

## Ep #65: Honesty



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 65.

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 talking with a client the other day and I was asking her about whether or not she had been writing down some of the exercises we had been working on. And she said really sheepishly, "I know. I know you always remind me to do this and I always hear you saying this on the podcast to make sure that you write things down, that it's really important to get things out of your head and on to paper, but I never do. I feel like writing it down makes it somehow real. If I list all the pros and cons of my drinking, if I write down my compelling reason, if I write down any exercises, it will mean that I have to really acknowledge that I don't like my drinking and I don't like the direction I'm headed in. And that's scary, it feels too real."

This is what she said. And you know what, I get it. I have heard this before, I have been in her shoes before. But I'll tell you what I told her. You can avoid putting pen to paper all you want, but the habit is already 100% real. Your drinking, the negative consequences that you're getting, how you feel about yourself the next day, all 100% real. All the thoughts you have about drinking, they are already playing out in your head, it's just unconscious.

Your think-feel-act cycles are already hard at work. They are already driving that habit cycle for you whether or not you like it. And putting it on paper, all it does, it just makes it easier for you to see what your brain wants to be unconscious. But do not fall into the trap of thinking if it's not on paper, then it's not real.

So you know, after talking to her, I decided that I wanted to do a podcast about honesty because I watch it come up for my clients over and over

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again. And this inability to be honest with yourself, or the inability to be honest with the people in your life, your loved ones. And I want all of you to really understand why we do this, why our brain thinks this is a good idea, the problems that it causes, and how to start overcoming it.

So here's the thing: when we look at the word honest, all it means is to be free of deceit and untruthfulness. So think about it. When you're being dishonest with yourself, you can't see the truth. And if you can't see the truth, then you are blind to the facts of your habit because you're so trying to fool yourself. You can't ever possibly understand how that habit cycle is working because you're trying to stay blind to it.

So the question is why do we do this? Why are we deceitful and untruthful with ourselves? Why do we bury our heads in the sand? And I think the reason why is because we think that the alternative, seeing the truth, being honest, that's what's painful. We believe that the facts of our situation are just too much to look at, right? If I really look at my drinking, if I really look at how much I'm consuming, if I really look at all the consequences that I'm getting, it will be too painful.

And so what our brain decides is okay, so I have no other choice but to look away. I have no other choice but to avoid seeing the facts. But of course, you guys know, your facts of your life don't create your feelings. That's not how the think-feel-act cycle works. Circumstances, facts, they're all neutral until you have a thought about them. That's what creates the pain, the negative emotion, the discomfort.

However much you are drinking right now, it is just data. You had six beers last night? Fine. That's just data. You had 14 glasses of wine last week? More data. If you refuse to be honest with yourself, you can't see the truth of how the habit is working. But that's what we do. We think the data, we think the facts cause our feelings, the facts cause our pain, so we just want to bury our head in the sand and not look, thinking that that will somehow serve us, that will somehow protect us.

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You know, I remember in college when I started drinking, I immediately really took to it. I immediately thought like, "This is great. This is how I feel confident and sexy and secure and fun rather than the regular version of Rachel that was walking around campus, who was incredibly uptight and insecure and worried about everybody's opinion."

So I really took to it as like, this is the path, this is how I feel good about myself, this is how I access fun Rachel. But I did also feel a little anxious sometimes about my drinking, even in college. I did wonder, "Why do I seem to get so drunk? Why is it that I seem to make all these stupid decisions when I'm drinking? Am I looking forward to it too much?"

Here's the thing: I definitely never shared this with anyone. And the other piece was I couldn't really hide from my behavior because it was such a big part of how I spent my time. It was such an integral part of my social life in college. I wouldn't be like, "What party? I didn't go to a party. You didn't see me at a party." Like, I was obviously at the party.

So instead, what my brain did was I decided to embrace it. I was like, "Yeah, I was super wasted last night. What's your point? It was fun. You guys over there, all you guys that are not drinking so much and judging me, you're all fuddy-duddies. Not me. I'm fun."

The other thing that I would do, which is so crazy looking back on it, but I'd be like, "Yeah, yeah I totally had a ton to drink because I can keep up with the guys." This is really something that I watched my brain create a lot of pride around, this thought that I could keep up with guys when it came to drinking, which is crazy for this reason. For those of you who don't know this piece of my background, I went to a women's college.

In fact, I only looked at women's colleges when I was applying to school. I was such a, like, dyed in the wool feminist that I knew 110%, I only wanted to go to a women's college, but here I was, I took all this pride in the fact that I could drink like a guy could. And I wore my drinking and my partying and getting drunk, I wore it like a badge of honor. And not just through college and through much of my 20s.

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But the truth was I was being dishonest with myself. There was a part of me that was worried and was embarrassed and did sometimes feel a little uncomfortable and ashamed. But my dishonesty with myself showed up like this - if I can just shout from the rooftops about how much fun this is and how amazing my life is and how incredible it is to go out and get drunk and party, maybe I can drown out that other voice. Maybe that means I don't have to listen to that little tiny nagging voice inside of me. All those worries, all my shame that was saying like, "Maybe something's wrong. I don't think this is where you want to keep heading. I don't know if this is the right direction."

So that was my instinct. I'm just going to so embrace it, I'm just going to shout it from the rooftops, I'm going to wear it like a badge of honor, and if I'm loud enough, I can drown out that little voice. But guess what? You know how that works, right? We can shout and shout and shout and shout, the little voice stays there.

So here's the thing. I think that that kind of way of being dishonest with yourself when you're shouting from the rooftops about how much you love drinking, it's much more common really before people start taking steps towards actual change. Before you start taking change - and you know, I see this all the time. I saw it in myself. It's really possible to have this attitude of like, let me tell you how great drinking is and how great alcohol is, and how boring all these other fuddy-duddies are, and people who don't drink, or people who just sip, like, so boring.

That attitude is really common. And it is a form of dishonesty with yourself, but once you start down the path of change, what I see is that kind of dishonesty shows up in different ways because you're no longer at the point where you're like, "Yes, this is my badge of honor, this is amazing, it makes me so amazing and so much fun, and obviously if you're not doing it, it makes you uncool."

The dishonesty shows up in much more subtle ways. And so the first one is what I shared with you, it's not wanting to write anything down. And listen, I have heard, and also myself, used all kinds of excuses. "I don't like my

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handwriting, I'm not good at keeping journals, what if somebody sees it?" I had someone say to me recently, "Like, what if I die and this is what people find out about me? All of this shame here?" Right? There's all these excuses about not wanting to write something down, not wanting to put pen to paper.

Number two is hiding secret stashes. That like, little bit that only you know about that's hidden away, tucked away somewhere, where it's just your secret. And then the third way that I see how dishonesty shows up is when you keep loved ones in the dark. So you sneak around, you have a drink, those times when you tell yourself, "Nobody will know, it'll just be my little secret."

And so these are the three most common ways that I see it for my clients. But the question is why do we do this? Why are we sneaking around? And the answer is always because we think the facts of our situation, we think the data of how much we're drinking makes us feel a certain way.

But that's never the case. How much you drink - alcohol itself is neutral. How much you drink is neutral. It doesn't make you feel anything until you start thinking something about it. It doesn't mean anything about who you are as a person until you have thoughts about it.

This happens with even exercise that I have people do of keeping an accurate tab on how much exactly you are drinking. Everybody wants to keep it real vague. That's where the brain wants to go. Like, let's keep things really vague here. And so people will report back, "Oh, I don't know, I had two or three, or four or five, or I lose count, I don't remember."

It's so much easier to keep things vague, rather than to have to actually look at a concrete number. And here's the thing: we don't want to look at it over the course of a night many times, and we certainly don't want to add it up over the course of a week. It's so much easier to tell yourself, "Oh, I had a couple glasses of wine," than it is to say, "I had 14 glasses of wine this past week and 56 over the course of the month."

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14 glasses of wine, 15 glasses of wine, two glasses of wine, it doesn't make you feel anything about yourself until you have a thought about it. It's all just data. Nothing more. But we do all this work, we expend all this energy trying to hide from these thoughts. "Something is wrong with me, maybe I have a problem. What if people knew?"

And we think that the way to do it is to hide from the data. "I just won't look. I just won't tally it up, I just won't write it down." But listen, all your thoughts are still there. All your thoughts worried about your drinking meaning something is wrong with you, that maybe you have a problem and what that problem could mean, if you didn't already have those thoughts inside of you, you wouldn't care about looking at the data.

Those thoughts are already there, they're not going to appear for the very first time when you finally start tracking things. And this extends well beyond just counting. I see this all the time with people that take part in the Five-Day Reset training that I offer. So it's a five-day training, you're taking a break from drinking, and while you're doing it, you're really trying to use that break in a very different way. Instead of just using willpower and saying no, no, no, no, no over and over again, which is what most people have the most kind of practice doing, it's really understanding how the habit is working and why you feel pulled, and what's holding you back.

And I hear from people that are like, "It blew my mind. I didn't think that I would learn this much in five days, but I really have. I really see my drinking in a totally different light," but I always ask people, I always ask, "Did you do the last exercise? Did you do that last one where you collect all the data from the Five-Day Reset, where you write it all down and look at it on paper and answer all the questions and ask yourself where do I want to go from here now that I've got all this data?"

And when I ask people, that is the number one exercise that they skip over. They find the training so illuminating, it makes so much sense, and frankly, it's such a relief to understand how habits work in the brain and how that's connected to your drinking, but then when it comes to collecting all the data over the course of those five days and contemplating next steps, it's like,

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"Nope. No thank you, I don't want to look at that information. I'm just going to keep plugging away."

But writing it down doesn't make it any more real. It just makes it visible because here's the thing, you're already drinking, you're already getting all the results that you're getting, you already have all the thoughts that you have about your drinking and what it means about you. All of that is perfectly real. Writing it down just forces you to take the blinders off and look at your choices and decide, "Hey, do I like them? Do I want to keep them or do I want to change?"

All the excuses in the world, all the excuses about, "My handwriting's really bad, I just don't like writing things down, it's illegible, I don't want anybody to see it," whatever excuses you have about writing it down, they are just your brain's way to try to protect yourself from a negative feeling because your brain thinks that facts creates feelings. But it doesn't work that way.

You don't have to make how much you drink or the results that you get mean anything bad about who you are as a person. In fact, you know, if you do, it's going to be that much more difficult to change the habit. You can just look at it for what it is, the results that you're getting and go from there.

So the second way that I see a lot of people not being honest about their drinking is keeping secret stashes of booze. And here's the thing, this is really fascinating because I have a lot of people that are like, "I'm not drinking, I'm feeling great. I feel really amazing, I didn't think that I would feel this good, but I do feel like I should tell you about this little stash I have that nobody but me knows about in the house."

And why we do that, especially when we are taking a break, why we hold on to that secret stash, that is so fascinating. And you know, I never did it with alcohol, but I definitely did it with smoking. I, of course, you will not be surprised to hear, started smoking when I was in college, shortly after I started drinking, and went back and forth, flip-flopped between smoking



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and not smoking all throughout college, in my 20s, and into my 30s. And I would do it the same way I would try to change my drinking.

I would just use willpower and say no, no, no, no, no, no, no. And it wasn't until I ever applied the think-feel-act cycle to my smoking habit that I understood, "Oh, this is what's driving the habit." I can use willpower all I want, but if I don't change the thoughts connected to it, I'm always going to have desire for a cigarette.

But here's what I would do: I would quit, I would say, "No more, Rachel, you're not doing this again. No more smoking." And I would hide these packs away, just one pack, but I would hide it away. I remember the drawer. I remember the drawer that I would always use and I would tuck it behind whatever else was in there, and it was my just in case pack.

And I watch people do the exact same thing with drinking. They're saying, "Okay, no more, I'm taking a break. But I'm just going to take this bottle of wine, or I'm just going to take this little bottle of vodka and tuck it away where nobody else knows where it is. I'm not touching it, but I just want to know that I have it. I just want to know that it's there in case I need it, in case of emergency."

You know, I was talking to a client about this recently, and I was asking her like, "Okay, so like, what is that just in case scenario? Like, what's going on here?" And initially she was just like, "Listen, I just don't want to commit to throwing it away." So I asked her why. Why don't you want to commit? And she said, "Well, you know because there might be a point down the road where I could need it. I could need a drink."

So I probed further, like, "What exactly is that point? What could happen? What is your just in case scenario?" And it took her a second. She had to pause because really her brain hadn't ever taken her beyond this point. The point of, "Well, I might need it, something might happen."

She said, "Well, something terrible could happen." So I asked her, "Like what?" And what she came up with was this: "Well, I could have a huge

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fight, a huge blowout with my husband." Okay, so that was her just in case scenario. That's when her brain was pushed, that's what she was coming up with, that's why she wanted to have this little secret stash hidden away.

And I asked her, "Okay, and how would you feel if that happened?" And she said, "Well, after we have fights like that, I always feel really lonely and misunderstood and angry." And I told her, "Look, the reason that you are keeping this secret stash of wine around is because your brain still believes that you are unable to cope with these emotions. Your brain has not yet recognized that feeling lonely, feeling misunderstood, feeling angry, those are all survivable emotions that you can handle on your own. You've had so much practice coping with them by pouring a drink, numbing them by getting a buzz, that your brain is clinging to this idea that you need a little secret stash just in case. The just in case is really just in case these certain emotions appear."

And when you understand it that way, it really shifts your understanding of why you're holding on to that stash. Most of us don't want to look past the point of like, "Well, maybe something could happen where I would need it," right? We don't want to go past that point. But when we do, what we always find is a negative emotion.

The reason you are holding on to the wine, or the reason that I was holding on to the pack of cigarettes was because my brain wasn't yet convinced that I could handle certain emotions on my own. But guess what? You get to teach your brain that you can. And the only way to do that is to allow yourself to willingly walk towards these emotions and not cover them up, not numb them with a drink. That's how you teach your brain that they are tolerable, that you don't need to have a security blanket.

So the third way that people, I find, end up being dishonest with themselves is when they start sneaking around. So you might be in this situation yourself. Kind of sneaking a drink in between when your spouse gets home, maybe while you're cooking dinner, or maybe your spouse is out of town. It's like, "Oh, I can get a bottle tonight." Sneaking alcohol when you're by yourself.

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And whenever I talk to people about it, where they start with, when they say why they're doing it, the reason why is because they think, "Listen, I just don't want the other person to judge me. I'm trying so hard, I'm doing this work, I'm trying to change the habit, like, I just can't handle if they're judging me."

But of course, you know you are already judging yourself if you are doing this. If you are sneaking anything, you are already in the process of judging yourself, otherwise it wouldn't be hidden. Isn't that crazy? If you felt 100% confident in what you were doing, like 100%, you were totally on board with it, even if someone else was like, "I don't think that's a good idea, I don't think you should do that," you wouldn't hide your actions because you'd be like, "Listen, this is what's right for me. I like it. I'm good with it. I know you don't get it. I know you don't like it, but I do."

When we feel confident about the actions that we're taking, we're not hiding them. We're not sneaking around. But what we do, what our brain does when we start sneaking around, we say, "Well, it's because the judgment from other people, it's so crushing, it's so inescapable, I just can't handle it, I don't want to feel it."

And we think, "Okay, if I drink in secret, or if I do anything in secret, then I can avoid feeling the guilt and the shame." But here's the thing: the guilt and the shame are the very reason that you're already doing it in secret. It's the reason that you're hiding. You're already experiencing it. That is what is driving you to hide your actions. It's already there.

And you're fooling yourself by saying, "Oh, well when I do it in secret, then I avoid the guilt and the shame." No, the reason you are doing it in secret is because you already have the guilt and the shame.

Here's the thing: you know, I, again, this wasn't something that I did with drinking, but I did do it with food. So the reason I didn't do it with drinking in part was because I lived on my own for a very long time, and so you know, there wasn't anybody that was going to come home and monitor me. But I do remember doing this around food.

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I would go to my boyfriend's apartment sometimes and spend the night, and I would usually get there earlier than him. And so often I would get there and I would think, "I think I can make a snack. I think I can eat something before he gets home. I don't want him to know about it though because he's going to say we're really close to dinner."

I mean, it was like I was in full-blown 10-year-old mode. Like, I just want to have this snack by myself and not have anybody judge me about it. So I would make myself a plate of nachos. You know when you do this really quickly, it's like, you just speed through making through it and speed through eating it. And then speed through cleaning it up because I was constantly like, "Is he going to get here? Is he going to get here? I think I can probably just get this food in before he gets here."

But of course the reason that I was hiding it in the first place was because I had all this judgment around it. I had all this guilt and shame around the way that I ate. If I felt confident about it I'd be like, "Cool, I'm going to eat some nachos." He would come home, I'd be like, "Yeah, I had some nachos. Now I'm going to have dinner, what's your problem?"

But I didn't, and so I was hiding, I thought I was hiding from the guilt and the shame but of course I wasn't. I was steeped in it, that's why I was sneaking around. But my brain kept saying, "Just hide it from him, just do it before he comes home. Just have this snack before he gets here."

And that's what so many of you guys are doing. When you're sneaking sips or you're sneaking glasses, or you're sneaking bottles, whatever it is, you think that you can avoid the judgment but the reason why you are sneaking around is because you're already mired in it.

And listen, I get it. Being honest with people in your life is not easy. Especially when you are making actions that you may not understand and also you don't like the results that you're getting. It becomes even more difficult when we make those actions mean something terrible about who we are as people.

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So many of the women that I talk to about changing their drinking, they are ready to do the work, they are ready to change the habit, they are ready to stop worrying, and so many of them get to a point where they say, "You know what, my husband doesn't even know. He has no idea that I'm worried about my drinking. He has no idea that I'm talking to you."

Or they'll say, "You know, I told him once but then we never talked about it again. And he thinks I'm doing great. But I've just stopped telling him the truth." But the thing is honesty in any relationship, it doesn't happen once. It's not one and done. I was honest that one time, now I never have to be honest again. Honesty is an ongoing exchange with another person, and it's an ongoing exchange with yourself.

When you are hiding from yourself, it is because you are afraid of how you think the facts will make you feel. The facts won't make you feel anything. And the truth is that you cannot change what you won't look at and you won't see.

So I want you to ask yourself this week, what are you hiding from in life? Why are you hiding from this thing? What are you afraid would happen if this thing you are hiding from was out in the open, if everybody knew?

Now, I hope that most of you will, as you dig in, discover that what you're really afraid of is a negative emotion. That's ultimately what we're always hiding from. So then you can ask yourself, okay, so why do you believe you can't handle these emotions on your own? What would happen if you came face-to-face with them?

And don't just let your brain stop at the thought, "Well, it would feel terrible." Dig in here. What is really holding yourself back? You should just do yourself the favor of knowing that. And then finally, just ask yourself, "How would my life be different if I didn't have any secrets?"

Can you imagine that? Not having any secrets? I feel in many ways that my drinking and my concerns about my drinking and my worry about my drinking, it was such a secret for such a long time, and I can't even tell you

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how amazing it feels to be so open about it, and to talk with you guys every week about it, and to write about it, and to just have a book about it.

It really does feel amazing, and so I want you to ask yourself how your life would be different if you didn't have any secrets. To be honest is just to be free of deceit and untruthfulness. And if you can do that, you can see that nothing can really hold you back. If you are willing to tell yourself the truth, that's when you create space for change. You can't change what you can't see. It's as simple as that.

Alright guys, if you have any questions, if you want to hear me talk about a specific topic, you know how to reach out to me. It's [podcast@rachelhart.com](mailto: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](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 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](http://RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.

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