

## Ep #22: Why You Need a Compelling Reason



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With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #22: Why You Need a Compelling Reason

You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 22.

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, hello everybody, how are you? What are you doing? It is a beautiful, beautiful day in San Francisco. We have bright blue skies that I'm looking at right now, June gloom is nowhere to be found, which means that I am not wearing a puffy coat in the middle of June, which makes me very happy. Alright, so I had a whole plan for what I was going to talk about on today's episode, but right before I was about to record, I had a coaching call with one of my clients, and she reminded me of something that I think is so important, something that I think a lot of you listening to are going to really relate to. And so I decided to scrap everything and switch topics.

We were talking about the work she was doing to drink less, and she said to me, you know Rachel, sometimes I feel like the person who I really am, the real me is trapped inside this other person who is struggling with her drinking. Like there are two parts of me, and I'm at war with myself, and I just want to finally figure out who I am without this struggle so that the real me can come out of hiding. I will tell you that when she said this, it stopped me right in my tracks because it brought me right back to what it was like when I was struggling with my drinking.

I'll tell you, I have such a vivid memory of living on the upper West Side, waking up in my shoebox of an apartment, hung over yet again, and thinking to myself, I know this isn't right, this isn't who I'm supposed to be, this isn't what I'm supposed to be doing, this is not how my life was supposed to go. But the problem was I didn't have the first clue how to fix it or how to get out of the situation that I was in, and I know that a lot of you out there can relate to this idea, this idea that it doesn't feel like you. It feels

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like there's a real you and then there's a part of you that is struggling, and like you're at war with yourself and you don't know why.

If you've ever thought of this, if you've ever thought something similar to what my client said to me today, then you know how disorienting it is. It's like you're adrift in your own body. You keep going through the motions of life, the motions of drinking too much, the motions of whatever habit that you're doing that you don't want to be doing, eating too much, spending too much, watching too much, whatever, and wondering how did I get here? Especially since what you're doing and how you're acting and where you are in your life doesn't feel right.

So if you can relate to this, if you turn around and you look at your life and you think, wait, what? How did it happen that I became this person who polishes off a bottle of wine without meaning to? How is it that I'm waking up hung over after I promised myself that I would go easy last night? And when am I going to figure this out? Or, worse yet, wondering, will I ever figure this out? If you can relate to any of that, then today's episode is for you, because I am going to show you the piece that you're missing.

Look, the reason you're not changing, the reason that you're not moving forward is because you are missing one very simple thing: a compelling reason. Now, I know that some of you are listening and like, no, I know what my reason is, and it matters a lot to me. I'm sick of the empty calories, I'm sick of waking up hung over, I'm sick of wasting time every night watching TV with a glass of wine in my hand. But here's the truth: whatever your reason is right now, it is not compelling enough. Because if it was compelling enough, you would already be on your way to change instead of feeling stuck in this place where you're not living the life you're meant to.

A compelling reason is exciting, it captures your attention, it makes you think, I want to do this, I want to go for it. When you have a compelling reason, you're like, okay, when do we start? A compelling reason compels you to action, that's why it's called a compelling reason. So I want you to think about the reason you have in your mind right now to change your drinking. Whatever reason it is, does that reason excite you? Does it make

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you think, I want this no matter what, or, does it just seem nice? Does it seem nice to not wake up hung over anymore? Does it seem nice not to waste your evenings drinking wine watching TV? Does it seem nice not to have all these empty calories?

You really need to ask yourself this question about your current reason, and be honest with yourself, because nice is not going to cut it. Because changing your drinking - but really changing anything in your life, will be uncomfortable. There are no two ways about it. Change forces you to grow, it forces you to step outside of your comfort zone. You have to do the hard work if you want to change of going on that first date and not drinking. You have to do the hard work of answering people's questions about why you're not having another glass of wine, and instead are having club soda. You have to do the hard work of coming home after a long day and not using a drink to take the edge off of how you feel.

All of those thing require discomfort, and if your reason to change your drinking just feels kind of nice, it's not going to sustain you when you run head first into discomfort. This is why your reason has to be compelling. It has to motivate you to keep moving forward, to keep taking action, even when you feel uncomfortable. Because when you're in the process of trying to change a habit, when you're going through the discomfort of changing what is automatic and routine, part of you knows that there is a quick and easy fix to feel better. I say this all the time. That is what alcohol is. It is a quick and easy fix to change how you feel.

Alright, so think of it this way: change requires discomfort, but the habit you're trying to change, your drinking, the habit you're trying to change offers comfort. Change requires discomfort, but the habit you're trying to change offers comfort. When you feel anxious or bored or lonely or stressed or insecure, you get into the habit of having a drink to feel better. The habit, the drink provides comfort, but change requires discomfort. Do you see the bind that you're in? To change a habit, you have to move away from comfort, towards discomfort, but the habit itself, the very thing you're moving away from is the thing that provides comfort. You taught yourself

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unknowingly that having a drink was the answer to feeling uncomfortable, and now you need to feel uncomfortable in order to change. It's crazy.

Now, alcohol might be your current solution when you feel uncomfortable, but it comes with a lot of repercussions, right? It's not sustainable. It feels good in the moment, it feels good once you have that buzz, but leaves you feeling worse in the long run. But you know what? The same is true of all your habits. Eating, spending, watching, whatever it is, all these habits are easy fixes that do nothing for your overall wellbeing. They just give you short-term comfort.

And this is why you need a compelling reason. You need a reason that feels better than just nice. You need something that will sustain you when you're facing down discomfort and your brain has learned that the answer to feeling better is just one drink away. So think about that, and you know, culturally, we've all been sold this idea that you have to hit rock bottom before you can change. You have to have lost everything or woken up in the gutter or ruined your life of admit that you have no power before you can begin the process of doing something differently. Only then, only once you've supposedly hit rock bottom, when everything is on the line, will you have a truly compelling reason to change.

But you know what? I think that's BS. It's really wrong. The idea that you need to hit rock bottom in order to find a truly compelling reason is crazy to me. And you know what? It might even be the thing that is keeping you stuck right now. I know that for a period of time when I was struggling, I would think to myself, well, maybe I'm not able to change my drinking because things haven't gotten bad enough yet. Maybe things need to get really bad so that I can move forward. But isn't that crazy to think? It's that a crazy idea? But it's the idea that we've been sold, that we need to hit rock bottom so that we can finally find our compelling reason, and I think that's why the idea of being powerless is so prevalent, because what would be more compelling than the idea that you must stop drinking because you have no agency and no power?

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Except of course for many of us, the idea of being powerless is actually demotivating, and also, it's not true. The real problem is actually so much simpler. It's not that things haven't gotten bad enough for you, it's not that you just haven't sunk to the lowest depth in order to find your compelling reason. It's that no one ever taught you that it's possible to find a compelling reason. No one ever taught you how to do it. Any behavior, not just your drinking, any behavior that's not serving you, you can find a compelling reason to change, and it doesn't have to be when you're in the depths of despair.

You don't need to be at the point where you can't get through the day without a drink, or drinking is interfering with your job and your relationships and your life in order to move forward. And I will tell you, that this is where I was stuck, because I had a million reasons to change my drinking. I hated how I felt in the morning, I hated looking at my bank account and thinking, how did I run up that bill, I hated all the empty calories, I hated the things I would do or I would say when I was drunk, and I hated - I hated waking up the next day and regretting the night before.

I'll tell you, I so clearly remember waking up one morning so hung over and so miserable after attending a party and thinking, god, if I can just capture how I feel right now, I promise I'll never be so stupid again. I was living in New York, I was in my thirties, a friend had invited me to a birthday party where I really didn't know anyone there except for her, and honestly, I didn't want to go. I knew I was going to feel so awkward, but I pushed myself to go because I was also at the same time really struggling with how lonely I felt at that time in my life. So I promised myself that I would go, but I also said I'm not going to drink. I don't know these people and I don't want to make a fool of myself. I don't want to have an unpredictable night. But then I got there, I got to the party and I was so right. Everything was so awkward.

Everyone there seemed to know one another, and they all had these glamorous jobs and were well travelled and well-read and talking about people and places I knew nothing about, and everybody was drinking and

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looking totally at ease and looking like they were having a great time. Meanwhile, I was in the corner and I wanted to crawl out of my skin. I couldn't stop thinking about how awkward I felt and how insecure and how I so didn't belong here. I didn't belong at this party, and finally I thought to myself, god, screw it, I can't do this, I'm too uncomfortable. And so I had one drink, and one drink led to another and another and the next thing I knew, I woke up the next day in bed feeling miserable and having a very hazy memory about how that night had ended for me.

And I thought, "Rachel, how did you do this again? You're here, and you feel terrible physically and emotionally." And I thought, "Okay, if I can just remember this feeling, if I can just capture this moment, maybe I will change." So I rolled over and I wrote in my diary about how miserable and sick and embarrassed and ashamed I was, and I thought, "Okay, maybe this is the ticket. Maybe this is the moment when I will change." And you know what? Looking at that diary entry worked for maybe a week, and then I was back to my old ways because not being hung over on a Saturday morning paled in comparison to the relief that alcohol gave me and the moment that was so uncomfortable.

I needed a reason that would be truly compelling when faced with that discomfort, and not having a hangover was not that reason. I needed to get to a deeper and more meaningful reason that really could compel me. Something that would connect me to a core motivation that would compel me to stay the course even when things got difficult, and so this is what I want to show you how to do.

So first, you're going to start with a premise, and for some of you, that will be taking a break from drinking, and for others it will be just drinking less. It doesn't matter what that premise is. Just start with a premise, and then ask yourself, why do I want it? Why do I want to take a break? Why do I want to drink less? And then answer that question. Just go with the first thing that you come up with. You don't have to start going real deep right there, just see what your brain says.

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But here's the thing, once you get that answer, don't stop. Keep digging. Take the answer that you came up with, maybe it's to lose weight or to stop having hangovers or to feel more productive, whatever it is, take that answer and then ask yourself why you want that thing, and with each answer you get, repeat the process of asking yourself why five times in a row. Keep going. Keep going deeper and digging. Keep looking for that compelling reason. I will tell you, this is harder than it sounds, I promise. It sounds simple, but it's not so simple.

After your first answer, your brain is going to be like, I don't know, I don't know why I want this thing, I just want it. I just do, isn't it obvious? Right? Isn't it obvious why someone would want to lose weight? Isn't it obvious why someone would want to not be hung over or be more productive or stop feeling crappy in the morning? But you have to keep digging. So I'm going to run you through an example of how this will work so that you can try this on your own.

So let's start out with the premise, I want to drink less. So you would ask yourself, okay, well why do I want to drink less? And that first reason might be something like so I can lose weight. Okay, that's really common, I hear that from people all the time. But let's go a little bit deeper. So ask yourself, well why do I want to lose weight? And it's one of those things where your brain might say, it's obvious, why wouldn't you want to, right? We're so conditioned that skinner is better. But really try to find an answer, and you might come up with a reason like I want to lose weight so I won't have to hide when I'm at the beach this summer. That's fine, use that answer. Use that answer to ask yourself why again. Why do you not want to hide at the beach this summer? And after some thinking, you might say, well really I want that because I want to be more confident. Okay, so see, we're getting a little bit deeper here, but now keep going. Why do you want to be more confident? And notice how your brain will be like, well, because everybody wants to be more confident, right? But keep going, keep digging. Ask yourself, well really, why do I want to be more confident? And maybe you'll come up with an answer like, well, if I'm more confident, then I can stop worrying about what others think of me, and that would be great.

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So this is good, but you've only gone four times. You only asked yourself why four times, and I want you to still go deeper. I want you to push past when you think you've gotten to the deepest point. Ask yourself why again, and in this case, ask yourself, well why do I want to stop worrying about what other people think? And this answer, at this point, is probably going to be pretty challenging for you. It might be a struggle to keep digging. But if you keep digging, you might come up with an answer like, so I can stop holding myself back and be more daring in life.

Now, pay attention. Notice that at the very beginning, you started with a reason of I want to drink less to lose weight, and at the end, you got to a reason, I want to drink less so I can stop holding myself back and be more daring in life. Now, which one do you think is more compelling? Which one do you think is more exciting, more motivating, more likely to keep you moving, keep you taking action when you're faced with discomfort?

You need a compelling reason, and now you have a way to find it, so test this out! Try it out. Ask yourself why five times. It really is harder than it seems. I know it was for me. I had to keep digging and digging and digging to find a reason that was truly compelling, and truth be told, as I am working on other things in my life that I want to change today, I still use this practice and it is still challenging for me to really you know, scratch beneath the surface and really come up with that reason that's going to be truly compelling.

When I was stuck in this place of feeling like this isn't right, this isn't who I'm supposed to be, this isn't how my life was supposed to go, I'm not supposed to be waking up feeling hung over and miserable all the time, all I could see initially for a compelling reason was how I was feeling the next day. Not having a hangover, not having regret. But when I started to do this work, I started to dig, I uncovered a compelling reason that was so much bigger, and I talk about this a lot in my book. I talk about how that compelling reason that I discovered was about being proud of who I am.

So in that moment when I felt so uncomfortable, especially knowing that there was this quick and easy fix to change how I felt, I had that compelling

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reason. I had that reason of being proud of who I am, it was something that I could tether my resolve to. Being proud of myself was a compelling reason that worked for me.

Now, who knows what your compelling reason will be, right? But the truth is, you probably don't know right now. Whatever reason that you have, whatever reason that you've been telling yourself, is the reason you want to either take a break or change your drinking, it's not compelling enough, because if it was, it would be working for you. So if you're struggling to find a compelling reason, I really want you to try this exercise out. Write it down, you cannot do this work in your head. Really commit yourself to be willing to dig deep even when your brain is like, duh, why wouldn't you want that. Keep digging, keep going below the surface, and you might have to try it out several times. You might have a couple versions, you might get to the fifth why and feel like, I don't know, is that really compelling?

Just keep trying. Keep digging, because if you're feeling stuck, if you're feeling like there's some part of you that is trapped, like you're at war with yourself, or if change just feels so elusive, then you need to really get to that deeper knowledge that can spur you on when change feels uncomfortable, because I promise, it will. And in the face of that discomfort, when you know that comfort is just pouring yourself a drink, even though it's not sustainable, you need that compelling reason to keep you motivated.

Alright everybody, thanks for listening. I love hearing from you guys, you can always send me an email with questions or comments or ideas for episodes. Just send it to [podcast@rachelhart.com](mailto:podcast@rachelhart.com) and 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.

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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.