

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 29.

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, how are you? How is your August going? It is August. It is August first, I'm back from my trip, back in San Francisco, back with my lovely foghorns, back in the fog. I will tell you, I know very little about weather patterns but I have learned since moving here that the hotter it gets in the central valley of California, the foggier it gets in San Francisco, and that's why it is so cold here in August. But that's okay, I'm really learning to love these foghorns, I'll tell you.

So I want to start off today's podcast by sharing with you something that's been on my mind lately. You know, I started the podcast almost six months ago and I have to tell you, I'm really - I've been absolutely astounded by how quickly it has grown. And I was actually looking at the stats recently, and we have listeners from around the world, from over 60 different countries, which is just crazy. It blows my mind.

But I wanted to share this with you because I want you to know that there are so many other people out there, so many people like you wanting to understand their drinking, wanting to try to change it and wanting to try to find a different solution that works for them. And I want you to know this because I know, I know how isolating it can feel to struggle with your drinking and worry that drinking more than you want might be a sign of something seriously wrong with you or thinking that you might not figure this out. Maybe alcohol will always be a struggle.

I understand this so completely, I was exactly where you are right now feeling isolated and alone, and truly like no one could understand what I was going through. So please know this: if this is how you feel right now,

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

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

there are so many people listening around the world that are in your shoes. They are also listening every week trying to figure this out for themselves.

And here's the thing, and this maybe is more important. I want to tell you guys how truly, truly, truly proud I am of you. I'm serious. I have heard from so many of you over the past months. You have written in and shared your stories and your struggles and your questions, I've talked with many of you on the phone, and I just want to remind you that you don't have to be doing this work, you don't have to be tuning in every week, you don't have to be trying to unravel why you drink more than you want to, or practicing awareness or trying to build the pause muscle, or working in any of the tools that I am teaching you.

But you are. You are doing this hard work, you are showing up and choosing to do this. You are asking yourself, "Hey wait, slow down, why do I want to drink right now? What if anything am I trying to avoid? Is it stress? Is it loneliness? Is it drawing attention to myself? What feeling am I resisting?" You are all asking yourselves these questions, and you know what, most people will never do this work.

They will never ever get the insight that you are getting from asking themselves these questions. They will never understand why they drink or question their desire and really go beyond just, "Well, everybody else does" or "It's fun", or "It tastes good", "It's just what you do, it's what you do at a restaurant, it's what you do on the weekend." They will stay at that surface level, and you know what, that's okay. Not everybody needs to dive in, but when you do, when you embark on this work, there is so much waiting for you on the other side.

There is so much that you can understand about who you are, and how you relate and cope with stress and anxiety and frustration and any negative emotion for that matter. There is so much to learn about what you really enjoy doing and what you truly find fun and how you want to spend your time and what you want your relationships and friendships to look like. And who you want to be when you walk into a room and you feel a little out of

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

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

place and a little insecure, or when you come home from a long day of work feeling so stressed out and frustrated, right?

There's so much to learn there, and do you want to be the person who immediately runs to the bar to get a drink or goes into the kitchen and opens the wine bottle so that you can feel better? Or do you want to see who you are and who you can be without a drink as your go to method to feel better?

I will tell you that taking a break opened my eyes. My life is so much more fun. It is so much more exciting, so much more fulfilling, and I had no idea that it could be this way honestly. I thought that I was taking a break for my health, right? I thought that this was going to be you know, suffering in the name of being a healthier version of me. And I am a healthier version of me, but I had no idea that it wasn't just about being healthier. It was about becoming a better, happier, more exciting, more engaged version of myself.

So know this: know that no matter what, if right now you are not able to feel proud of the work that you are doing, the work that you are doing to tune in every week and to be open-minded to a different way of thinking about drinking and a different way of examining your choices that you make and just being open-minded to a different perspective, if you aren't right now able to feel proud of what you're doing, know this. I am so proud of you.

Because when I was in my 20s, just listening to a podcast like this probably would have been difficult for me. I would have been so afraid about what it meant and did it say anything about who I was and did it mean that I had a problem, and so anyone who dives into this work and shows up every week and is trying out the tools and really bringing awareness and consciousness to something most people never think about, it's something that you should be so proud of, really.

So on that note, so many of you have been sending in questions and ideas for podcast and I really want to get to all of them, but a couple weeks ago, I got this amazing email from one of my listeners in Australia who really

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

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

wanted me to do an episode on how to deal with the regrets and the emotional turmoil that you feel the day after drinking.

Now, keep in mind, this can look a lot of different ways. Maybe you're trying to take a break and you committed yourself to that and then you made the choice to drink and you're dealing with that the next day. Maybe you've been trying to work on cutting back and you had a plan for how your night was going to go and then you ended up having way more than you intended.

But really, the outcome is still the same, right? For many of you, what will happen is you'll wake up the next day and you just enter into the shame spiral, right? You just start beating yourself up, and the question really is, okay, so how do you stop doing that? How do you stop beating yourself up and move on? Because I know for a lot of you, the negative emotions that you're feeling won't just last a couple hours. They can sometimes last a couple days, right? So how do you move on from there?

So that is what we're talking about today, how to stop beating yourself up after a night that did not go the way you planned. Now listen, I know that a lot of you listening are like, "Yeah, yeah, I know that I shouldn't beat myself up." But here's the thing, knowing that you shouldn't and actually stopping yourself from doing it are two very different things.

If knowing that you shouldn't beat yourself up was enough to actually stop yourself from doing it, then you would have stopped a long time ago. You would have stopped the first time someone said, "Hey, you know what, beating yourself up, it's really not all that effective. You probably should cut it out." Right? The first time someone said that to you, you'd be like, "Okay, thanks. I had no idea. Now I'll stop."

But that's not what happens. Knowing is not enough, and what happens for most of us is that we end up saying, "Well I know I shouldn't do it, but it's just so hard to stop." So that's what I want to break down for you. In order to understand why it is so hard to beating yourself up, you need to understand three things. First, what you are really doing to yourself when

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

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

you beat yourself up; second, why you do it, why you beat yourself up; and the third, how to start practicing doing something different.

And guess what, I'm just going to tell you right now, the solution is not to love yourself more. When I was in the midst of this, when I would hear that, when I was beating myself up and the antidote presented to me was just love yourself more, you just have to learn to love yourself, I was like, "Okay, yeah, right. You try loving this screw up." So I promise you, that's not the prescription that I've giving and I'm going to explain why loving yourself is not the answer, at least not right now.

Alright so first, what you are really doing to yourself when you beat yourself up. Now, you need to be really clear on this, and the reason is because so many of you will just casually say, "Yes, I know, I beat myself up." You have this kind of matter of fact-ness about it, like it's not a big deal, it's just what everybody does, it's to be expected. Right?

I mean, no one has ever come to me and been like, "Oh my god, I just discovered that I beat myself up, this is terrible, what do I do? How do I fix it?" Right? You're so much more likely to say, "Yes, I know, I beat myself up. I know I shouldn't do it, but what are you doing to do?" Telling yourself that beating yourself up is not a big deal is a problem. That in and of itself is a problem because it is a lie. Beating yourself is and always is a big deal. Always. I don't want you to ever tell yourself otherwise.

Never dismiss it. Never say, "That's just who I am. It's just how I was born." Right? That's not true. It's not who you are. You were not born beating yourself up. You may have learned to do it at a very young age, but it's not an innate part of you. Beating yourself up is something that your brain unconsciously learned to do, and I always say this when people say, "Well how come we learn this? Where does this come from?"

Just look at the messages that we get from advertising. It is all about not being good enough as we are, it's all about fixing ourselves, improving ourselves and selling us on this imaginary version of the perfect man and the perfect woman and the perfect family and the perfect Instagram life,

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



## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

right? You've been bombarded with these messages about not measuring up as a way to sell you things.

So it is no wonder your brain has taken on some of these messages of not being enough, not doing things right, and adopted them as your own. Beating yourself up is a big deal, but it's also something that you learned, which means you can unlearn it, which is fantastic news. But you have to be really clear on what it is exactly.

Beating yourself up is literally giving your brain a bunch of negative thoughts to think about who you are and your actions. Thoughts like, "I'm so stupid", "What's wrong with me?", "I'm such a screw up", "I'm an idiot", "I'm never going to figure this out", "I'm hopeless". I mean, you know what this sounds like.

When you look into the mind of someone who is beating herself up, you will see excessively harsh, critical, black and white language. And you know what, you can always spot it in a friend or a loved one, right? It is so easy to see when we see it in another person, but when it comes to ourselves, our brain is like, "Oh no, no, no, this is true. These are actually factual." It's very difficult sometimes to see it in ourselves because we so cling to the idea that this is just a true assessment of who we really are.

Now, just because you have created the habit of beating yourself up does not mean that you are necessarily aware of it. So many of you have no idea how prevalent this kind of talk is in your day-to-day life. But I promise you, so much of your internal dialogue about yourself and your actions is incredibly negative. I watch this all the time. The tiniest thing, the tiniest insignificant thing. You stub your toe, you forget your keys, you leave the store and you get to the car and then you remember, "I forgot to buy that thing that was on my list."

Something so small, and your brain is like, "I'm such an idiot." And you know what, I point this out to people all the time, how often they call themselves stupid or an idiot or a screw up, and most of us carry around this kind of self-talk all day long. It's so pervasive that we don't even notice

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

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

it, and if you do notice it, and when I do point this out to people, we're so quick to shrug it off.

We're so quick right, to just think, "Whatever, it's not that big a deal." Right? "It doesn't really matter, beating yourself up is normal." But do not tell yourself otherwise. The reason it is a big deal is because of the think-feel-act cycle, and think of it this way. If you're telling yourself habitually that you're an idiot when you forget your keys, right, or you forget something at the store, or that you're stupid when you stub your toe, just imagine what your brain is doing after a night of drinking more than you intended, or when you told yourself you weren't going to drink at all. Imagine the kind of overdrive of beating yourself up your brain goes into.

You want to understand that because you need to see how it's playing out in the think-feel-act cycle. Now remember, I talk about this cycle all the time, but your thoughts create how you feel. So when you're thinking, "I'm stupid, I'm a failure, I'm an idiot", what emotions do you think are being created? Positive ones? I don't think so. And when you feel negative emotions, what do you do?

Now, most people do one of two things. They will either hide and hold themselves back when they feel a negative emotion, so they won't go after what they want, they won't take any risk, because they don't want to make any mistakes. They've assumed that mistakes are what make them feel terrible and then they'll just start beating themselves up, so they will hide. Or, you'll start chasing perfection. You'll go on this mad dash to prove to everyone your worthiness, by doing everything perfectly and racking up accomplishments.

But you know what, all the brass rings in the world, all the bullet points on your resume, all the accomplishments that you can start marking up, they're not going to make you finally feel good about yourself. And you know this to be true, right? All they end up doing is making you think, "That wasn't enough, what do I have to go after next?" "That didn't do it, that job didn't do it, that partner didn't do it, that home, that degree, these things didn't make me feel better, so what do I have to keep hunting after?"

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



## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

So that's what will happen when you create all these negative emotions for yourself, right? You either go into hiding or you start chasing perfection. And when you understand the think-feel-act cycle, you realize that beating yourself up is a big deal because it creates negative emotions, which fuel negative actions, which leave you with negative results.

And this brings me to the second point. Why do we do it? Why do we beat ourselves up? Now, I will tell you that I believe that we beat ourselves up because deep down, our brain thinks that doing this, engaging in all this negative self-talk is actually helpful. It actually believes that it's helping us. And I want you to think about it this way, why wouldn't you want to stop beating yourself up? What do you think might happen if you did?

Now, I often pose this question to my clients, and I'll tell you, when I ask them why they may want to stop beating themselves up over drinking, what do they think would happen, at first they're a little puzzled, but usually I get a pretty similar reaction. And the reaction is this: if I stop beating myself up over drinking more than I want or drinking at all when I don't want to, then I might as well give myself permission to keep making the same mistake over and over again. That's what we think, right?

At some point our brain has come to believe that beating ourselves up is what keeps us in line. We think it's how we learn a lesson, that we need to be punitive in order to teach ourselves to behave and to act differently. And I don't know about you, but I will tell you that being punitive or getting punished never helped me learn anything faster. It just taught me to be terrified of making mistakes.

And some of you will tell me, "Well wait, being hard on myself is actually really motivating. It's how I've always pushed myself to do better." But I will tell you, there is a huge difference between setting high standards for yourself and pushing yourself even when things are really challenging, versus using excessively harsh and demeaning or critical language as a way to crack the whip. Right? It's the difference between "You can do this, I've got you, I believe in you", versus, "Do this or else. Your worthiness

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

depends on it. Only an idiot would keep making this mistake over and over again."

I work with so many successful women who have used beating themselves up as a way to push themselves through college and law school and high-powered jobs and then onto becoming star mothers, and you know what, maybe it worked for a while, maybe it worked to tell yourself you had to do everything perfectly or else, but you know what, it's exhausting.

And I will tell you that I think so many of us rely on harsh, overly critical words to try to teach ourselves a lesson or to motivate ourselves to work harder or to do more simply because no one has ever shown us the think-feel-act cycle. No one has ever explained to us why we do the things we do. And so our actions start to feel kind of mysterious and unpredictable, right? If you don't have the cycle to understand them, you don't really understand why you make the choices you do in your life.

You don't understand that what you do or don't do is directly tied to how you feel, which is tied to how you think. And without that knowledge, most of us end up in this place where we think, "Well, maybe I'll just keep bullying myself so that I can try to make different choices."

I really believe - I will tell you this. I really believe that most people beat themselves up because they think in some way it is protective and or motivating. But truthfully, most of us have just never seen another way forward modeled. And the problem is that beating yourself up not only does it feel terrible, but over the long haul, it keeps yourself stuck, or it keeps you exhausted because you're always chasing perfection. You're always chasing the next accomplishment.

And you know, if you don't believe me, just think of it this way: you know that beating yourself up as a way to change your drinking hasn't worked thus far, right? Otherwise you wouldn't be listening to me. If beating yourself up worked, then your drinking wouldn't be causing problems for you. But here you are, you're still trying to figure out a way forward.

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

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

So with that in mind, knowing that evidence, why not try something different? Okay, so this is where the final point comes in. What should you practice instead and how do you do it? Now, I said at the beginning that in order to stop beating yourself up, this is not just about turning around and loving yourself. And I'll tell you that so many of us when we look for help and support on how do we stop beating ourselves up, what we find is just, just love. Just love yourself, love is the antidote. Love is the salve, love will fix everything.

And, you know, love is great. I'm not down on love, but I think in my experience, love especially at first, does not work. It doesn't, and it doesn't work for the exact same reason that just slapping on positive thinking doesn't work, right? You can't just slap on all these new thoughts about rainbows and daisies and just loving yourself no matter what when you are in a habit of thinking of yourself as a screw up, right? Or telling yourself that you're an idiot or you're stupid, or you're never going to figure this out, right?

Loving yourself no matter what, it's not going to feel good because it's not going to be believable. Your brain is going to just reject these new thoughts as untrue. It's too big of a leap to go from, "I'm an idiot" to "I love myself no matter what." You can get there, trust me. I'm not saying that love isn't the direction that you want to head in, but you have to take gradual steps, and I think it's too big of a jump for most people to just go from, "Well, I just beat myself up all the time" to "Now I love myself all the time."

So the solution is this: the solution is curiosity. And isn't just knowing that kind of a relief? Curiosity is so much easier than love, especially at first. You can be curious. Everyone is curious. Curiosity is just the need to investigate and learn about the world around you and yourself, and all humans have it. You were born with it. Curiosity is innate. It helped us survive as a species.

Venturing out from the cave and figuring out how to get food and how to find a mate and how to get shelter and how to survive, all of that required curiosity. You had to be curious. And so after a night when you drank more

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

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

than you intended, or you were planning not to drink at all and you ended up drinking, and you find yourself the next day beating yourself up, the solution is not love. Not yet. The solution right now is just to be curious.

Can you be curious about what happened? And I will tell you there are so many questions that you can ask yourself. So many questions that can stop the cycle of just all these really negative self-recriminating, excessively critical thoughts that so many of us get caught in. Questions like, "Why did I make the decision to drink?" And remember, it's always a choice, right? Why did you make that decision?

What were the emotions that seemed to trigger your desire to drink? Did you notice any emotions? Were you feeling uncomfortable? Were you feeling awkward or insecure or lonely or stressed or frustrated? What emotions seemed to trigger that desire? What happened when you let yourself try to feel them, or did you even let yourself try to feel them? Did you notice the emotion and then immediately try to move away from it? Did you try to see, "Hey, what's happening in my body? What does this emotion feel like?"

You know, you want to know. Did you immediately go into resisting and distracting? And why do you find whatever emotion it was, why do you find it difficult to feel? Be really specific with yourself. Don't just say, "I don't know, I don't like feeling it. I don't like feeling stressed, I don't like feeling awkward. "What makes it so intolerable? I talk about this all the time, but ever emotion is just a set of physical sensations in your body, and when you can understand it in this way, you can really start to ask yourself, "Okay, so why was it so intolerable for me to feel awkward or lonely or angry or frustrated?"

And then what did the urge feel like? When did the urge appear and what did it feel like? Can you describe that? Do you have any information about that that can help you understand urges better? Did you try to resist the urge or did you try to let it be there, and what is resisting feel like, and what does observing feel like?

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

There is so much that you can start to unravel and ask yourself if you will be curious with what happened the night before. The night before is always an opportunity to learn, always. And you do that by being curious. You put your brain to work, and you can start looking for patterns. You can start seeing "Hey, what worked, and what didn't and how might I do this differently next time?" And I'll tell you, if you can get to curiosity, you can start to shift away from that cycle of just beating yourself up over what happened.

The salve for beating yourself up is to be curious. It is to try and understand what happened, to try and ask yourself questions, to learn from the situation and plan a different way forward the next time. And you know what, curiosity is actually motivating. It's actually self-protective, but we don't realize that because we're not used to using it. And I will tell you, one of the most important things that you can do is to notice how you are beating yourself up on a day-to-day basis, in all these tiny little ways.

You have to constantly remind yourself that beating yourself up at any time is a big deal and not just because you should be nice to yourself, but because of how the think-feel-act cycle works. When you are thinking harsh, critical thoughts, you are generating negative feelings, and those emotions do not get you any closer to the actions you want to be taking in life.

So that is what I really want to encourage you to start practicing. You have to start practicing not just in those moments, not just the day after when that beating yourself up and the self-recrimination is so strong, but just practice and notice how it comes up in so many different areas of your life. And I really hope that this podcast will help you the next time you find yourself in a shame spiral.

Be curious, ask yourself questions. Really look at it from the position of a scientist. Look at it from a dispassionate, non-judgmental place, and see what you can learn and then take that information and put it to use.

## Ep #29: How to Stop Beating Yourself Up

Alright, that's it for today's podcast. Keep sending those questions in, you can always email me at [podcast@rachelhart.com](mailto:podcast@rachelhart.com) and I'll see you next week.

Alright, so before I go, I want to share with you a new free resource that I put together. If you are struggling to change your drinking, I created a worksheet, it's called Your Complete Picture, that I promise will completely change your perspective. I always tell people, if you only ever do one exercise about your drinking, do this one, it is that powerful. It is the exercise that changed everything for me. If you want to go grab it, all you need to do is go to [rachelhart.com/picture](http://rachelhart.com/picture) and download it now.

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