

Ep #56: Your Opinion of You



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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 56.

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, it's Valentine's Day this week. Now, Valentine's Day, you all know, you're all familiar with it. It is a time to tell someone special in your life how much you love them and how much you care about them. So I'm going to tell you, this year I didn't get my husband anything, and I presume he will not have gotten me anything either. We've really never exchanged any presents on Valentine's Day. But I did get something for myself, and I want to tell you a bit about that.

Now, before I do it, I want to back up many years ago to when I was still living in New York. I was in a tiny little studio apartment on the upper West side, and I stumbled upon the work of this amazing calligrapher named Betsy Dunlap. I have to tell you, her work is just unbelievable. I love design, I love typography, and this woman creates the most beautiful and intricate Valentine's, and when I saw them for the first time, I just thought, "Oh my gosh, every piece of it was thought out perfectly, from the antique stamps that she used, on that envelope, to the wax seal, to the colors, and the ink, and the calligraphy."

It was so beautiful, and when I saw this years and years ago living in New York, I immediately thought, "Oh my gosh, I want one of those. I want a Valentine like that for myself." But the only problem was I had no one to give it to me. I had no one in my life to drop hints to. I was single at the time, and not very happy about it. And I certainly was not looking forward to being alone on Valentine's Day.

Then I thought to myself, "What if I sent one of these Valentine's to me?" Now listen, I also believed that that was a crazy idea. I also thought, "God,

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that is so pathetic. Sending yourself a Valentine? How weird. And not only that, I'd have to reach out to this woman and order one for me and she would obviously think that this was the act of some very, very desperate person."

But then I also thought, "It's so beautiful, I love it so much. Maybe she would be the only one in the world who would know. Maybe I wouldn't have to tell anyone else. I mean, she mails out these Valentine's to whomever you want, so why couldn't I ask her to mail one to me?" So you know what? I did it. And I will tell you that I really felt kind of sheepish and awkward about it, but a couple weeks later when I checked my mailbox and I saw this beautiful envelope waiting for me, I was so pleased. Because the Valentine was indeed even more beautiful in real life than the pictures I had seen online.

So the question is, well, what did I write to myself? So inside I did write a message to myself, and I felt pretty silly doing it. I felt pretty silly sending her the words that I wanted her to write out for me in calligraphy. But I thought, "Okay Rachel, if you're going to go through the whole rigmarole of purchasing a Valentine to send to yourself, you might as well figure out something really nice to say to yourself."

But I really was like, "What am I going to say that just isn't so ridiculously cheesy and over the top?" But I looked online for some quotes and I finally cobbled something together that felt both kind of good, and something I wanted to believe, and also something that felt totally uncomfortable for me to think about writing these words to myself. But this is what I wrote.

I wrote, "Rachel, the single most important thing that I could ever share with you, with regard to health, harmony, and happiness, not to mention, expediting your heart's fondest desires, can be summed up in two words: love yourself. I do." And I signed it, "From the universe", because that just somehow felt less embarrassing than signing it, "From Rachel."

Now listen, I did not love myself back then. In fact, I remember being really unhappy and really miserable about myself in that little tiny studio

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apartment on the upper West side. Back then I could have rattled off a long list of what was wrong with me and how I was a screw up and how I had wasted time and how I was failing over and over and over again. And certainly, back then, I had not figured out my drinking.

In fact, on that front, I was kind of a mess because here you can imagine, I had all these negative thoughts about myself. How I wasn't living up to my potential, how I kept failing, I was a screw up, something was wrong with me. I had all these negative thoughts that were creating all these negative emotions, and then guess what happens, you start looking to your external environment to get a little relief. And so especially the weekend would roll around and all I could think was, "I can't wait to go out and get drunk. Can't wait to go out and have a good time, because I'm certainly not having a good time on my own."

So I was going out to bars and I was getting drunk, and I was also thinking at the time like, "This is how I'll find my next partner." Like, I know, I'll show up as a really messy version of myself and that's how I'll lure the next one in. But you know what, deep down I really did hope that the words that I wrote to myself in that Valentine could be true. I really did want to be someone who could say that she loved herself, even though just uttering those words felt so foreign and so awkward at the time.

And you know, the reason I decided to do this, the reason I decided to send myself a Valentine even though at the time I thought the entire endeavor was embarrassing, and I could only convince myself to do it because I said, "Well, only one woman in the world will ever know about this", but now of course, all of you know about it as well. But I convinced myself because I thought, "Well, at least you'll get that Valentine you always wanted, that was so perfect and just spoke to you."

And so if I can just let one woman in the world know how pathetic I am, it will be okay, because at least I will have gotten that. So it's funny now, I still have that Valentine, I actually dug it out when I was preparing for this podcast, and it's so funny. I mean, still incredibly beautiful, I still love it, but it's so amazing for me to read those words now and to think how far I've

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come, to think that those words don't feel so weird and foreign and awkward to me, and that it actually took a real leap of faith seven years ago, I think, when I did this, to do something that felt uncomfortable and to write words that I hoped one day I could believe, but at that time felt so far away and so unbelievable.

And so you can guess what I'm sending myself this year. I'm sending myself another Valentine from Betsy Dunlap, from me to me. Because you know, I really understand now that you have to take these uncomfortable steps to start to believe what you hope you can believe about yourself. And now that seven years later, I'm sitting, looking at that Valentine and feeling like, "Love yourself, I do. I do feel like I love myself."

Now that I feel like those words are true, I figured, "Hey, it's time for a new message. It's time for a new something that I want to believe about myself, and why not send it to me in this really beautiful, amazing way?" Plus, you know, I love getting things in the mail.

So what does this have to do with drinking? Well, I'll tell you, it really has a lot to do with it. Because so many of you are making the choice about whether or not to drink based on how you think others will perceive you. You are so caught up in trying to control other people's opinion of you, and your opinion of yourself is not even on your radar. You're not focusing on how to improve your opinion of you, you're focusing on how to control other people's opinion of you.

And you know, I was talking about this recently with a client and she was talking about going to a party and how she was feeling a little nervous about it. And I asked her, "Okay, so what do you think will be running through your mind when you're there?" And she said, "Do I look okay? What do these people think of me? Do I even belong here?"

She had all these questions, and remember how questions act in the brain. You ask yourself a question and your brain goes to work. Your brain wants to find that answer. I talked about this, how this mechanism works in episode 48, how questions work in your brain. So if you haven't had a

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listen, go back and check that one out because it is really important to understand how questions work.

Because what ends up happening is that we're not very conscious about the kinds of questions that we ask ourselves, and of course, our brain is primed for many reasons, both cultural reasons and evolutionary reasons, to kind of spot the negative, that we often end up asking ourselves these negative questions which lead to negative answers.

So you're at the party and you're thinking, "All these people, they look so put together. What am I wearing? They probably think it's weird that I'm not drinking like everybody else, like I'm the one standing here drinking club soda while everybody's having wine. I feel like I stick out like a sore thumb." Right? You ask yourself a lot of negative questions and your brain is going to come up with a lot of negative answers.

But even more important than that, I want you to notice how so many of the questions that you ask yourself are focused on what your brain imagines others think of you. So rarely are we asking ourselves about what we think of us. Right? We're not focusing on questions about what you think about you. So many of you are so caught up in trying to make sure that everybody likes you, and drinking can play a really big role in this.

If you believe, if you have thoughts that not drinking means you're boring, you're not fun, you're abnormal, if you think it's a sign that you're uptight or a fuddy duddy, whatever it is, and you're also very concerned about what other people think about you, well, guess how this is going to come together. Right? If your main concern, if your main priority is making sure that other people like you, what other people think about you, then it's going to be very hard for you to say no to a drink if you also believe that not drinking is a sign that something is wrong with you or you're not as fun, not as interesting, you have a problem.

And what I want all of you to do is to focus on what you want and the results that you are getting, and what you want out of life. Because if you don't do that, if you don't believe that your opinion of you, and the results

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that you are getting in life are the most important, then what you'll end up doing is you will end up tolerating hangovers and regret day after day, weekend after weekend, just to try to ensure that people like you.

Now listen, I get it. I was in your shoes. I was also massively caught up in what other people thought about me. I was not taught to believe that my opinion of myself was the most important. My focus was all external, and I was constantly thinking, "Am I smart enough? Am I pretty enough? Am I funny enough?" And I was so convinced that people didn't like me. I mean, I could spot that in my environment all the time.

And I also believed that if I did decide not to drink, then it would be like another mark against me. I already thought I wasn't measuring up in all these ways, I was already worried in what people thought about me, and then to not drink on top of it, in my mind, it was like - it was as if I was wearing a label like, "Hey, something's wrong with her. Who is this weirdo that isn't drinking? Does she have a problem or something?"

But the truth is this. It is exhausting trying to control other people's opinions of you. It takes a lot of energy to twist yourself and contort yourself into someone or something that you believe other people will like. And if you are trying to do that for everybody, if you want everybody to like you, then imagine all the energy it will require. You will have to be someone different for everybody. You will have to be twisting and contorting yourself all the time.

So not only is it exhausting, but I have some additional bad news. It's also impossible. You cannot ensure that other people like you. You cannot make yourself into someone that guarantees people will have a positive opinion of you. And in fact, many people can spot that a mile away, right? We're very good at spotting when someone is not being authentic to themselves.

Whether or not someone likes you has to do with their thoughts. Not who you are. And we know that this is true because I can guarantee for all of you listening, that there is someone out in the world who likes you a lot.

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Now, you may dismiss that person's opinion as not counting for some reason. "Oh, they're my best friend, they have to like me." But there is someone for each of you that likes you a lot.

And I can also guarantee that there is someone out there who doesn't really like you, not so into you. It's true for everyone, it's true for me. So the question is, which person is right? If both opinions exist, how do we know which one is right? Is it the person who likes you or the person who doesn't? Well of course, what we know is that whether or not someone likes you has to do with their thoughts, not who you are. Because if it had to do with who you are, then everyone would have the same opinion about you.

Now, I know some of you are going to say, "But I want everyone to like me", and you know what, what I will say back to you is why? Why on earth do you want everyone to like you? That's a lot of people. I think the reason we get caught up in this belief that you know, everyone should like us, and that it's important that everybody like us is because we also mistakenly believe that if everybody likes us, then we can finally feel good about who we are.

But you know, it doesn't work that way. You feel good about you when you like you. And let me tell you, it is a lot easier to like yourself when you like the choices you are making, especially in regards to habits like drinking, that are not serving you well or not giving you good results. So I say, let others be wrong about you. Let people not like you. Let people think that not drinking is weird and uptight, and boring. Whatever, because there are other people out there who will think that it's great.

You know, so let your opinion be the most important. Otherwise, you are setting yourself up for an exhausting, and an impossible task. Trying to get everybody to like you will suck all of your time and your energy. And even if you could get really, really good at it, even if you're an expert at it, you'll still probably only succeed 50% of the time, and then what? You have another 50% of people to worry about. The goal post just keeps moving.

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Because no matter what, you cannot reach inside someone else's head and change their think-feel-act cycle about you. But you can change your think-feel-act cycle about yourself. And if you're going to expend time and energy trying to change someone's thoughts, why not do it, why not try to expend that time and energy trying to change your own thoughts about you? Because it takes energy either way. How you decide to redirect that energy, that's what matters.

What if you were to say, "Alright, all these negative thoughts I have about myself, I want to challenge them. All the thoughts that say I don't measure up, that I'm not good enough, that I'm not smart enough, that I'm not skinny enough, I'm not pretty enough, successful enough, whatever it is, I want to spend my time and energy challenging those thoughts." And while you're at it, you might want to take a good look at the thoughts you have about what it will mean about you if you have a club soda in your hand instead of a glass of wine.

And if you think, "This feels really silly, I feel really sheepish", like practicing improving my opinion of myself and loving myself. Maybe not even loving yourself, just liking yourself. It's weird. I get it. I felt a little silly and a little pathetic when I first sent that Valentine to myself so many years ago. But you know what, a small little part of me also felt kind of good. Like I was finally choosing to do something kind to me. Even if it meant really stepping outside of my comfort zone, that I was finally trying to be kind towards myself, the way that I would be for another person, and the way that I was so desperate for others to be towards me.

I always say this. You cannot shame yourself healthy. Shame is not going to undo this habit for you, but you also cannot hate yourself happy. That just does not work. And so this week, this week of Valentine's Day, I want you to challenge yourself to do something different. Instead of having it be something that is focused on somebody else that you love and showing someone else how much you care about them, you can still do that.

But I want you to also think about how you could do that for yourself. How are you showing up for you? How are you telling yourself that your opinion

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matters most rather than everybody else's opinion about you? Because at the end of the day, you're the one that has to deal with the consequences from drinking more than you want. Nobody else. You're dealing with it. You're waking up with it.

So why not have your actions matter most to you, rather than trying to get your actions to fit your perception of what you need to do in order for people to like you? So I'm giving you three things to do this week. Number one, I want you to write down the thoughts that you have about yourself. The ones that aren't so pretty. "I'm a screw up", "I'm a failure", "I'm fat", "I never get anything right", "I'm lazy", just get them on paper, and I want you to really look at them. and ask yourself, would you ever, ever talk this way about someone that you care about? And if not, then I want you to ask yourself, "Why am I willing to talk this way about me?" So that's the very first thing to do.

Number two, I want you to write down your opinion of you if you were someone who didn't drink. What would you think of you? "I'm so boring", "I'm not fun", "No one's going to want to hang out with me", "I'll never find anyone to date", "It means I have a problem", "I'm uptight", "I'm abnormal", whatever it is, write down the opinion that you have of you right now about what it would mean if you were someone who didn't drink.

Because you have to understand that if you do not start spending some of your time and energy challenging these beliefs, and if you continue to be caught up and more focused on what other people think about you, then the combination of those two things together will make it next to impossible for you to change this habit. So I want you also to see those thoughts on paper.

Number three, find a way this week to be kind to yourself. Now, I know what you guy are going to say. "I don't know how. What would I do? I can't think of anything." Listen, I know that every single one of you listening knows how to extend kindness and love and caring and compassion and acceptance towards a friend. You know how to do this. so think of what you would do for a friend, choose something, and then try doing it for yourself.

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It will require that you step outside of your comfort zone. But stepping outside of your comfort zone is a necessary ingredient if you want to start loving yourself and caring about yourself, and talking to yourself in a way that you would talk to a friend. We talk to ourselves in ways that are so unkind. I had a client say this to me recently, and it was so spot on. She said, "You know, if I talk to my friends the way I speak to myself, I wouldn't have any friends." And it's so true.

So I want you to find something you can do for yourself that is kind, and compassionate, and caring, and loving. It doesn't have to be sending a Valentine to yourself, it can be anything. But I want you to challenge yourself to do something that might make you feel a little sheepish, that might bring up some thoughts that have you feeling a little awkward. That's okay, that's how you're going to start to change this.

Because if you are always fixated on what other's think of you, unwinding your habit of drinking is going to be so incredibly difficult, because you will always try, you will always be focused on making choices that you think will make other people happy. You have to start treating yourself like you matter the most.

You have to start believing that your opinion of yourself is the most important, and that how you feel the next day, and the results that you are getting matter, and are more important than making sure that other people like you, or that you blend in or you fit in. You have to choose to be your number one priority.

Alright guys, that's it for this week. As always, if you have questions, or you'd like to see me cover a specific topic, I'm happy to get emails at podcast@rachelhart.com. Otherwise, I will see you next time.

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

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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 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.