

## Ep #57: What Creates Enjoyment



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #57: What Creates Enjoyment

You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 57.

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.

Alright everybody, we are talking about a good topic today, because we are talking about how to have a good time, and what makes for a good time. We're talking all about enjoyment. And that enjoyment is just the condition of having a good time, of enjoying yourself.

Now, here's the thing. Whether or not you are enjoying yourself, whether or not you're having a good time depends on the thoughts running through your mind while you are doing something. Now, most of you do not think about enjoyment in this way. You believe that an activity itself is either inherently enjoyable to you, or it isn't. But I want to show you that that's not quite how the think-feel-act cycle works. And this is a big issue for everybody really, but it's in particular a big issue if you want to change your drinking, because of course, drinking and enjoyment are so often linked together.

So I have two examples that I want to give you, examples that I think will help show you that it's not about an activity being inherently enjoyable or not, but it's about what you're thinking while you're doing that activity. So my two examples are dancing and painting. I think both of these are perfect examples. I hear so many people say, "I hate to dance. I don't dance. Dancing's not my thing" or, "I'm just not artistic. I've never been any good at stuff like that, like, that's not something I do. I don't like it."

But here's the thing. Have you ever really watched little kids dance and paint? Right? Like, when you see little kids that are dancing or painting, and sometimes doing both of those at the same time, they are just like, "Yeah, let's do this. Moving my body is fun. Playing with colors is fun."

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Right? Enjoyment is available to them because they don't yet have all these thoughts running through their mind that adults do, or even you know, older kids do.

They aren't thinking, "Do I look stupid? Am I doing this right? I feel ridiculous. I don't know what I'm doing. That painting is so much better than mine. This is ugly, I'm no good." Right? Really little kids are just like, "Yeah, this is great. I love it. I love moving my body. I love painting." And I know some of you will come back to me and say, "Yeah, but the reason I have all these questions doubting my ability, the reason why I'm questioning whether or not I'm a good dancer or whether or not I can actually paint something that looks okay is because I'm not a real dancer, I'm not a real artist."

But here is the thing that I want you to consider. A dancer is just a person who moves her body to express what she is feeling. And I'm pretty sure that all of you listening are capable of moving your body in some way to express how you are feeling. And the same is true with an artist, right? An artist is just a person who uses materials around her to bring her ideas to life.

Now listen, you have ideas. I know you do. There are materials around you to express those ideas, but whether or not you are willing to use them to create something, whether or not you are willing to move your body to express how you feel, now, that is a whole other story. But there is no doubt in my mind that you are capable of doing both.

And the reason that you don't enjoy it, the reason that you'll say, "I'm no good at this. I'm not a dancer. I can't paint. I'm not creative" is because of all the thoughts you have about what you are doing and or what you are making. So really, whether or not you enjoy yourself when you move your body, or when you bring to life an idea depends entirely on what you're thinking while you're doing these things. This is how the think-feel-act cycle works.

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Let me tell you, if you are on the dance floor and you are thinking, "Oh my god, I look so stupid", you're going to feel embarrassed. And guess what, your action is going to be. You're probably going to sit down. Right? You're probably going to move to the far wall and lean against it, or go to the bar and get a drink, or go to your table and sit back down.

And if you look at something that you have drawn, and you think, "God, that's terrible. This is terrible", guess what? You're going to feel ashamed and probably crumple up the paper and throw it away. But the dancing and the drawing, or the painting, it didn't make you feel anything until you started judging it with your thoughts.

So I have some bad news, but also some good news for you. Whether or not you are enjoying yourself at any given moment is up to you. It's your responsibility. Now, I know for some of you that's kind of bad news, because it's like, "Jeez, another thing I have to be in charge of", right? But I think it's fantastic news. Because if it is up to me, then I can look at what I am thinking, I can pay attention to how the think-feel-act cycle is working while I'm doing something, and I can change it.

So I can start to enjoy things that I may have previously told myself, "You look like an idiot. This is no good. This work is junk." I can learn how to enjoy things just by changing my thoughts. I don't have to go out and become you know, a master dancer or a master painter. I just have to change the thoughts that are running through my mind.

And the truth is that nobody can change those thoughts but you. This is why it's your responsibility. No one gets to crack open your head and tinker with your own think-feel-act cycle. That's what you get to do. So yes, it is up to you. But this is great news because if it is up to you, then what I am telling you is that there is always the possibility of enjoying yourself in what you are doing.

If you are willing to pay attention to your thoughts, if you are willing to notice how those thoughts make you feel and how you act as a result of how you are feeling, then you can decide, "Hey, do I want to keep this

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think-feel-act cycle? Is this thought really working for me?" And if it's not, then you can challenge your thinking on purpose.

You can maybe decide that you won't say things to yourself like, "I look like an idiot. This is terrible. This drawing is terrible." Right? You can start maybe just as a first step, talking about the things that you are doing and the things you are creating in a more neutral way.

Now, here's what most of us learn to do unconsciously. What we end up learning to do is outsourcing our enjoyment to things that give our brain dopamine. So the things that we consume, what we eat, and of course, what we drink, becomes how we teach our brain to seek out enjoyment in so many different situations.

And I hear this all the time. I hear people say, "If I go out to dinner and I'm the only one that's not drinking, it's going to be so boring", "If I go to the party and my glass only has club soda in it, I'm going to be miserable." But I want to tell you this - if food and drink are the best things about who you are with and what you are doing, then you are doing it wrong. Really.

I am not saying that that means you can never enjoy a glass of wine, or eat a piece of cake. But if the thought of going to a party and not consuming things for pleasure leaves your brain thinking, "Why would I even bother going?" then that's something you really want to know about yourself and pay attention to.

The reason why you're convinced you'll be bored and miserable if you aren't drinking or eating is because you've become so dependent on consuming things that give your brain dopamine as the primary way of enjoying yourself and having a good time. Now, this is not your fault. No one ever sat you down and taught you about the think-feel-act cycle.

No one ever said, "Hey listen, if you're not enjoying yourself, you really need to look and see what's going on in your mind. You really need to pay attention to the thoughts and see how they're making you feel." We don't get that information. And so of course, for many of us, when we're in

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situations, especially situations where drinking is really common and we find ourselves feeling a little uncomfortable, or a little anxious, or a little insecure and we don't really feel like we're enjoying ourselves, we don't know what to do. And reaching for a drink seems like a really good idea. It seems like, "That's how I'll have a good time."

Now, the problem is if that becomes your sole way of changing how you feel, of enjoying yourself, of having a good time. You can see how you would very quickly become dependent on it. That's exactly what happened to me.

I like to think about, you know those water wings that little kids wear when they're learning to swim? You've got this kind of inflatable armbands that helps keep the kids afloat while they're still learning. Imagine if you wore those armbands every single time you went swimming. Every time you took a dip, every time you went into the water, you had those water wings helping you stay afloat.

Now, what if you did that for years? Maybe even decades. And then one day you went into the pool without them. Your brain would freak out, right? Your thoughts would be, "Oh my god, this is so hard. I don't like this. I feel really uncomfortable. I need my floaties." So you would probably get out of the water and you would probably decide, "Yeah, I don't really like swimming without my water wings, so I'm going to pass on doing that in the future."

This is what is happening for a lot of you who don't like having a drink in your hand when you're socializing. You're in the water without your floaties, and your brain is like, "I do not like this. This is not enjoyable. I am feeling uncomfortable, why would I choose to do this?" And I get it. I didn't like it either. It seemed like I always had struggled to enjoy myself socially because I was feeling so much anxiety created by all my mental chatter, the thoughts that I had about not fitting in, that everyone was prettier or smarter, more successful.

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And so I was feeling all this anxiety and insecurity and awkwardness, that's what was being created in my think-feel-act cycle. Of course, I didn't even understand how the think-feel-act cycle worked. I just knew when I went to college for the first time and I started going to parties, and I felt that way, and I had no idea what to do with these negative emotions, and I had no idea that they were created by the thoughts running through my mind.

What I did start to unconsciously learn was that if I could start to get a buzz going, if I could get a drink in my system, that I seemed to be able to feel better and enjoy myself. I seemed to finally be able to have a good time. The problem was the more I did that, the more my brain was like, "Hey Rachel, this is the solution. Let's just grab a drink."

I started to get to a place where not having a drink felt like not having my floaties, right? I didn't like it. It didn't feel good. I was like, "Why would you do this? Why would you go to a party and not drink? Why would you go to a bar and not drink? Why would you go to a baseball game and not drink? I don't like this." My brain was so used to getting dopamine as a way to have a good time. I just had no idea the sort of power that I had in my own mind, with my own thinking, to create enjoyment for myself.

I didn't even realize that I was the one creating the fact that I wasn't enjoying myself. Because here's the thing - the more I reached for a drink to quiet the chatter and to finally have a good time because I was giving my brain dopamine, the problem was all those underlying thoughts, they were still there. They were still unchanged. And every time I tried going out and not drinking, and then I didn't enjoy myself, it was because my thoughts were unchanged, but of course, what did I think? "Oh, it's because I'm not drinking."

I didn't yet understand how the cycle worked. I just believed that going out and not drinking was one of those things that was obviously inherently unenjoyable, which is a pretty problematic thought to have when you're trying to change a habit. Your enjoyment is up to you. You can either decide that you want to hand over the responsibility of enjoying yourself to the things that you consume, especially the things that give your brain

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dopamine, or you can make the choice to take responsibility for it, for you to be in charge, to not need dopamine to convince yourself you're having a good time.

Because if you leave all those thoughts unchanged, if that think-feel-act cycle just continues to loop over and over and over again, except in those moments when you have enough dopamine to cover it up, well, you can see where you're headed. You're headed to a life of wearing floaties.

Now, on the flipside, there is so much freedom to know that you don't need anything outside of you to enjoy yourself, that your enjoyment is up to you. You don't need to be consuming something, you don't need a drink or a buzz to make sure that you have a good time. There is just tremendous freedom there.

You know, obviously, I have practiced now for years understanding this and learning this for myself by not drinking. And like all things, it's become easier with practice. So I've talked about on the podcast before, the very first wedding that I went to when I had decided I was going to take a break, and it was really hard. I mean, I was probably - I think I was maybe a month in, maybe a little bit longer, to taking a break, and I remember dreading going to this wedding.

I was so worried about it, but I went, I really - it was important for me to go. I really wanted - I wanted to go, even though I was afraid I was going to be miserable, and I remember when the music came on, and I was like, "Alright Rachel, go out on the dance floor, try to be a normal person." But I was so hyperaware of my dancing. I was just like, "Oh my god, this is terrible. What am I doing? What are my arms doing?"

My body had never felt so uncomfortable because for so long, I mean, I just - unless I was by myself in my house you know, I was really never dancing without a drink in my hand. And so I was out on that dance floor, really trying my best, but just thinking, "This is terrible. I look weird. I feel awkward. I know technically that I like this song that is playing right now, but I do not like what is happening."

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And it was really challenging. It really was because my brain was like, "Listen, when we're dancing in groups, the way that we enjoy that is by making sure that we're drinking. This is just how you do it. You taught yourself that at 17 and we've been practicing it ever since then." And so it was really hard for me to do it that first time. But I kept doing it. And I think about my own wedding a couple years later, and I've also talked about that on the podcast before.

And you know, there was an open bar at my wedding. I didn't drink. And I will also tell you that I was the first person out on the dance floor, and my husband and I joke about this because I was so impatient about wanting to dance. So we were sitting at our table and I kept kind of leaning over to him and saying like, "Is it time yet? Like, when is the dancing going to start? I think this is taking too long. Why isn't the DJ playing anything? I think we should be dancing already."

I was really, really, really excited to get out on the dance floor. And he was like, "Rachel, calm down. You are the bride, you are the very first person who was served dinner. There are people, there are guests who still have not gotten their food yet. Take it easy. We're going to dance." But I was so excited to get out there. And once I finally did, once all those people finally finished eating, which let me tell you, I still think it took a really long time, I didn't have a moment of self-doubt or insecurity.

But I had practiced so many times in between that very first wedding that I went and I wasn't drinking, and then my own wedding, I had practiced so many times really understanding and paying attention to, "Hey, if you're not enjoying what's happening on the dance floor, it's because of everything that's going on in your head. So if you want to have a good time dancing, you need to either change the thoughts in your head, or go back to drinking, or decide you're never going to dance again. Those are your choices."

And I practiced changing my thoughts, and that's why I could be in such a different place a couple years later. So here's the thing - if you're not enjoying yourself, it is time for you to question a couple things. Number

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one, what do you really believe creates your enjoyment? Write this down. Answer this question for yourself. Is it what you're doing? Or is it what you're thinking about while you're doing something?

Number two, what are your thoughts about not drinking and also enjoying yourself? Does your brain think that's possible right now? Does your brain think, "Okay, I won't drink, and I'll be really healthy, but I don't think I'll have that much fun." Really get those thoughts down on paper.

Number three, think back to a time recently where you did not enjoy yourself. What were you thinking? What was running through your mind? I want you to try and capture those thoughts so that you can start to really show your brain that it was your thinking.

And number four, just ask yourself, "Will it be possible for me to change my think-feel-act cycle, for me to learn how to enjoy myself and take responsibility for having a good time if I'm always covering up how I'm feeling and what I'm thinking?"

Your enjoyment is your responsibility, and trust me, that is the best news ever. As always, send me your questions, your comments, any topics you'd like to hear me talk about on the podcast. Otherwise, I will see you guys next week.

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 tolerable. All you need to do is head on over to [rachelhart.com/urge](http://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

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