

Ep #31: The Willingness to Look



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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 31.

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? How is your day going? So some of you know that before I started working as a life coach, I was working at a human rights foundation in New York City, and I will tell you, it still kind of boggles my mind when I think about the transition that I made. I mean, I went from flying around the world and helping human rights activists all over tell their stories, to starting my own life coaching business that focuses on how to change your drinking. It is not a career path that I could have foreseen, but here I am.

So anyway, I was working with one of my clients the other day and we started talking about how much power there is in the willingness to look at a problem head on. Now, keep in mind that for many, many years, the habits that I had around alcohol and around drinking were not something that I wanted to look at head on.

Now, don't get me wrong, I thought about my drinking a lot, and not only the problems that it was causing for me, right? I thought about the struggle. So I wasn't in denial, but I also wasn't really looking at the situation head on. Most of my looking centered around, "Why me? Why do I have to deal with this? This is so unfair. Why am I the only one who struggles with her drinking? I hate this." That's where my attention was focused.

I was so caught up in the unfairness of it all, rather than just seeing the habit for what it was, which for me was an unwillingness to ever feel uncomfortable. I didn't ever want to be bored or anxious or lonely or insecure, or heaven forbid, awkward. And because I wasn't looking at the issue of my drinking head on, I couldn't see it for what it really was. I could

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only see the, "Why me?" I could only see what I believed was the unfairness of it all.

And because of that, because of where my focus was, I couldn't make any headway. So, as I was talking to this client, it reminded me so much of a training that I went to when I was still working in human rights. It was called HEAT, and it stood for Hostile Environment Awareness Training. And the goal of these types of trainings is to really prepare you for travelling in dangerous places around the world.

So they would set up all these different scenarios for you to go through. You would go through armed checkpoints and protests and mine fields and active shooters and kidnappings, all of these different scenarios to give you a sense of how you automatically behave under fire, but also not just so you can see your instinctual response, but so you can also learn about what you should do differently.

So a group of us from work went through a three day training together, and the training was at this really beautiful conference center owned by the Girl Scouts of all people, outside New York City. It was a really big conference center and they had hundreds of acres there, and it was big enough so that there were other companies there. We weren't the only group, and I remember I always thought it was funny because at breakfast every morning, there were these signs posted around the breakfast room for the other guests basically saying, "Don't be alarmed if you hear random gun fire during the day. It's part of a training exercise, there's nothing to be worried about."

Okay, so obviously a big part of this training was seeing how you respond under fire, and how you respond when you're not given any warning that something's about to happen, right? Like you need to be able to watch what someone's instincts are. So during the training, we really never knew what to expect. There was a classroom instruction component, but sometimes someone would run into the classroom with guns blazing, and all of a sudden you'd be in the middle of a scenario and have to figure out what to do.

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Anyway, on our first morning there, a group of us were walking with one of our instructors down this paved road at the conference center area, and there were woods on either side of the road, and we haven't had any live scenarios yet, and we were just kind of chatting and talking and asking the instructor questions, and pretty much enjoying being outside and not being at work, and suddenly, about 50 yards away from us down the hill, a man very quietly stepped out of the woods and walked into the center of the road.

And he stood facing us for a second or two, and it was enough time that we noticed he was head to toe in black, wearing a face mask and carrying an automatic weapon. We all froze. So we're standing there in the middle of the road, and he starts walking towards us, and then he starts shooting the gun in the air. Oh my god, this was not like any Girl Scout camp I had ever been to.

Everyone scattered. We all ran off the road into the woods, and I took cover behind the first tree that I found. So I crouched down behind it and immediately, I just instinctually put my hands over my eyes. And I just kept thinking, "Oh my god, I hate this, I hate this, is it over, is it over, is it over?" And you know, the gunshot sounded like they were getting closer to me, but my brain did not care. The entire situation I found to be so terrifying and my brain was like, "You're staying right here. Hands over your eyes, just wishing that this entire scenario would stop right now."

And eventually it did stop. One of our instructors finally said, "Okay, show's over, let's talk about what happened, let's talk about what all of you did." And would you know it, but he started with me because of all of my colleagues, I apparently had taken the worst cover. And so I remember he said to me, "So Rachel, your instinct was good. You saw that there was a threat and you got off the road and you took cover behind the first tree that you found, but then you stayed there. And you know, the gunman, he was still walking towards you. He was eventually going to get to the tree and potentially shoot you. It was only a foot or two off the road, but you were

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there with your hands covering your eyes and you never looked up once it started."

And he was right. I didn't. But of course at the moment, I was like, "Of course I didn't look up, this was really terrifying. There was an active shooter, I mean, come on. What was I supposed to do?" My brain was like, "That was a good decision, this was really scary and what I did was the safest thing I could think to do at the time." And so he pointed out to me, "Yes, you know, again, your initial instinct was good, but the goal here is to help you stay alive, which means once you took cover behind the tree, at some point, you had to stop covering up your eyes, open them up, look out from behind the tree, assess the situation, and then see if you could find better cover. You need to keep moving. You could have moved much deeper into the woods and gotten further away from him, but instead you were stuck behind this tree, right? You weren't moving at all, and you were staying there with your eyes closed. And doing that, it was just putting you in harm's way."

And he was right. But for so long, I will tell you that looking something that I believed to be really scary, and not just an active shooter, but anything in my life, looking at something that I believed to be really scary was not my instinct. My instinct was when I was freaked out, to just duck and cover. To close my eyes and keep my head down and hope and pray and wish that whatever was going on would just go away.

I thought that looking at whatever really scared me or freaked me out would make things worse. But in reality, I learned that day, it's really the only way to stay safe. And that's what I want to talk with you about today. There is so much power, so much power in the willingness to look at whatever isn't working in your life. Refusing to look at what isn't working is not keeping you safe. Covering your eyes and wishing whatever it is would just go away is not protective. It's keeping you stuck, it's keeping you frozen. You can't make headway when you won't look.

And here's the thing. When you're able to work up the courage and look at a problem head on and see where you are and assess the situation, there

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is something so utterly transformative in that action, because then, and only then, you can change course. You cannot change course when you are hiding.

So what does this mean for your drinking? For some of you, it's really as simple as paying attention to how much you are actually drinking right now on a regular basis. I will tell you that my clients always want to give me ranges. When they start working with me, you know, they really don't want to get very specific on how much they've had to drink, or how much they have to drink during the course of a week.

And so they'll say, "I had a couple, maybe I had four, maybe five. I'm not sure. I know I had one too many" or "I mean, I just had more than I thought I would." Right? They want to hide behind these vague numbers, and I'm telling you that one way in which you can stop hiding is to just get data. That might mean something as simple as writing what you're drinking down, writing it down on a piece of paper for a week. Keeping a tally, and seeing how much you are drinking over a seven-day period. It might be as simple as that.

But I know that for a lot of you, even that step is really kind of scary. It might freak you out a little bit. You don't want to see how much you are actually drinking. You're actively avoiding getting this data, and the reason why, the reason why you're actively avoiding getting this kind of information is because you are afraid that the number, whatever it is, is going to mean something.

Either it will mean something about who you are as a person, it will mean something about your ability to change, or it will mean something about having to change, being required to make a change. That's why you don't want to get the data. But you know what? I've got news for you. The truth is this. You don't ever have to change, ever.

You don't ever have to take a break. You don't ever have to cut back on your drinking. You are not required to do anything. You truly aren't. You have free will. But you may decide that you want to. You may decide that

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you want more than 20 glasses of wine in a week. You may decide that there's something deeper inside that you truly want and want to go after, that actually has nothing to do with a buzz.

And P.S, whatever data you collect on how much you're actually drinking, it means absolutely nothing about who you are as a person. I'm serious. It means zilch. It is just a number. It is not connected to your worthiness, it is not connected to your intrinsic value. It is just a data point.

Now, right now, you think that gathering this data about how much you are actually drinking is scary, but it's just information. It's just information you need to see where you are and see if you want to head in a different direction, a direction that might be better for you. The only part of the information that is scary is the thought you are having about what the data could mean, and it doesn't have to mean anything.

Now, I know that there are others of you out there who aren't drinking right now, maybe you're on a break, because I know a lot of listeners are, I hear from you. So then the question for you is what should you look at if it's not how much you're actually drinking during the week?

My guess is this. There is something in your life that you need to face up to and that you have been avoiding. And as soon as I said that, something probably came to mind. What are you hiding from? Is it social situations? Is it dating? Is it avoiding getting drinks with your best girlfriend because you don't want to order a club soda and risk her thinking that you're a fuddy duddy?

Are you not drinking in the evenings but spending your precious time glued in front of Netflix? Is that really what you want to be doing? What is it that you are avoiding? What is it that you are hiding from? No matter where you are right now in your journey, whether are not you are drinking or not drinking, there is a place in your life where you can stop hiding.

Now, I know that some of you are like, "Hey, I'm not hiding. I'm listening to this podcast every week aren't I? I'm spending valuable time thinking about

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my drinking when I could be doing something else." And it's true, you are. But I still bet that you're not looking at it head on.

What a lot of you are doing is kind of half-looking at the situation. You're looking at your drinking, but you're looking at it from the corner of your eye. Your full attention isn't there. You kind of see it out of the periphery, you're not looking straight on, and when you don't look straight on, you cannot see the problem in its entirety.

When you look at a habit that is giving you negative results out of the corner of your eye, you can only see part of that habit, and you know what, you can only see part of the negative results. The full thing never comes into focus until you look at it straight on. And here's the thing. Not only that, it's really exhausting to look at something just out of the corner of your eye. Seriously. Try doing it, try looking at something out the corner of your eye. It takes effort because that's not where your eye normally goes.

So you kind of look to the side and then you look back to the center and then off to the side then back to the center and on and on, and you can't really get a clear picture of what's on your left or what's on your right unless you turn your head. It uses so much energy to try and see what's there if you're only looking out the corner of your eye and you're not just turning and focusing.

So here's my question. What would happen if you just turned and looked head on? What would happen if you just faced it? I'll tell you this. It would be so much easier. Then, and only then you can see your habit for what it really is. Something that is giving you results that you don't like, but you don't fully know yet how to change. But here's the thing, you have that power. You have the power to change, even if you're not fully sure about how to do it right now.

You were blessed with one of the most powerful brains in the world, it's the human brain. You don't have to be a slave to your habits, you can use your higher brain to supervise your lower brain. You can resist being

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unconscious on purpose. You can bring awareness to everything that you do. That is why you have so much power.

And when you look at something head on, when you stop hiding from it, you can own it. You can take responsibility for you. You can start making different decisions and decisions that line up with what you really want to do. But when you refuse to look at it, when you hide, when you look at a problem only out of the corner of your eye, you have lost your power.

You are just like me in that situation, hiding behind the tree, hoping that some divine intervention would swoop down and save me from the situation that I was in. But I was responsible for getting myself to safety that day, and I abdicated that responsibility. That was my instinct. When I covered my eyes and I just wished the situation would go away, I gave away what I was responsible for.

Now, here's the thing. That was my instinct, but I learned how to change it. I learned how to look at a problem head on, I learned how to start taking that kind of responsibility. I learned how to be in charge of my habits and how to be in charge of the results that I was getting. But I couldn't do it until I started looking. So take a look, let me know how it goes. Send me an email at podcast@rachelhart.com. I love hearing from you, otherwise 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 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-

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day challenge. Besides the obvious health benefits, taking a break from drinking is the fastest way to figure out what's really behind your desire. This radically different approach helps you succeed by dropping the perfectionism and judgment that blocks change. Decide what works best for you when it comes to drinking. Discover how to trust yourself and feel truly powered to take it or leave it. Head on over to RachelHart.com/join and start your transformation today.