

Ep #62: Self-Pity



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #62: Self-Pity

You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 62.

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. So listen, I was walking to lunch today and I was thinking about this podcast. It's all about self-pity; very exciting. And I was thinking like, I can't believe this is my job. I can't believe this is what I do. I love talking about this stuff, I love sharing this work with you guys. And I love that we're about to talk about self-pity, so hang on. I hope I'm going to blow your mind.

Alright, so how many of you out there are feeling a little self-pity about this habit of drinking more than you want? When you are struggling to change a habit that isn't serving you, it is so easy to get lost in self-pity. I know I did. For a long time, I was stuck in self-pity.

And so I want to talk to you about that today, I want to talk about why it's a problem, but before we do that, before we dive into self-pity, I want you to understand pity as an emotion in and of itself. And then we're going to explain how it applies to you and how it applies to the habit of drinking too much, and how it's keeping you stuck.

So pity, pity is an emotion that we feel and it literally is a strong feeling of sorrow for the misfortune of others. Now, you may hear that and be like, "Okay, what's so wrong about that? What's so wrong about a strong feeling of sorrow for the misfortune of others? Isn't that like, an okay thing?"

But I want you to contemplate for a second the people whom you feel pity for. Who do you pity? And I think a lot of people, when they start to consider this, they'll say, "Oh, well maybe someone who's homeless and

Ep #62: Self-Pity

living on the streets. Or someone with a disability, or families that have been displaced by war or natural disasters."

We often reserve pity for these sorts of situations for a very, very good reason. Here's why: because your brain - our brains believe that there is a distance between you and the object of your pity. When you start feeling pity for someone, that person stops being fully human, there's distance between the two of you. They become a label or a problem or a sad story.

And you know what I think about labeling people, right? I've talked about this before in the podcast. When we label people, including ourselves, what we do is we're reducing a human being, this complex multifaceted person, we're reducing them into this sum total of a single behavior or attribute.

"Oh, they're homeless. Oh, that person's in a wheelchair." Right? All of a sudden, they become a label. So in that moment when you are feeling pity, what is actually happening is that you are comparing yourself and your life to the object of your pity. And in that moment, you actually feel a little better off.

Isn't that crazy? But it's true. You kind of feel like, "Well, I have a home. I have full use of my limbs. I have food." Whatever it is. Whether you realize it or not, the emotion of pity is based on the premise that you are in a superior position to someone else. And in a weird way, that makes us feel good. That kind of, "Thank god it's not me."

But here's the thing: when you realize this, you quickly understand why nobody likes being pitied, right? Nobody's like, "Oh hey, pity me more. This feels great." It's because even if we don't fully understand it, we're understanding about this distance between the person who is pitying you, and you. One person is in the superior position and the other person is in the inferior position. And no one likes feeling inferior, that's why we don't like to be pitied.

You know, I remember when I was publishing my book, *Why Can't I Drink Like Everyone Else*, and I was so excited and I sent out a mass email to my

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #62: Self-Pity

network, letting everybody know, hey, I wrote this book, it's available on Amazon, check it out. I was really proud of myself.

And because it was a crazy big mass email, some of the people on that list, they had no idea that drinking had ever been something that I had struggled with, much less that I would write a book about it. And I remember after sending that email out, that I got a couple responses from people that said something along the lines of, "I feel so terrible that you had to go through this." That was their message.

And I remember reading those emails and my brain was like, it was so incredulous, right? It was like, "Wait, what? Why do you feel terrible for me again?" Because listen, I think figuring out and understanding why I sometimes drink too much, why I over-desired alcohol, and why I felt like I needed a glass in my hand to feel less insecure and less awkward, I felt like figuring all of that out was my ticket to the secret of the universe. I'm not joking because that explained to me how my brain worked. That helped me harness the power of my brain.

I was finally able to understand not only what created my emotions, my thoughts, and not only that I could handle any emotion you could throw at me, right? That's what learning how to change this habit taught me. I didn't have to be afraid or scared or worried about any negative emotion because I knew after unwinding this habit that I didn't need to reach for something in my external environment to numb how I was feeling. And that was incredible, incredible power to realize that I had.

And I mean, here's the thing, isn't that what everybody wants really, to feel like you're in charge of your life and you can create the life and results that you want, that you don't have to be constantly kind of at the mercy of what's happening to you and at the mercy of your emotions?

So I remember getting these emails being like, I don't get it. Why are you feeling sorry for me? This is amazing. What I did was amazing. Right? But I mean, that's what happened. Somebody looked at my situation and they

Ep #62: Self-Pity

saw that kind of distance. They saw distance between where they were and where they perceived I was. And they thought, "Thank god that wasn't me."

So you know, in the distance created by pity, what the person who is doing the pitying is unwilling to see, partly just because the brain made this snap decision that they are in a better place, they are better off is two things. One, that the object of their pity may have an entirely different, alternative understanding of their own circumstances. You may think, "Poor Rachel," and I'm like, "Dude, secret to the universe. Don't feel bad. Super happy I figured it out."

And the other is that the object of their pity is more than just a label or a sad story. That's what you can't see when you're pitying someone. You can't see the person beyond the label. And so what you're missing is that there is a human being there who no matter what circumstances they happen to be in, they still have immense power, and they have it because of the think-feel-act cycle.

And that's what you can't see when you are pitying another person. So that's what pity is and why we don't like to be pitied by others, so then the question is why on earth do we fall into the trap of pitying ourselves? Why is self-pity something that so many of us are stuck in? It doesn't make any sense, right?

If I don't like being pitied by another person, shouldn't I also dislike pitying myself? But I'll tell you, self-pity is a trap that I fell into and a trap that I see so many of my clients fall into over and over again. So first, let's just define it. Self-pity is the self-indulgent dwelling on one's own sorrows or misfortunes. And here's the kicker: because you believe you have suffered more than is fair or reasonable.

Now, that last part is really important. It's not only that you are indulging, you're dwelling, you're wallowing in what you perceive to be your own misfortunes, but you're doing so because you believe you have suffered more than is fair or reasonable.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #62: Self-Pity

And let me tell you, oh lord, was I so stuck in this belief and this emotion. "Why me? Why do I have to struggle with drinking? Why is it so easy for everyone else? Why do I get too drunk? Why do I make stupid decisions? It's so unfair."

Like, this was my brain for my entire decade of my 20s. I was so stuck in how unfair it was. I just lived in that place of unfairness. And what happens when you start pitying yourself is you feel sorry for yourself instead of changing what is changeable. Instead of changing what is changeable, you feel sorry for yourself.

And if you want to understand why you do this, all you have to do is look at how self-pity works in the think-feel-act cycle. So we have all these thoughts, "Why me? Why is it so easy for everyone else? Why do I make these stupid decisions?"

All of these thoughts that create the feeling of self-pity and remember what self-pity is, it's an indulgent dwelling on one's own misfortunes. And when you dwell on your situation and you think about how unfair it is, it's so wrong that you're suffering more, guess what, you better believe that you are not taking action to jumpstart change. You're just wallowing; you're just feeling sorry for yourself.

Self-pity can never lead to change. it leads to dwelling and indulging and wallowing and staying stuck. So then why do we do it? It doesn't feel good. Nobody's ever like, "Hey, I just had this great day where I was doing a lot of self-pity. It felt awesome." And we know we don't like being pitied by others. You've had that experience of someone feeling sorry for you and it's like, "Don't feel sorry for me," right?

So why do we do this? And the answer is so simple that it's almost easy to miss. Remember, your brain likes to seek pleasure, avoid pain, and do both as efficiently as possible in a manner that will save energy. This is what your lower brain cares about, and this is how humans learned to survive.

Ep #62: Self-Pity

It was an incredibly, incredible helpful set of traits to have, to be in an environment that was really dangerous, where survival was not a given. It was really useful to have a brain that was trying to avoid pain, seek pleasure, and be super efficient about it.

But now here we are, living in our modern world, most of us are really not worrying about our day-to-day survival. What are we worrying about? How many likes did I get on Facebook? What did my boss say to me today? What am I going to eat for dinner? Right?

And this mode of thinking to always be in the mode of seeking pleasure, avoiding pain, and doing so efficiently, it does not serve us anymore, especially not when we're in an environment where we're just surrounded by easy, easy pleasure. Everywhere we look, not just from an abundance of alcohol, but in abundance of highly processed sugary foods, and abundance of entertainment that we don't even have to get off our couch.

We don't even have to go to the video store anymore to go get. Just press play and then we watch an episode and the next one starts. We didn't have to go to the next episode, and we have it on our phones and our computers, right? There's pleasure around us everywhere.

And this way of surviving that our lower brain learned to survive is not useful or helpful for us in this environment. And so the answer, why do we fall into the trap of self-pitying ourselves is so simple. Because change, stopping wallowing, stopping indulging in feeling bad for yourself, actually getting off your butt and doing something different requires discomfort.

You will have to be uncomfortable if you're going to learn how to change this habit. No if, ands, or buts. But guess what your brain likes to avoid? Discomfort.

So here's the thing. Self-pity as an emotion, it may feel terrible, but it's easy. It requires nothing from you. The more you complain, the more you whine, the more you focus on how bad things are for you and how unfair

Ep #62: Self-Pity

life is and how everybody has it easier, the more excuses you have to stay right where you are and avoid the discomfort of changing.

Isn't that crazy? Self-pity feels terrible, but it's easy. The problem is it's not useful. All it does is keep fueling and keep indulging the why me, why me, why me, it's so unfair. And so if you want to get out of self-pity, you have to give up on that idea that you have suffered more than is either fair or reasonable.

Let me tell you, it was a hard thing for me to give up. I was like, "No. I've suffered so much. Look how hard it is for me." It was a really, really challenging thing for me to give up. It was like my security blanket or something.

But I really want you to think about this. When you watch your brain stuck in the loop of self-pity, why me, it's so unfair, how come I have to deal with this, how come this is my problem; I really want you to think about who exactly - who exactly says that what you are dealing with and your circumstances are unfair and unreasonable. Says who?

Says who that you've had too much pain? Really. Think about this. Because if it was up to your lower brain, you'd have zero discomfort, right? That lower brain is like no, no pain, no pain ever, I'm in a totally dangerous world, I got to find all the pleasure and do it in a very efficient manner. That's all your lower brain thinks about. It hasn't evolved to where we are in life now.

And so don't let it be up to your lower brain because it'll just keep you stuck in like, more pleasure, more pleasure, more pleasure, more pleasure, and never choosing any discomfort. It only cares about pleasure.

But here's the thing: even so, I don't think that this is how the world is supposed to work. I don't think that we were put here to just bask in positive emotions, to never feel anything negative. And I think this for a really important reason. Because if we were meant to only feel good, if that was the point of all of this, just be here, live on Earth, only feel good, why

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #62: Self-Pity

would anyone ever change and evolve and grow and invent? Why would we do that? Why would you ever find out what you can accomplish or who you can become? Why would you ever chase your dreams or your potential?

If you were just feeling good all the time, you'd be like, "Yeah, I feel good. I don't need to do anything different. I'm good, I'm cool, I got it." If we only felt positive emotions, we would stay exactly where we are. We would never evolve, we would never grow. This is the thing that so many of us miss. When we're so fixated on trying to avoid discomfort is that discomfort is the key, it is the path to growth and evolution and getting your dreams, figuring out your potential, discovering who you can become and what you can do.

Those things cannot happen without discomfort. Self-pity on the other hand leads you to thinking you are a victim. It's so unfair. You're a victim of your brain, or you're a victim of your childhood, or you're a victim of your family, or you're a victim of your lot in life. But here's the problem: if you're the victim, then you're fighting against a victor, right?

And most of us believe that the victor is our circumstances, but the think-feel-act cycle shows you that all the circumstances in the world, no matter what they are, they're neutral. You get to experience them depending on what you are thinking, what you are making them mean, how you are understanding them in relation to yourself. That's what creates your emotions, and you can choose to experience them any way you want.

Listen, the habit of drinking too much can either be the most unfair thing that has even been beset upon you, or it can be the struggle that showed you the secret to the universe. How to harness the power of your brain and use it to create the life that you want. You choose.

The circumstance of over-drinking, that's neutral. It doesn't make us feel anything until we start having thoughts about it. And so many of my thoughts for so long were just creating self-pity.

Ep #62: Self-Pity

Here's what I want you to remember. The habit that you have, the habit that you're trying to change, drinking too much, drinking to numb how you feel is something that you created. Now, you may not have known that you were creating it at the time, but you did create it.

And if you created it, then guess what, this is the best news: you have the power to change it. It wasn't thrust upon you, you weren't born with it. You created it and you can change it. But if the habit of over-drinking is just your lot in life, just who you are, then you are going to stay stuck in self-pity and indulge in feeling sorry for yourself and you will never take action. You will never get up off your butt. You will never move towards discomfort, you will always move away from it.

Because here's the thing: your brain, that lower brain of yours is going to be super happy saving a bunch of energy, avoiding discomfort, avoiding change, just going for more pleasure. Meanwhile, you're racking up more and more negative consequences in your life.

When you take full responsibility for how you think, how you feel, and how you act, you'll no longer have any use for self-pity. It will be a pointless emotion because you will know just how powerful you really are to change your life, to change your habits. And then self-pity becomes pointless, which is a good thing because it doesn't feel good in the first place, right? You're not enjoying it. Why not make it pointless?

So listen today guys, if you are stuck, if you feel like self-pity is something that you're indulging in, I really want you to answer the following questions. Write them out, you know never do this in your head. There's so much awareness to be gained when you get it on paper.

First, do you pity yourself when it comes to your drinking and why? What thoughts are fueling that feeling? If you pity yourself when it comes to your drinking, why do you pity yourself and what thoughts are fueling that feeling of self-pity?

Ep #62: Self-Pity

When you feel self-pity, what actions do you take or not take? What do you do? What is the A-line of the think-feel-act cycle? How is the feeling of self-pity helping you? Now listen, don't say it isn't. It is. It may not be the help that you want but it is helping you.

When does complaining or indulging in how things are unfair ever benefit you? This is a good one. Because well beyond drinking, people love to complain about how things are unfair and just stay stuck there.

And then finally, do you believe that you can rely on yourself to create change? And if not, why? Such a powerful set of questions to go through. I have loved talking to you guys about self-pity. I really do because I think when I understood this concept it just blew my mind. And I watched myself, I watched all the areas of my life, not just drinking, where I felt so bad for myself. Like, oh poor Rachel, right? Poor her, she's got it so tough.

And so I hope that this has given you a different perspective because if you can start to shift this, I promise it is such, such powerful work. Alright, as always if you have questions, if you want to hear me talk about specific topics on the podcast, you can always shoot me an email at podcast@rachelhart.com. Otherwise, I will see you 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-

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #62: Self-Pity

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.