

Ep #58: Using Your Past as Evidence You Can't Succeed



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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 58.

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. So listen, last night I was watching the Winter Olympics and it got me thinking about the idea of what we believe is possible or impossible, and how these beliefs directly impact what we are able to achieve.

So think about it. Last night, I was watching this figure skater, Mirai Nagasu. I was watching her perform, and she landed a triple axel in the competition. Now, I want you to think about this. No other American woman has landed a triple axel at the Olympics before. And not only that, only eight female skaters in the world have ever landed that jump in international competition. It's crazy, right? The triple axel is considered to be one of the hardest jumps in figure skating because it requires tremendous strength and tremendous ability to rotate quickly.

Basically, what's happening is that you are starting - you. Not you. A skater - unless maybe you're a skater. You're starting from a jump that is head-on rather than a backwards position. Now listen, I don't know anything about figure skating. Backwards sounds pretty hard to me, but apparently starting a jump head-on is harder. And then once you propel yourself into the air - mind you, what you're going to fall on to is ice - once you are up there, then you have to do three and a half revolutions before landing on a single blade. It's so crazy.

So I watched her do this, I watched her become the first American woman to land a triple axel at the Olympics, and it was incredible. So it got me thinking about what is possible or impossible, and I wanted to know more. I wanted to know more about this jump and why it is so difficult.

So here's what I learned. The triple axel was actually invented - and you might not believe this - it was invented in 1882. That's 136 years ago. That's a really

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long time ago. It was invented in 1882 by this guy, Axel Paulsen. Now, here's the thing. It was invented 136 years ago, but the first woman to land a triple axel in competition was Midori Ito, and that didn't happen until 1988. 106 years after the jump was invented. 106 blew my mind, right?

I mean, a long period of time had passed, 106 years, but women hadn't evolved into something stronger and more capable, right? Nothing had really changed. But finally, in 1988, a woman was able to land a triple axel, and then it happened in 1991, and then 2002, 2004, 2015, 2016, 2017, and then last night.

So I was thinking like, what is going on here? For 106 years, no woman can do it. Then after 1988, eight women land that jump. How does something go from being impossible for so long to being possible? That is what I want to talk to you guys about today.

So I know you guys are not working on landing a triple axel. You're working on something very different, you're working on how to change your drinking, but I will tell you, I know from experience, sometimes that goal of how to successfully take a break from drinking can feel as impossible as landing a triple axel, right? It can feel like, "God, I'm never going to be able to change this habit."

I talk to people all day long about this, and almost every person comes to me initially with the same thing. "I'm not really sure I can do it, I don't really think I can learn how not to desire alcohol, I don't know how not to want it, I'll feel like I'll always be missing out, I'll always be deprived." This is what people say to me. And I always ask them the same question. "Why? Why aren't you sure that you can do it? Why aren't you sure that you can finally change this habit?"

And I almost always get the exact same answer. They will say, "Well, because I've tried. I've tried so many times and failed so many times before." And I listen to people, I hear them hold out their past attempts at trying to change their drinking like proof that it is impossible. So they'll hold it out in their hand, and they'll say, "See, see, look at all these times I've tried, Rachel. Look at all these times I've failed. Look at all this evidence that I have, all this evidence that it won't work, I can't do it. It's impossible."

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And this is what you're doing too. This is what so many of us do. We use our past results as an indicator of our future success, and I will promise you something. As long as you keep doing that, as long as you keep looking to the past to find evidence of what is possible in the future, you will stay stuck.

Because here's the thing: of course you have tons of evidence that taking a break won't work, and that you'll always desire alcohol, and that you'll always want it, and you'll always feel like you're missing out and deprived because you haven't changed the habit yet. Right? If you had successfully changed the habit, you would have evidence that the opposite was true, that it is possible to take a sustainable break, that it is possible to not desire alcohol, to not always want it, to watch people drink while you aren't drinking, and not at all feel like you're missing out. In fact, you can sit there and be like, "Doesn't matter, I don't care."

But guess what? Nobody changes the habit on their first go. You cannot change it on your very first attempt. That's not how habits work. But more importantly, the reason that you haven't changed this habit yet is because you have never worked on changing the thoughts and the feelings driving the habit. You've never taught your brain anything new when it comes to the think-feel-act cycle. You've just practiced saying no over and over and over again.

So here's what you're doing. You have this habit of drinking more than you want. It's not serving you. You're getting negative results, you're getting consequences from it. And so you think, "Okay, I just got to change the action. I just got to change the action of drinking." And it seems so logical, right? If drinking too much is the problem, then I'm just going to put all my focus on to not drinking.

So all of you are doing one of two things. First, you're either trying to stop the action altogether. So you're trying to say, "Okay, no more drinking. That's it. I quit. Never again. I'm saying no forever and ever." That's the first thing. Or the second thing is you try to modify the action itself. You try to say, "I'm going to try to drink less." And so what you'll do is you'll say, "Alright, my limit is two. I'm never going to have more than two. I promise, never more than two in a sitting."

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"I mean, unless it's a really special occasion, and then maybe it's three, or my best friend is in town, or I had that friend's bachelorette party coming up, or I'm in Napa and we're going wine tasting, but otherwise, just two. Otherwise then it's just two." So this is where you're focusing your energy, right? Just on the action, either trying to stop it all together, or trying to modify the action.

So all your energy is there. It is focused squarely on trying to change the action. Just say no, putting limits on yourself, creating rules, creating restrictions, using willpower, anything you can think of to change the action of drinking. But there's a problem. You are treating the action of drinking as if it exists in a vacuum, as if the decision to pour a drink just manifests out of the clear blue sky. That's not how the think-feel-act cycle works.

Actions don't just appear out of the ether. You decide to drink, you make the decision to drink because you felt an emotion first. Now, usually, it is either just desire, the desire for a drink, or the desire for relief from an underlying emotion like stress, anxiety, insecurity, loneliness, but you know, it can be anything. And emotions, that emotion that was propelling the action, that didn't just appear. That wasn't created out of nothing. You felt that emotion because you had a thought.

So when you look at your habit and you say, "Okay, I'm just going to change the action, I'm just going to say no, or I'm just never going to drink more than two." The problem is that it will not reveal to you the think-feel-act cycle. In fact, what may happen is it may make the decision to drink feel even more mysterious. Because now, you are trying to stop something, a decision that you don't understand why it's even happening in the first place.

Now listen, I did this for years. I decided that I didn't like the results that I was getting from drinking, and I would quit. And then I'd start back up again, or I'd set rules, and I'd follow them for a while, and then it would all go out the window. And I would flip flop back and forth. I did this all throughout my 20s, probably 10 or 15 times. I just fixated on trying to change the action, and I probably did this 10 or 15 times, just focusing on trying to change the action.

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Sometimes it was for as long as a year. A whole year where I was saying, "No, no, no, no, I'm not going to have a drink." And other times, you know, those attempts were as short as a couple of days. But all the while, I wasn't teaching my brain anything new because I was trying to understand the action in a void. I didn't understand that my thoughts and my feelings were connected to why I was making the decision to drink in the first place.

So you can imagine after 10 or 15 times of trying to change your drinking, I had a lot of evidence that changing the habit wouldn't work, that it was impossible, that I would just fail like I did last time and the time before, and the time before that. Because that's what I saw happening over and over again.

All those times I was trying to take a break or implementing rules, I was focusing solely on changing the action. 100% of my energy was on saying no to drinking, and I devoted zero effort to understanding why I was making that choice in the first place.

So listen, I could have used all that evidence to just say, "That's impossible, it's not going to work. I mean, just look at my past, look at this history. Look at all the proof that I have." But I decided to do something different, and what changed for me was this: I went from saying, "I'm going to quit drinking" to "I'm going to understand why I drink."

Those two things, they may sound similar, but they are light years apart. I shifted my focus from stopping an activity, just focusing on the action, to learning why that activity was happening in the first place. Why did I have all this desire? Why did I feel like I needed a drink in my hand in social situations? Why did I feel like I was missing out when everyone was drinking but me?

And the only way that I could do that was by understanding how the think-feel-act cycle worked. To understand how my thoughts were connected to my feelings and emotions, and how those feelings and emotions were connected to my decision making around alcohol.

So listen, for all of you out there saying, "You know, I'm not really sure I can do it. I don't really think I can learn how not to desire alcohol, how not to want it. I

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don't think that I'll be in a place where I'm ever going to feel like I'm not missing out, I'm not deprived. It just feels so impossible." I get it. But what you are doing is you are looking to your past as an indicator of your future success, and that is not how the impossible becomes possible.

So I want you to think about this. How does something that you believe can't happen, how does it finally happen? Now, the answer is pretty simple. If you truly believe that something cannot happen, it can't. The impossible cannot become possible for you if you believe it will never happen. Think about that triple axel. 106 years went by before the first woman pulled it off. 106.

106 years of evidence that it couldn't be done, and then one day it was. That first woman who did it, she had to believe that she could do what no woman before her had ever accomplished. And then notice, she did, right? She does it. Midori Ito pulls off a triple axel in competition in 1988, and then suddenly, oh look, more women start to be able to do triple axels as well. Because all of a sudden, they now see a little bit of evidence, they can watch a film of another woman competing and completing the jump.

And then they start to think, "Surely, maybe if Midori Ito can do it, maybe I can do it too." And it's not just true at the Olympics and with figure skating. It's true of everything. Just think about all the inventions in our world that have revolutionized our life, and all the naysayers who said it wasn't possible. "It's not possible, people can't fly," "It's not possible to put men into outer space," "It's not possible to communicate instantly with people that are halfway around the world."

Right? There are all these naysayers, and the truth is, everyone who believed that these things were impossible, they were not the ones making it happen. But there were people who said, "You know what, I think we can do this. I think this is possible. I bet I can figure out a way," and then they got to work. And those are the people who made the impossible possible.

So for all of you out there who believe right now that it's impossible to change your desire to drink because you have so much evidence of past failures, what you're doing is you are using that evidence as an indication of your future

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success. And there is no upside to believing that thought. If you believe that something is impossible, you will feel defeated and you will quit ahead of time.

The only solution is to believe that change could be possible. Because then, you will have the motivation needed to keep taking action. But you cannot do that if you keep looking to your past and using past attempts as examples for why it can't be done. The only thing that ever makes the impossible possible is to keep believing it can happen and to keep working towards that goal.

Keep trying even if you failed. Even if you failed not once, but twice, three times, five times, 10 times, 15 times, 20 times. I don't care. Failure is necessary. Your brain is trying to learn something new. And learning does not happen overnight. You can't intellectually understand something and then master it. You have to get on that bike, right?

You can understand that the bike has two wheels and two pedals and a handlebar and a seat. It can make perfect sense to your brain, but until you get on a bike for the first time and try to drive down your driveway, as I remember doing as a kid, and falling over, you have to have that failure. It's necessary for your brain to learn how to do something new.

But the quickest way to guarantee this, something remains impossible is to give up. It is to throw up your hands and point to the past and point to all your failures and pack it in and say, "It just can't happen." I want you to understand this. When it comes to changing the habit of drinking, when it comes to taking a sustainable break, when it comes to learning how to change your desire, if you focus solely on the action, if you focus only on the decision to drink or not to drink, just say no, using willpower, it will never reveal the think-feel-act cycle to you. It will never reveal the thoughts and emotions driving the habit.

Believing you can't do it will ensure that you don't take action. It is the quickest way to prove that something is impossible, to believe that you can't do it. For years I had all this evidence, so much of it that my drinking would always be a problem for me. I had so many attempts where I had tried to change, and so many failures, and I could have used all of those attempts to just quit and say, "Well, I guess this is something that I'm just going to have to live with."

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But instead, I kept believing that I could figure this out, and you can too, especially if you shift your focus from just say no to understanding why you are drinking in the first place. Why do you have all this desire? Why do you feel deprived? Why do you feel like you're missing out? Why do you feel like you need it in certain situations?

Your success is determined by one thing: do you believe that change is possible for you? And if you do, then you have what you need to keep taking action. Remember, your past results, all those past attempts are not an indicator of your future success. I really want you guys to remember that. Do not look towards your past to see what is possible in the future. You have to always be looking towards your future.

Alright guys, if you have questions, if you want support or help, if you want to hear me cover a specific topic on the podcast, you know how to reach me. It's podcast@rachelhart.com. 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 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.

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