

Ep #13: Change Your Perspective, Change Your Results



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 13.

Whether you want to drink less or stop drinking, this podcast will help you change the habit from the inside out. We're challenging conventional wisdom about why people drink and why it can be hard to resist temptation. No labels, no judgment, just practical tools to take control of your desire and stop worrying about your drinking. Now, here's your host Rachel Hart.

Hello everybody, welcome back! How are you doing? How is your day treating you? It's a lovely, lovely day in San Francisco. We have blue sky here, which makes me really happy, and I'm also really happy today because this podcast talks about an exercise that was one of the very first exercises that I did that completely changed how I thought about my drinking. So I'm really excited to share that with you today.

You know, whenever I start working with a new client, they usually start by telling me why they want to take a break from drinking, and it can sound something like this: maybe they don't like waking up in the morning feeling groggy or having a headache or feeling a little nauseous and they want to be more productive in their evenings but they find that after a couple drinks they end up just sitting on the couch and watching TV and before they know it, that little bit of precious free time that they had in the evening is gone.

They might hate how drinking too much and eating too much seems to go hand in hand and they know that they have fallen into this pattern of pouring themselves a glass of wine and then they start snacking and then they pour more wine and then they have more snacks and they hate the cycle that they are in and feeling like they're overdoing it, not just for drinking but also with eating.

Or they might tell me that they feel uncomfortable with something that feels like too much desire. They have too much desire in their body to drink and because of that desire, they find themselves drinking more than they want

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to, and then the next day they beat themselves up for having had too much and then on top of it worrying about what they did or what they said or just anxious that they don't have a crystal clear picture of everything that happened. Not to mention, don't understand why their desire is so big.

So no matter what they tell me is their reason for wanting to take a break - and you may have your own that don't fit in to any of these categories - I know that they truly do not like the results they are getting from drinking too much and you probably are in the same boat. You too probably do not like the results you're getting when you have more to drink than you intend.

Yes, when they try to cut back or take a break on their own, they find that their commitment wavers or if they make a commitment it doesn't last very long and it's so frustrating. It's so frustrating to have all of these reasons to want to change something, to know the negative results that you're getting and not liking them and yet, still feeling like change itself is elusive. I bet that a lot of you out there listening have felt that way yourself.

So the question is, why does this happen? Now, I will tell you that this was my situation for so long. I understood perfectly well that drinking too much was often having a lot of negative effects on my life, but despite knowing all the negative impacts, everything I didn't like about it, every morning that I woke up and I felt regretful and embarrassed and didn't understand why the night before had happened, I would still find that my commitment to change was not very strong.

I've talked about this before but I took a lot of breaks in my 20s. I would take a break for a couple days or a couple weeks or even a couple months and then I would start again. Or, I would be really, really careful. I would really carefully - I would count my drinks, I would really make sure that I wasn't going to go overboard and it would work well for a while, and then one night I would throw all restraint out the window and I would just say to myself, "Screw it" and I would drink as much as I wanted.

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I tried for so long to figure out why this was. Why was it that I was intimately familiar with all the negative impacts of drinking too much? I was living with them after all; I had to deal with them in the morning, yet I couldn't sustain a commitment to change even though I knew something in my life wasn't working.

So here's the thing. My explanation that I told myself privately was that I was weak-willed. And here's the thing also, I kind of thought that I was that way about everything so it wasn't just my ability to not be able to reign in my drinking, but when I looked at all my goals, I really looked at them and thought, "I don't know, I don't really have that much discipline, I'm kind of lazy when it comes to sticking with my goals. I'm weak-willed." So it didn't matter that it was about drinking because I was like this with eating better, getting in shape, starting up my artwork again, finding a new job, getting into a relationship, whatever it was, I found that I had all these goals that I didn't stick with and I would tell myself, "I guess I'm just not someone who knows how to stick with her commitments" and that was why I told myself that changing my drinking was so hard because something was innately wrong with me. I just didn't have it, I didn't have that will that other people seemed to have.

Now, here's the paradox. If you have listened to me before, you know that one of the things that never appealed to me when I looked at other approaches to either cut back on my drinking or just stop all together, was the idea that drinking too much was a sign that something was wrong with me and wrong with my character. That did not resonate at all. I did not like that, and in fact, any time I got any sort of whiff if that was the direction that an approach was going in, I wanted nothing to do with it. But here I was essentially doing the same thing. When I was alone with my thoughts, when it was just me in my head, what I was telling myself and what I was thinking to myself was that something was wrong with me and something was wrong with my character.

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I told myself that the fact that I'm not always able to control how much I drink and that my commitment to change - not just this but all my commitments in life, the fact that they were so flimsy, that that was a sign that something was wrong with who I was as a person and I told myself, "You're weak-willed, you're lazy, you're lacking discipline, you lack self-control and that's what's wrong. That's why you can't stick with your commitments. That's why you can see that drinking too much has all these negative impacts but you're still not changing."

Now, if you have ever felt this way, if you have felt like the reason you aren't changing or you aren't sticking with your commitments is because something is wrong with you, then I really want you to listen to this episode. I want to tell you right now, nothing is wrong with you. Nothing. Nada. Zero. You are not weak-willed. You are not lazy. You are not lacking discipline or self-control. You're just going about the process of change all wrong.

Okay, so think about this. What do most people do when they want to change something? Think about what you do. You probably focus on what isn't working. When it comes to drinking, that means focusing on hangovers, weight gain, disturbed sleep, waking up the next morning and regretting what you did or said, blacking out, feeling out of control, whatever your negative results are, that is where people put their intention. And that is why when people come to me and they want to work with me, they have no problem articulating what they don't like about drinking too much. And we think this is how it works. We think, "Okay, I don't like something and I want to change so I should focus on all the negative parts. I should focus on how this isn't working for me and use those negative results as a way to propel change."

Now, here's the thing. You've also heard me talk about the think-feel-act cycle. This is the cycle that gives us all of our results in life and it's very simple. Your thoughts create your feelings, which drive your actions. Now here's the thing, your actions create your results. So a lot of us have this sense that we don't know why we feel the way that we do, our emotions

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just seem to come out of nowhere, or the reason we feel the way we do is because of everything that's happening in our external life.

This is not the case. This is not how the think-feel-act cycle works. You always need to pay attention to what you're thinking to understand why you're feeling a certain way and why you're acting a certain way because also, your actions do not just materialize out of nothing. They are driven by how you're feeling. They're driven by your emotions and your actions always create your results.

Now, for a long time, I thought the results that I had in my life, especially these negative results I had around drinking were created by drinking too much, right? That's what I attributed my negative results to, the idea that I was drinking more than I wanted and of course when I had too much to drink I was waking up the next day feeling terrible, beating myself up, stuck in shame, whatever it was. But drinking too much is an action. It is one piece of the cycle and your actions - you know how the think-feel-act cycle works; your actions are always driven by a feeling and your feelings are always created by what you're thinking.

So the very first step for you right now is understanding that the negative results that you have from drinking too much are not created in isolation. You do not take any actions in your life without first feeling an emotion and you do not have any emotions without first having a thought.

This is not what happens when we think about changing our drinking. We fixate on the negative results that we're getting and we attribute all our negative results to alcohol, right? It's alcohol that is creating this for me, and we bypass the think-feel-act cycle. But there's another piece of the puzzle you need to understand. When you're only thinking about negative reasons to change, you are only going to produce negative emotions. You're going to produce negative emotions like shame, anger, anxiety, overwhelmed, insecurity, doubt, whatever it is, when you're thinking about all the negative results that you're getting, you're going to feel negative

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emotions, and guess what? Remember that if your emotions drive your actions, the negative emotions drive negative actions.

Really want you to pay attention to this. Negative emotions drive negative actions. A lot of people think it doesn't work this way. A lot of people think that shame and anxiety and overwhelmed and feeling bad is motivating but I want you to think about how do you act when you feel these emotions. How do you act when you feel ashamed? A lot of people hide. How do you act when you feel angry? For many people, their actions are either yelling or silently stewing in the corner. How do you act when you feel anxious? Probably worry a lot and you get stuck in that worry cycle. How do you act when you feel overwhelmed? For most people, they don't do anything. They stay stuck in inaction. How do you act when you feel insecure? You start judging yourself. When we feel negative emotions, we take negative actions and this is why we need to pay close attention when we want to change our relationship with alcohol but the only thing we're looking at are negative results and our negative thinking around what's happening.

So you're thinking negative thoughts, then you're feeling negative emotions and then you're taking negative action and guess what, change isn't happening. Or it's happening for a little bit and then you're finding that your commitment is pretty flimsy. Any kind of positive change that you want to fuel in your life, whether it's taking a break from drinking or eating better, exercising, starting a business, finding a job, finding a partner, whatever it is, whatever the positive change is, it's never going to be the result of taking negative actions. You are never going to get positive change as a result of hiding or worrying or judging yourself. These things do not produce positive change. These things keep you in the negative.

Change requires actions like planning, taking risks, being willing to try something new, persevering, putting yourself out there, being uncomfortable, picking yourself up when you fall down. This is what positive change requires and if these are the actions that you need to have on your side, then the thing for you to think about is what emotions are

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going to fuel them. Is it going to be shame, anxiety, insecurity and doubt? When you think about when you're planning or trying something new or persevering or running towards discomfort, whatever it is, when you think about it, is it shame, anxiety, overwhelmed, insecurity? Are these the emotions that produce those actions? No. Those emotions keep you hiding, they keep you stuck, they keep you worrying, they keep you judging. You need positive emotions to generate positive change. Emotions like hope or determination or tenacity or courage or motivation. These are the emotions you need to feel.

So knowing that, knowing what fuels our actions, understanding the think-feel-act cycle and knowing that our actions do not arise out of the clear blue, they are driven by how we feel and if you need a different set of actions to create the change you want, you need to start figuring out ways to create those positive emotions, and guess what? It means you also need positive reasons to change. You cannot just focus on the negative.

This is what everybody does. This is what I did for so long. I thought, "Okay, I want to change, I really want this to be different, it's not working for me so I just have to keep reminding myself of all the negative outcomes." I would make these lists of all the ways in which drinking was not serving me and I would look at these lists and then somehow I still wasn't changing. It was like having all the information in the world wasn't creating the change that I wanted.

This is what we do. We so often look at what we don't like about something and hope that that will fuel change but it doesn't work that way and here's why: nothing you are doing only has negative results including your drinking. Now, I know for some of you, it might feel that way. It might feel that your drinking at this point only has negative results but it is never that way. If you are only looking at the negative right now, I can promise that you are only looking at half of the equation.

Your reasons for wanting to change your drinking are definitely specific to you but I guarantee you do not need to look at the downsides anymore.

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You have looked at the downsides quite a bit, and here's the thing. You'll keep looking at the downsides at the expense of looking at the upside because if there weren't any upside to your drinking, you wouldn't want to drink in the first place.

I want you to really hear that. If there were no upsides to your drinking, you wouldn't want to drink in the first place. You wouldn't feel like you were missing out if you decided to take a break, or if you decided to change your drinking. So then the question becomes, how do you start to look at the complete equation? How do you find not just the downsides, which we're so good at identifying, how do you also find the upsides?

You have to identify the unique cost and benefits when it comes to both your drinking and also taking a break. You must look at both. So this is an exercise that I first did that had such a tremendous impact on me and I created a worksheet for you to use so that you can start to take a look and get a sense of what your complete picture is, your 360 degree assessment is of both the cost and benefits of drinking and taking a break. You have to look at the pros and cons of both sides.

Really, this exercise I cannot state how much it changed things for me. I had struggled for so many years, I had spent so long flip flopping between drinking and not drinking and telling myself that I was weak-willed and I was lazy and I just didn't have discipline like other people but in reality I was never looking at the complete picture. I was ignoring all the upsides of drinking. I didn't pay attention to that and I will tell you that I remember so vividly when I first did this exercise. It was actually on a work trip, months earlier I had planned that I was going to stay on and see the sights and have a little mini vacation by myself, but at that time I was also really, really struggling with how much I was drinking. I was going out and I was partying a lot and I was waking up a lot feeling really regretful and not understanding why I hadn't grown out of this by now, why this was still a problem for me and it wasn't a problem for a lot of my friends and I will tell you that I was so depressed at that point, I just felt like change was

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impossible. I really couldn't see a way forward and what happened was I came across this idea of looking at not just the negatives but looking at the positives and not just of my drinking but also of the idea of taking a break, looking at both positives and negatives of that and I ended up spending this little mini vacation hold up in my hotel room almost the entire time going through this exercise, because I will tell you it was the first time that I had seen on one page all the costs and benefits - and benefits, that was a big key associated with my drinking and also with what I envisioned taking a break would be like. And it floored me to see everything on one page, to see not just these lists of negatives and I was really good with coming up with that, I was really good at writing in my diary how I felt so terrible and I just had to remember how terrible I felt but to see also the positives.

It changed something for me, I felt like something clicked in my mind because I had thought about my drinking all the time. I really did. I liked drinking and so I would think about when do I get to drink, and I really want to drink and I hate how I'm feeling right now so I can't wait to pour a drink. So I was thinking about drinking a lot but then I was also thinking about the after effects a lot. I was thinking about you know, when I woke up the next day, how could I be so stupid, why do I feel so terrible, how come I did this again, why do I keep making the same mistake.

So I was thinking about the action of drinking a lot and I was also thinking about the repercussions of drinking a lot so I was spending a lot of mental energy thinking about my drinking but I had never understood the complete picture. Never. And this is something that I had thought about for almost 15 years and once I did this exercise, suddenly I had a new perspective and it was a perspective I had never had before. Not only that, I could see that there were not just negative reasons to change but there were positive reasons as well. Reasons that could potentially fuel positive emotions and positive change.

So this worksheet that I put together, it's going to take you through how to pinpoint all your unique costs and benefits of not just drinking but taking a

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break and it's going to show you how to look at it from every angle so that you can really get your own complete picture. You can really understand this for yourself because you must also look at the benefits of drinking and the cost of taking a break. You must look at both of these. Those are two areas that a lot of people ignore.

Now, I want you to remember when you take a look at this worksheet, it's available on my website, I'll give you the link in just a minute but the information that you're including here, it's just information. I think so often, we start to ask ourselves these questions that maybe we've never asked before and then we start to judge our answers. But what you're writing down, it is not good and it is not bad. There are no right or wrong answers here. Your responses are really just data points and the more data points that you have, the better you can assess where you want to go because ultimately the decision about what you want to do, it's always yours.

And I will say also you know, the point of this worksheet is not to persuade you to make a change. You might do this worksheet and you might take a look and decide that you're happy with the way things are and that is perfectly okay too. The point is just to give you a 360 degree assessment, a complete picture - one that you have probably never given yourself so that you can see it all together on one page. And from there, you'll be in a very different place in terms of being able to really think about what you want to do.

Okay, so here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to put this worksheet - it's called Your Complete Picture, I'm going to put it on the page for episode 13 on my website, so if you don't know already, my website is just www.rachelhart.com/podcast will take you to all the podcasts and you just need to go to episode 13, this episode, and you will find a place where you can download this worksheet. I really want you to do it, I really cannot stress how sitting in this little hotel room by myself on what I had thought was going to be a nice mini vacation, but really ended up with me doing this exercise for the very first time but also something clicking inside of me and

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understanding for the first time the full picture of what my drinking looked like, the benefits and the disadvantages and also why I thought taking a break was going to be like in terms of the benefits and the disadvantages and I will tell you it really shifted something for me, and so that's why I'm so excited to share it with you today and I hope that it will be something that will give you a brand new perspective, a perspective that you've never had before.

I'm really curious to hear what you guys think about this. I love hearing from you guys, I've heard from so many of you in the past couple weeks and I find it just amazingly gratifying. I know that a lot of you have shared with me how helpful it is to hear this perspective and to also feel like what you're thinking about and what you're struggling with, you're not alone and I just want to tell you because you know, you don't get to hear from each other, you're only hearing from me. You're not alone in this. You really are not. If you have any questions, I love hearing from my listeners. If you want to give me any feedback you can always email me at podcast@rachelhart.com. I'm always looking for ideas for new episodes or anything that you're interested in hearing me talk about on this show.

So take a look at that worksheet. It's called Your Complete Picture, it's available on the page for episode 13 for the podcast on my website and download it, fill it out, take your time with it and see what you think. I really hope that it will give you a different way of looking at something that you probably thought you already knew inside and out. So that's it for today everybody. Thanks for listening and 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

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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.