I'm feeling, I don't like the repercussions I'm getting" the focus tends to be just on changing the habit.

Now, there's nothing wrong with that, but here's the thing. If you only focus on changing the habit, if you only focus on saying, "Alright, I'm not going to drink anymore in the evenings" or "I'm never going to have more than two glasses of wine". If you only focus on that, you're going to be missing

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

Ep #12: Perfectionism and People Pleasing

something really important. You're going to be missing what made you feel like you needed to take the edge off in the first place. What made you feel like you just needed to muffle what was going on in your head? What made you feel like you just needed a break from the thoughts that you were having?

You have to go to that. You have to look at what is fuelling the perfectionism and the people pleasing. You have to look at that initial feeling that is fuelling it, which for so many people is insecurity and understand that anything that you are ever feeling, any emotion is always created by your thoughts. It's created by thoughts of I'm not good enough, I'm not smart enough, I'm not pretty enough, I'm not accomplished enough, so I just need to fix everything about me. I just need to do everything perfectly. Or, thoughts like they don't like me, I need to keep people happy, I can't let anybody down, it's my responsibility to meet everyone's needs - thoughts like this that just fuel people pleasing.

It's too much. It is the weight of so much pressure that people say I can't do it. I just need a way to forget about how I feel for a while. I just need a break. Enter alcohol.

The truth is, and this is the thing that I tell all the people that I work with. It is really difficult to truly make any progress on these areas without consciously understanding how you moderate your own self-criticism and how you cope with the thoughts that make you feel like you aren't good enough and like everyone else's needs are your responsibility.

In my case, I needed to stop looking for a distraction for the way I felt inside and the way that I seem to feel every evening at a bottom of a glass and figure out new ways to deal with the thoughts that were fuelling my perfectionism and fuelling my people pleasing. Otherwise, I was always going to be running from them.

So, what does this mean for your drinking? Look, if you are pouring yourself something to drink, it does not mean that you are always doing it as a result of perfectionism or people pleasing. It does not mean that, that's not what I'm suggesting. But what I am suggesting is that when you do, if this is a habit that you want to change, you have to get really, really good at asking yourself why. Why am I pouring myself a drink right now? What do I feel like I need a break from? What do I feel like I need to take the edge off

Ep #12: Perfectionism and People Pleasing

of? And if your answer is that you need a break from the relentless pressure of doing everything right and trying to keep everyone happy, then that's where you need to focus, and focusing there is going to make all the difference because I will tell you this: you can stop drinking. You can, and this is what will happen with so many people. They will take a break. They can take a break. It's not hard for them to take a break, but then they take a break and they don't understand why they don't feel better.

They feel better physical but they don't understand why the desire to drink is so strong and a lot of times, that reason is because they have not found other ways to deal with the discomfort that they feel at the end of the day from trying to cope with these negative thoughts.

If you don't have ways to change these thoughts, if you don't have ways to change how you're thinking is generating your insecurity and ultimately fuelling the perfectionism and people pleasing that wears you out and exhausts you, you will stay stuck in this cycle. It may not be through drinking, you may turn to other coping mechanisms to deal with how you feel. You might stop drinking and start overeating. You might stop drinking and start working around the clock. You might stop drinking and start spending a lot of money.

Whatever it is, because if you don't understand that your thoughts create your feelings or how your thoughts and your feelings are fuelling these twin problems of perfectionism and people pleasing and how it's exhausting you, then you will keep trying to find things outside of yourself to feel better.

This is the awareness that you need to bring to this issue if you want to make sustained long-lasting change, and this is why I think it is so important to understand how things like perfectionism and people pleasing are connected to our drinking, how these things actually fuel our drinking. Because when we feel like we are running around crazed, when we are waking up in the morning and already having thoughts of how we're behind before we even get out of bed, this is what we need to pay attention to. This is the real work and it makes all the difference.

So that's it for this week. I would really love to hear what you think, especially on this topic because I know so many of you out there already know that you're dealing with perfectionism and people pleasing and you

Ep #12: Perfectionism and People Pleasing

may not have made that connection before of how it connects potentially to your drinking.

I love hearing from you guys, I love hearing from my listeners, and so if you want to reach out to me, if you have ideas for the podcast, if you have questions that you would like me to answer, you can always email me at podcast at [rachelhart.com](mailto:podcast@rachelhart.com). Finally, I want to let you know that this is the last week to win a copy of my book "*Why Can't I Drink Like Everyone Else?*" All you have to do is leave a review on iTunes to be eligible. If you want to find out more about how to enter, just go to www.rachelhart.com/iTunes. That's it! Thanks for listening everyone, I'll see you next week.

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