

## Ep #14: The Power of Questioning Your Thoughts



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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

## Ep #14: The Power of Questioning Your Thoughts

You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 14.

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 guys, how are you doing? How was your weekend? Did you have fun? Let me tell you, I had fun this past weekend. My husband and I went to the Exploratorium in San Francisco, it's our local science museum and they have an exhibit there called the Tactile Dome. It's this large, geodesic dome and inside the dome is a maze and you have to make your way through the maze, but here's the catch: it is totally dark inside. I mean pitch black. You cannot even see your hand in front of your face. You can't see anything at all. It's a level of darkness that really most of us rarely get to experience anymore because there's so much artificial light in our night.

So we're in this maze, it's pitch black, the only way you can figure out which way you should go and where you should go, where you should turn, whether you should crawl or stand or slide, is by using your sense of touch. That's why it's called the Tactile Dome. Our sense of touch is incredibly sensitive yet often it's really underused because so many of us are used to relying on visual evidence and memories and our environment around us that we can see, to interpret the world.

Okay, so the Tactile Dome is crazy and I loved it. Ever since I began doing this work and examining the thoughts in my mind and watching how they create my feelings and drive my actions, I have started putting myself in situations that I find really mentally and physically challenging - situations that I would not have put myself in before. But it's because I want to watch my brain. I want to see what are the thoughts that my brain produces. I want to take a look at what is my automatic and habitual thinking that's

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

## Ep #14: The Power of Questioning Your Thoughts

going on in there. Where does my brain go when it's outside of its comfort zone?

So you're not going to be surprised probably, I will tell you my brain goes to danger, all of the time. Really, anything that is unfamiliar from a pitch black maze at a science museum to ordering something unfamiliar off a menu, I have learned that my brain's knee-jerk response is "I don't know about this Rachel, this could be bad, this could be danger." And I will tell you, it's really fascinating because my husband's response to things that are unknown is the exact opposite. Anything that is unfamiliar to him, his brain's knee-jerk response is "This will be exciting" and it's kind of funny to see us in action together out in the world because our automatic, habitual responses to the unknown are so at odds.

So doing this enough, putting myself in enough unfamiliar, unknown environments, I've figured this out about my brain. I've got my brain's number. My brain sees danger everywhere, but here was a crazy thing about being in the Tactile Dome. I saw danger even when I couldn't see. There was a point in the maze where all of a sudden I thought, "I'm standing on a ledge, I'm about to fall off a ledge."

Now, here's the thing. I know that my brain likes to spot danger everywhere and in the past, not knowing this, I just would have believed what my brain was telling me. I would have believed that I was standing on a ledge and that I was about to fall off, but now because I know this, I didn't panic, I didn't feel that you know, overwhelming anxiety that I would have felt in the past. In the past, I probably would have frozen because I felt so anxious and refused to go any further. In fact, truth be told, I'm not sure I would have even gone into the Tactile Dome in the past. I probably would have said, "Have a good time honey, I'm going to stay outside."

But here I was, knowing that my brain does this, knowing that my brain like to immediately go to danger and I was able to do something different. My brain told me that I was about to fall off a ledge and immediately, I looked at that thought and I started to question it. Instead of just believing it and reacting to it and getting stuck in fear and anxiety and not being able to

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

## Ep #14: The Power of Questioning Your Thoughts

take a step forward, I looked at that thought and I started to hold it up for inspection.

This is what today's episode is all about. Are you questioning your thoughts? Are you challenging your thinking? Are you holding up your thoughts to the light of day and asking yourself not only is this true, but do I want to keep believing this? Or are you doing the opposite? Are you holding on to your thoughts for dear life and clinging to them as the unquestionable truth and not ever examining whether or not there's something that you want to change?

If you're trying to change any habit, but especially drinking, you are going to have to start questioning your thoughts because a lot of those thoughts, the ones that you have never examined and you hold on to as true, are the exact same ones that hold you back from change.

Okay, so here's what happened inside the Tactile Dome. I was standing there and I was watching my brain think, "Rachel, you are standing on a ledge and you're about to fall off, you are in danger", I didn't panic, I didn't freak out - even though, I will tell you, I am not a big fan of heights. My palms will sometimes sweat when I watch people on TV that are high up. So I didn't freak out and I had no visual clues in my environment to tell me otherwise, to tell me that I wasn't on a ledge, and the only place I could really go in this moment was to look inside my brain.

So I looked at that thought and I said, "Okay, let's examine this. Do I think this thought is true? Do I think that my local science museum would have created an interactive exhibit for visitors that included a ledge that you could tumble off of?" Probably not. But it still felt true. I saw that as that's probably not the case but I was still feeling like, "I don't know, I feel like I'm going to tumble."

So then I remembered something before they let us into the Tactile Dome. They were very clear that you had to be at least seven years old in order to go through the maze, and that's when it hit me. Little kids can do this. Second graders are allowed to do this. Surely the Exploratorium is not

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

## Ep #14: The Power of Questioning Your Thoughts

putting second graders in danger, and that's when I decided, that's when I came up with some evidence that felt believable enough to me, that if it's safe enough for second graders to navigate this exhibit, then it is probably safe enough for me. And that's when I took a step forward, and guess what? I didn't fall. I wasn't standing on a ledge.

Now, it's rare that you have the benefit of being in an entirely pitch black dome with no information around you and in total isolation to examine your thoughts, but I love this idea. I love the idea of just looking at a thought and examining it in isolation. Not looking to your surroundings, not looking for visual evidence, not looking to your past, not looking to other people, just looking at the thought itself in isolation and questioning whether or not it is true.

If you want to change your drinking, you have a lot of thoughts that probably could use this sort of examination. Or if you want to change anything in your life, for that matter. Thoughts like "Life will be boring if I'm not drinking", "I will always stand out if I'm a non-drinker", "I won't ever be able to just kick back and have fun again, I'll always feel like I'm missing out, parties will be miserable, the holidays will be unbearable", "I'll be healthy but this will suck."

Whatever that thought is for you, whatever your fear is about what your future will look like, I want you to ask yourself, what is it? What is that thought you have when you think about changing your drinking that when you think it, it feels as uncomfortable as standing on a ledge?

I know that right now, whatever that thought is, it doesn't feel optional for you. It just feels 100% true, and that's why it's so uncomfortable. Now, I'll tell you what my thought was when I was really struggling with my drinking. I was at a point in my life where I was partying a lot, I was drinking way too much, so much that I was blacking out a lot. I was waking up the next day not only feeling physically miserable, but also really embarrassed and regretful and yet, I wasn't stopping. Because as much as I wanted to change, life without drinking felt impossible because I was clinging on to a

## Ep #14: The Power of Questioning Your Thoughts

single thought for dear life, and this is what the thought was: "I can't meet guys if I'm not drinking."

Okay, now look, I know this might seem funny to you, but it was an incredibly painful thought for me. I was in my thirties, in New York City, and at a point in my life where I was really starting to feel like the odd man out among my friends for not being in a relationship and I hadn't been in a relationship for a while. In fact, my longest relationship had ended before I had even turned 30, and after years of being single, it was starting to pile up, the situation for me was starting to feel hopeless, and I wanted to meet people. I wanted to go on dates and I had no idea how to do this if I wasn't drinking. Drinking just seemed like it was part of everything social.

Not only that, if I did take a break, which part of me was thinking, "Maybe you should do this, you're not getting very good results Rachel." I had no idea how would I explain to a potential suitor that I was taking a break from drinking. How would I explain why I was doing that? It felt like opening up a door into a conversation about something being wrong with me. It was like opening up a can of worms and I wasn't willing to do that. So I really clung to this thought, I cannot meet guys, I cannot meet a potential mate if I'm not drinking.

I felt so stuck, this thought, it kept me frozen in place, it kept me terrified to take a step forward because the unknown seemed so uncomfortable and untenable for me. So here's the thing: maybe you can relate to this thought, maybe you think it's ridiculous and entirely irrelevant to your own current situation, but what is relevant is that you also have a thought that is holding you back.

You also have a thought about what your future is going to be like without alcohol, that is not just keeping you stuck but is so uncomfortable and potentially so painful that you would rather everything stay the same and you're not moving forward because this thought for you feels like if you take a step too far, you're going to tumble off a ledge.

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

## Ep #14: The Power of Questioning Your Thoughts

You have to identify what this thought is. You have to find this thought and then you have to question it. You have to question it even though it feels 100% true for you, which let me tell you, my thought about meeting guys in New York in my thirties without drinking, that did not feel optional. That felt like a fact. All I had was evidence in my life to support it and a million examples of how not drinking kept me alone and drinking, although very messy for me, with all its repercussions, at least gave me the opportunity to meet people. And I was so lonely at the time, that having a salve for my loneliness seemed like an acceptable excuse for waking up the next day feeling miserable and embarrassed and regretful.

So here's what else I know: whatever your thought is that is holding you back, no one can logic you out of this. I know this, and you know this, because you've probably already had well-meaning friends try to tell you that what you believe isn't true or that you're exaggerating or it's wrong when you share with them your fear of what it will be like, what your life will look like if you stop drinking.

You already know that all the well-meaning, persuasive arguments from other people in the world has not worked. They roll right off you. The thing is, you have to logic yourself out of it. You have to do the work of disproving this thought. You have to do the work of starting to chip away at this thought. Otherwise, all the well-meaning suggestions from friends - and let me tell you, I had a lot of them from my friends as well about how I was being silly, it wasn't true, let me give you examples of other people, I'm sure it's possible - I mean, I just sat there with my arms crossed, kind of glaring probably, thinking this person has no idea what my situation is like, they cannot relate.

You will be like that as well. You will stay frozen in place. You will not take a step forward. You will not have any progress unless you start to question this thought yourself. You will just keep feeling like you're standing on the edge of a ledge about to fall.

So this is what I want you to do this week: ask yourself, what is my biggest fear that is keeping my stuck? When I think about making a change, what is

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

## Ep #14: The Power of Questioning Your Thoughts

that thought that feels so uncomfortable? What is that thought about my future that is preventing me from moving forward? What is the thought that I have that makes me feel like I'm standing on a ledge and taking a step forward would be terrible, even though you have to deal with the negative repercussions right now in your life?

Once you have that thought, you need to look at it. You need to start to consider and be open to the idea that it might not be true. Not only that, it might be an optional thought. You may not have to think it. And the way you do this is by starting to question it and asking yourself, is there any evidence at all that you can find that this thought might not be entirely correct or might not be a thought that you want to keep thinking.

So if your thought is, "Life will be so boring", how would you start to chip away at it? If your thought is, "I will always stand out" or "I will always be the odd man out", how can you start to question that? If your thought is, "I won't ever be able to just kick back and have fun" or "I'll always feel like I'm missing out, parties will be miserable, the holidays will be unbearable, this will suck", "If I take a break it means something is wrong with me", "I won't be normal" - whatever it is, whatever that thought is for you, how can you start to question it? That is the very first thing you have to do.

You have to identify what the thought is, that one thought that is really holding you back, and then you have to look at it in isolation. This is your work. Look at this thought like you are a scientist. Do not just react to it. Do not just be at the mercy of it. Look at it, observe it, see how it makes you feel, understand how it makes you act, see how it is keeping you stuck. Don't look at your past for evidence. Don't look at the environment around you. Just look at that thought and be open to questioning it. Come up with at least ten reasons why it might not be true. Even if you still really believe that it's true, can you push yourself to start to question it? Can you challenge yourself to start to try to disprove it?

And this is the most challenging work, especially when thoughts like these we want to cling to, we want to hold on to, we don't want to look at them, we don't want to think they're optional, we don't want to think they're

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

## Ep #14: The Power of Questioning Your Thoughts

anything but the truth because we feel like we're standing on a ledge. We feel like if we take a step forward, that's when we're really going to be in danger. We feel like this thought in some way is keeping us safe, but it is not keeping you safe, it is keeping you stuck.

And look, at first you may only be able to slightly chip away at it, and that's okay. That's part of this process. I did not snap my fingers one day and all of a sudden decide that the thought that if I stop drinking I'll never meet guys just wasn't true. It didn't work like that. It was a thought that I had to work with. I had to keep questioning, I had to hold it up to the light and see it as potentially not 100% true and look for other examples, look for other ways in which I could chip away at it.

That process, just your willingness to be open to look at what is that fear, that thought you have that is keeping you stuck, that is keeping you from changing your habit, that is keeping you from taking a step forward, just looking at it and examining it and questioning it is such powerful work. And I will tell you that at some point, you may hit upon an alternative thought that is enough for you to take a small step forward and that is all you need. You need to take one small step forward so that you can take the next small step forward, but you cannot make any progress, you cannot make any change if you are stuck standing on that ledge, afraid to move at all.

Before I go, I want to share with you a free resource that I put together. If you are struggling to change your drinking, I've created a worksheet called Your Complete Picture, that I promise will radically change your perspective. I always tell people, "If you only ever do one exercise about your drinking, do this one." It's that powerful. It is the exercise that changed everything for me. You can go to [www.rachelhart.com/picture](http://www.rachelhart.com/picture) to download it now.

Alright, that's it everybody. I'd love to hear what you thought about this episode, you can always email me at [podcast@rachelhart.com](mailto:podcast@rachelhart.com) with feedback, questions or topics that you would like to see me cover in the future, and thanks for listening. And if you're in San Francisco, check out the Tactile Dome, it's amazing! I loved it. Alright, bye everybody.

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

## **Ep #14: The Power of Questioning Your Thoughts**

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](https://RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.