

Ep #37: Why You Want Things to Be Easy



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Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 37.

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 everybody, how are you? What's happening? It's hot in San Francisco, I don't know what to do with myself it's so hot. I'm not used to it. So, I wanted to talk to you today about something I've been thinking about a lot. I started thinking about it because I was talking with one of my clients, and one of the things that she was saying to me is that she likes the tools, she likes doing this work, she can see the changes that are happening in her brain, but she can't shake this one thought. And that thought is, "It's just so much work. It's so hard. I just want it to be easy."

And I see this thought, I see it come up all the time for people. All the time we get stuck on this thought cycle about how hard it is, how it's too much work, you just want it to be easy. And so, I want to talk to you today about why that is and what to do when you find yourself in that thought loop.

Now, the other reason that I've been thinking about it is because I have started going to a gym. But look, it's not just any kind of gym. I walked into this gym for the first time a couple weeks ago, and I was like, "I do not belong here. I do not think that I fit in" because it's a very small gym, but it is all about lifting weights and building muscle and there were all sorts of contraptions in there like these crazy ropes that you wave in the air and huge barbells and people that looked very, very strong, and I just thought, "What am I doing here? Is this really the right place?"

But I had decided that I really wanted to build strength. I really did, and I will tell you one of the reasons why is because I cannot do a push up. It's true. I have always wanted to be able to do a push up. I know for some of you out there who can do a push up, you're like, "What? You don't do a push up?"

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but I just can't. I can't do it. I have wanted to be a woman who is really strong since 1991 when Terminator 2 came out. Do you guys remember this? When Linda Hamilton was in Terminator 2, and I remember seeing her and it was the first time that I saw a woman who was jacked. Like, she had biceps. Real biceps. And I thought, "Wow. You can have biceps? You can be that strong as a woman?"

And I remember her since then, I've just thoughts, "Wouldn't that be so cool to be that strong?" But here's the thing. I've been thinking about it for an awful long time, and here I am as a 36-year-old woman and I'm still not able to do a push up. So what gives? What's the problem? Why have I been wanting it for so long and still here I am unable to do it?

The reason is because it's hard. And I will tell you, this has been made abundantly clear to me ever since I started going to this gym, which has only been a couple weeks, and I started working with a trainer there. And I will tell you, my trainer, this guy named Steve, he's a big dude. This guy is strong. He was intimidating the first time that I saw him. And it was intimidating also to tell him, "I can't even do a push up" when we were doing the consultation.

But it has also been incredibly fascinating to watch my brain there and watch my brain as he's running me through all these exercises, because the chatter in my brain goes something like this: "Oh my god, this is so hard. Doesn't he see that I'm struggling? Is he going to take pity on me? I feel like I'm going to die. I cannot keep going, this is impossible." This is the chatter that's running through my brain. But of course, it's all my internal dialogue. I don't say any of it to him, but he keeps thinking that I can keep going.

Every time that my brain is telling me, "Rachel, you are going to die. This is too hard. You should really stop", he always says, "Okay, keep going. You have to do more. You need to do more reps." And it's so crazy for me to watch the disconnect between what my brain is thinking and what my brain is telling me is possible, and then see what is actually possible when I'm able to push myself beyond what my brain is telling me I'm capable of.

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And I realized all of a sudden that the only reason I've never been able to do a push up in my life is because every time I have tried to learn how to do it on my own, I stop when it gets hard. I do a couple of my knees and I get halfway down and I'm like, "I don't know, this is impossible." And I would try for a couple days and I wouldn't really see any progress and I would give up. It would get hard and I would give up.

Now, here's the thing. I'm noticing all of this right now. I'm noticing how my brain just wants to tell me, "Stop, stop, stop. This is too hard. It's too hard, you're going to die." And I could beat myself up. I could say, "Why am I always failing? Why am I always quitting? What's wrong with me?" Or, and this is really important because this is what I want all of you to be doing as well, I can choose to understand that nothing is wrong with me. Nothing is wrong with my brain, and nothing is wrong with you or your brain.

When your brain is telling you all the time, "This is so hard, it's impossible. I want it to be easy." It's because your brain was designed to avoid hard things. It was an evolutionary advantage. You know, I've talked about this on the podcast before, but I want you to really think about what life was like for people thousands of years ago. It was incredible difficult. Surviving was difficult. The world was full of danger. Getting food and clean water and shelter and all the basic necessities of life were not given. There was danger around every corner. There were predators and weather and injury, just being outdoors could put you at risk.

And so, our environment thousands of years ago was filled with all these hard things. Existing was hard. Surviving was hard, so it makes a lot of sense that the human brain evolved to find and spot easy solutions, and to prioritize things that were easy. It was the smart thing to do. It helped humans survive. But now here's the problem. It's not thousands of years ago. We're in the modern world, and the question that you have to ask yourself is, how hard are you working right now to survive?

How hard is it for you to get food, to get clean water, to stay warm, to travel from point A to point B? I mean, the truth is, for most of us, it's really easy. All of these things have gotten incredibly easy. Surviving, existing, has

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gotten very easy, but the brain has not caught up with the change in our environment, and so the brain is still programmed looking for things to be easy. So nothing is wrong with you. Nothing is wrong with your brain. But you have to understand why it has this drive to look for what is easy.

You know, the other thing about the environment that we live in now is that instant gratification is everywhere. It is everywhere that you turn, and I will tell you that even in the last 10, 15 years, there's been such a huge explosion of how much instant gratification is available to humans. So you can think about it with food. Our food is very sugary. It is highly processed food, and food that has a lot of sugar that is highly processed, it gives our brain a big dopamine hit. And so, you've heard me talk about the dopamine hit that your brain gets with alcohol, but it also gets it with certain kinds of food.

I mean, all you have to do is look and see the difference in how much people were consuming sugar in the 1800s compared with how much we're consuming today. So I looked it up. In the 1820s, over the course of a week, the average person was consuming three tablespoons of sugar. Three tablespoons of sugar in the course of the week. Nowadays, over the course of the week, the average person is consuming a pound and a half of sugar. A pound and a half, that is a ton. And sugar, it is a concentrated substance that floods our brain with dopamine, so you have a lot of easy instant gratification from food.

You also have it from entertainment. Think about Netflix. Any show you want to watch is at your fingertips. You don't even have to get off the couch anymore. You don't even have to drive to Blockbuster. You don't have to go to the movies. You can just sit there and pick up your remote. Not only that, you can watch an entire season in one sitting. You don't have to wait anymore. You can just go one episode after the next, after the next, after the next. So, entertainment has become really easy.

And of course, there's alcohol, right? So I've talked about before how our serving sizes have grown. So I've talked about how just the size of a wine glass, if you look at the size of a wine glass from the 1960s and the 1970s

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to the size of a glass today, I mean, it's huge in terms of growth. When you think about people talking about how our food has been supersized, our alcohol has also been supersized.

But you know I love my historical tidbits and I wanted to share this one with you because I learned about this pretty recently. I think a lot of people have this perception that over the course of history, during the Colonial period in the United States, people were drinking alcohol all the time. They were drinking beer all day long, and you hear these tidbits like, Ben Franklin drank beer with breakfast every day. And so, there's this sense of like, yes, well they were consuming tons of alcohol.

So one piece of information that is not included is that a lot of that alcohol that was being consumed had very little alcohol content. And so there's actually something called small beer, and it was a very common beer that was drunk back then, and its alcohol content was about 0.75%. Now, you may not know much about alcohol content of beverages, but I'll tell you this. If you are familiar with kombucha, which is a fermented health food tea - I like it a lot - but anyway, it's become a lot more popular in the past couple years. Kombucha is not regulated in the sense that anyone can purchase it, even though it does have a small percentage of alcohol in it, and kombucha is about 0.5% alcohol content. So small that it's not even regulated.

Now, this small beer that a lot of people during Colonial times were drinking all day long, and children were drinking also as well, was 0.75%. So think about that the next time you think like, "But people have been drinking alcohol forever and they drank it all day long, and Ben Franklin was drinking it with breakfast." Yes, he was basically drinking the equivalent of a little bit stronger kombucha.

And if you look at - you just take beer for example, which normally is about 4% to 6% alcohol content, there is a trend towards much higher alcohol content so you can easily find beer with 10%, 11%, 12%, even as high as 20% or higher. And so there's so much in our world that has just become so easy in terms of instant gratification. And if you pair that with the fact

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that our brain evolved to prioritize and seek out easy things, well, you can start to get a sense of the recipe for disaster here.

In a world of easy, you have to supervise your own brain. You have got to develop this skill, because I will tell you this, the world is just going to get easier and easier and easier in terms of instant gratification, and if you are not supervising your own brain, you can see the path you're going to head down. If you leave your brain to its own devices, it's just going to choose easy over and over again, and this is where your higher brain comes in. This is why you can work at using your prefrontal cortex, using this part of your human brain to be the adult and supervise the toddler, supervise the lower brain.

I like to think of my lower brain as the toddler that just wants pleasure, doesn't want any pain, wants everything to be really easy, throws a lot of temper tantrums, right? The question for you is do you want the toddler to run the show, or do you want to start to learn how you can use your higher brain, how you can use your prefrontal cortex to understand that your brain may always be seeking out easy, but that doesn't mean that you have to abide by it.

I think it's also - it's really important to understand when you catch your internal dialogue, when you catch yourself saying, "It's just too much work", what do you really mean by that? So I was looking this up, because I always love to look up definitions of words, and I found this definition for work. Using your physical or mental strength, or ability in order to get something done, or to get some desired result.

Now, how often do you think about work in this way? Using your physical or mental strength, or ability in order to get something done, or get some desired result. Why is that ever too much? What would you rather be using your physical and mental strength for? Think about it. What would you rather be directing that physical and mental strength that you possess? What would you rather be directing it towards? To sit back and have everything be easy? Or to get something done and go after a desired result? That's what I'd rather do.

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And it makes me think about this desire of mine to finally be a woman who can do a push up. And already, I've only seen my trainer Steve, five times, and it kind of blows my mind because in those five sessions, I have made more progress than I have when I was an 11-year-old girl looking at Linda Hamilton in Terminator 2 and thinking, "Wow. I want to be that strong."

And the reason why, the reason why I have made more progress in just five sessions is because I have stopped stopping. I have stopped throwing in the towel when my brain tells me, "This is too hard, you're going to die, it's impossible, you can't do it." I have kept going. And now, it might be easy for you to think, "Well you've kept going because you're working with a trainer now."

But I was actually - I saw him today and I was asking him about what it's like to work with clients, and something that he said really stuck with me. He said he works with people when he gives them exercises, they just outright refuse to do it. Which was kind of funny, because in that moment, my immediate thought was, "You can do that? You can say no?" because I'm such a rule follower that my brain was like, "Wait, what? You can say no?"

But the truth is, yes, of course it's incredibly helpful to be working with this trainer, but he can't make me do the pushups. He can't make me take the action. The only thing that ever makes me take an action is how I am feeling and what I am thinking. And the thing that he is doing that is so incredibly helpful is that he is giving me new thoughts to think. He is literally telling me, "You can do this, keep going. You got this. You can keep pushing." He's giving me these thoughts to think that if my brain was left to its own devices doesn't come up with, because my brain just wants to think, "It's too hard, you can't do it."

And this is the exact same thing that happens when I work with my own clients who want to change their drinking. I can never do the work for you. But I can help you find a new way forward. I can provide for you a different way to think about something where your mindset and your thoughts have been keeping you stuck.

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Stopping is just a habit. If you feel like you stop a lot, it's just because your brain has practiced stopping over and over again. Stopping is easy. The brain likes easy. When you stop you get a little bit of relief. Your brain likes that. And what happens for most of us, we start out, whenever we're trying to learn something new and we're all excited, "I'm finally going to master this push up", that's what I would always think on my own, like, "I'm going to do it this time. I got it." And then I would try it out a couple times and I would hit an obstacle, and that obstacle frankly, was all the chatter that my brain had, the chatter saying it's too hard, it's impossible, and you know, actually one of my favorite thoughts, which isn't much of a coherent thought, but just, "Ugh."

Right? It is surprising to me always how much I notice "Ugh" being something that I'm thinking to myself a lot. And my brain was like, "Okay this is a sign something has gone wrong, we should stop." But obstacles are supposed to happen. Obstacles are just par for the course. The problem is when you make an obstacle mean something about your, or something about your ability to succeed. An obstacle doesn't mean anything.

The only way to get the results you want, the only way to change your drinking is to keep taking action until you get the outcome that you want. That's the only way to do it. It's like the only way to ride a bike and learn how to drive a car is to keep getting on the bike, keep getting behind the wheel. That's the only way to do it, to keep taking action until you get the outcome that you want. But so many of you are getting stopped by that chatter about how it's too hard and how you just want it to be easy.

I think one of the best things that I ever learned, and it's something that I learned from my own coach, was that humans are meant to persist until we reach a goal. Although our brain was designed to look for the easy way, that was an advantage, it was also designed to help us persist until we reach a goal. So my coach always says, you know, it's really lucky that humans learned to walk when we're so young because if we had to learn how to walk when we were adults, most of us would still be crawling

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because we would get caught in that self-talk about how hard it is. "It's too hard, I'm never going to figure it out, I keep falling down, this is embarrassing, ugh."

But if you watch a baby, if you watch a baby learn to walk, you understand how humans are meant to persist until they reach a goal because you'll watch and they just fall down and get up and fall down, and get up and stumble, and get up. Just over and over again, they keep hitting obstacles, but of course, because they're just a baby, they don't make it mean anything about who they are. They don't make it mean anything about their ability to succeed. They just keep trying.

And that's the exact same thing that you need to do if you want to change your drinking. You need to keep trying, keep persisting even in the face of all that chatter about how it's too difficult, even in the face of all that chatter about how "something must be wrong with me, I'm never going to figure it out." The thing is, what if stopping wasn't an option? If stopping is just a habit, you can change it. You can stop stopping.

So every time I go back to this gym, which I am still a little intimidated by, but every time I go back, I just get to watch my brain go back to the same chatter. It's still there. It still tells me every time, "You're definitely going to die. Is he going to take pity on you finally because you're really struggling?" That chatter is still there. "It's too hard, this is crazy, I can't do it." But what I'm able to do is watch the chatter and keep going.

You don't have to listen to it. You don't have to let the chatter be the thing that stops you from taking action, and that is really the most important thing that you can take away. Just because that chatter is there, just because your brain is saying, "This is too hard, it's too much work, I'm never going to figure this out", that doesn't have to be the reason that you stop taking action. You can see that chatter and you can decide to think something else. You can decide to think, "I'm practicing not stopping anymore. I'm practicing persisting. I'm practicing figuring out how to reach a goal." You can choose to think all of those things.

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So I want to help you do this. I really do. I love this work so much and I really want it to be as available to as many people as possible. So I mentioned this last week on the podcast, but I have created this free private Facebook group where I am going to be offering a five-day challenge that anyone who wants to can participate in. It's a challenge to take a break for five days from drinking.

But here's the thing. It's going to be a totally different kind of break. If you have taken a break before, it's not going to be like anything you've done because what we are going to be focusing on is changing your mindset. This mindset piece is so crucial, it is so key, and it is the piece that is most often overlooked, because instead, we're just focusing on like, resisting desire, we're just focusing on saying no to a drink, just saying no over and over again. And you really have to start understanding the mindset piece.

So every day for five days I'm going to have a training video in there talking about a different topic, giving you exercises so you can actually take these tools and put them into action. And here's what I promise. Anyone can participate, and if you do, if you take part in these five days, if you do the trainings, if you do the exercises, there is no way that you are going to leave those five days and not have really shifted your mindset about drinking, your mindset about desire, the thoughts that you have about what is fun, the thoughts that you have about deprivation and going to challenging events. We're going to be talking about all of this.

So I really want to encourage you if you're interested to participate. I want to share this work with you. I want to help you see that you can stop stopping as well. You can take a break for a period and see how you can use that time, instead of just focusing on saying no over and over again, which is what most people do, you can actually use that time to dramatically change your thinking, and dramatically confront a lot of the thoughts that you have about drinking and about alcohol that are keeping you stuck right now.

So if you're interested, the challenge is going to start on October 9th. It runs for five days, so it's the 9th through to the 13th, and if you want to join,

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all you need to do is go to www.rachelhart.com/challenge. So I'm going to have all the information there about how you join the group. But now here's the other piece. I'm going to keep this training running, and so if you want to continue to do this work, if you want to continue to understand this, the training will continue running so you can keep doing those training videos. You can go back to this work, you can revisit it. You can start to understand it on a deeper level.

I promise you, every time you engage with these new concepts, every time you challenge yourself, every time you do the exercises, you are going to learn something new and different. So I hope you will join me over there. It starts October 9th, I'm incredibly excited about this. I just wrapped up all the videos for it and I'm really excited to share it with you.

You can stop stopping. You can allow the chatter in your mind about wanting it to be easy and thinking that it's impossible and all the complaining, you can allow it to be there and learn how to take action anyway. That's what this is going to show you how to do. So head on over to www.rachelhart.cpm/challenge if you're interested. All the information will be there on how to sign up. It's completely free and you can continue redoing the training as much as you want in the weeks moving ahead.

I'm really excited for this, I'm really excited to share it with all you guys. I've been wanting to have something where I could bring this work to a larger, more interactive way for all of you and so I'm really excited for this. Thank you for listening everybody, and I will see you next week, and I hope you will join me on the five-day challenge.

Hey guys, if you want to go over to iTunes and leave a review about the podcast if you're enjoying it, I would love it. But not only that; I am giving everyone who does a free urge meditation. I will tell you, this meditation, it is super simple. All it takes is five minutes and a pair of headphones. If you are having an urge and you want a different way to handle it, just pop those headphones in, find a place where you can sit down undisturbed and teach your brain, retrain your brain a very simple method to make urges more

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tolerable. All you need to do is head on over to rachelhart.com/urge and input your information there.

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 and start your transformation today.