

Ep #72: I'll Start Monday



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast, episode 72.

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. Welcome back. This is going to be a two-part series. So today we're doing part one, it's all about why you delay taking action. That's what we're going to dig into today. And then next week, we're going to go into part two. So why your enthusiasm fades once you start taking action.

These things go hand in hand and I watch them unfold for people all the time. So it's really important that you both understand why you're delaying taking action when it comes to changing a habit and also why your enthusiasm starts to fade once you take action.

Alright, so part one. I want you to ask yourself, have you ever thought, "You know, I'll start this on Monday." I've thought this before. And it's worth considering how you can think a thought like this, "I'll start on Monday," with lots of things. Things beyond taking a break from drinking, but with things like dieting or exercise routines, or sticking to a budget. It's a thought that we use over and over in so many different areas of your life.

And here's the thing. Maybe you're not saying I'll start Monday. Maybe it's I'll start tomorrow, or next week. Next month will be better. Or, actually, I'll wait until the new year, right? Whatever kind of thought that you're using, what you are doing is trying to avoid facing with what is happening today, you're avoiding facing dealing with today because you think that you will be better equipped to deal with whatever is plaguing you at some later date.

This is what happens with a thought like I'll start Monday. So today what I'm going to do is I'm going to dig in to what is really happening when you think this thought and how it unfolds in the think-feel-act cycle. That is a really important piece to understand.

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I also want you to understand why it's so easy to fall into the trap of I'll start Monday, I'll start tomorrow, I'll start next week, I'll start next month. And then finally, how do you let go of this thought. Because unless you learn to let go of thoughts like these that delay change, you will be stuck in a cycle of not taking action.

So the very first thing for you to understand is that before you can start to shift and change and let go of a thought like I'll start Monday, you have to see what it's creating for you in the think-feel-act cycle. And a lot of you want to skip this step. A lot of you are like, "I get it, I'll start Monday when I think it, it leads to an action. So just tell me what to think."

But I really want you to see that understanding always how your thoughts unfold in this cycle is really crucial to having sustainable change. So let's say that I notice that I'm always telling myself, "Yeah, I'm really sick of my drinking. But you know what, I'll just - I'll get on board, I'll take a break, I'll sign up for the Five Day Reset, I'll do that on Monday."

And then I never follow through, right? Monday comes and Monday goes and nothing really changes. So how do you get out of this cycle? And what will happen is that you want to know how to stop thinking this thought before you understand how this cycle itself is unfolding. But it really will backfire if you just try to swap thoughts in and out.

Because if you can't see the think-feel-act cycle in its entirety, you cannot really understand how to go about shifting this thought. So let's take a look at it. Alright, so you've heard me talk about the different parts of the think-feel-act cycle. So the very first part is the neutral circumstance. It is the thing in the world, whatever it is, that you are having a thought about.

So when it comes to these thoughts like I'll start Monday, I'll start tomorrow, I'll start next week, I'll start next month, whatever it is, the neutral circumstance is just today. Whatever day today is. Could be Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, whatever it is, whatever today is, that is your neutral circumstance.

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But now here's the thing. Your brain does not see today as neutral when it comes to starting change. I want you to think about this. Whatever day it is right now, whatever day it is when you are telling yourself, "I'll start tomorrow, I'll start Monday," today is neutral. That is the neutral circumstance in the cycle. It does not cause you to feel anything until you think a thought about it.

So the thought isn't just, "Oh, I'll start Monday. I'll start tomorrow. I'll start next week." When you're thinking about today and you're thinking about change and you're telling yourself that Monday or tomorrow or next week or next month is better, what you are actually thinking to yourself is, "You know what, today isn't really a good day." That's kind of the unspoken part of I'll start Monday or I'll start tomorrow. There's this unspoken part that today is not a good day.

So I want you to think about this. Today is neutral. Today does not make you feel anything. But your brain is basically saying, "Yeah, I don't know, I don't think today's a good day." And when you think this thought about the present moment, now isn't a good time, some point in the future will be better, I want you to think about well, what feeling does that create for you?

For most of you, the feeling is complacent. And complacent is that feeling where you're kind of telling yourself that you're satisfied with how things are right now, and you don't really want to or need to change right now in this moment. Complacency is a feeling that you really need to be on the lookout for because complacency is a lie.

Because here's the thing: if you have a habit that is not serving you, a habit like overdrinking, a habit like overeating, a habit like overspending, whatever it is, if you have a habit that is not serving you, then of course you aren't satisfied with how things are. If you were, if you were satisfied, you wouldn't want to change. Change wouldn't ever be something that you would contemplate.

You still have to worry about your drinking or your eating or your spending, but here's the thing, you don't want to deal with that worry right now. So it is

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easier to lie to yourself and pretend that you are satisfied with how things are. And complacency will always keep you stuck in inaction. When you feel complacent, when you are telling yourself that you're satisfied with how things are right now, you are not going to take action. You're not going to create change.

So when you feel complacent what do you do? You just keep doing what you're doing, right? You keep allowing the habit cycle to unfold without interrupting it. So you're saying yes to your lower brain, you're saying yes to immediate desire, you're saying yes to whatever is easy, whatever is habitual.

Now, here's the crucial piece to understand from the think-feel-act cycle. You're always getting results. Whatever thoughts are creating feelings and whatever feelings are driving actions for you, those actions are always giving you results. So what do you think is the result from a cycle that's basically kicked off with a thought like, "Today's not really a good day. I'll start Monday, I'll start tomorrow."

You feel complacent, you have that false sense of satisfaction about where you are in life and what you're doing that's not true, you do nothing to change and the result that you get is twofold. So first, you keep reinforcing the habit or the actions that deep down you really want to change. So you keep drinking too much, you keep eating whatever you want, you keep spending whatever you want, you keep saying yes to desire and the more you do that, the more you reinforce the habit and the more you reinforce the habit, the stronger you make it.

So that's the first result. But there's also a second one. The second result, and most people miss this, is that when you tell yourself that today's not the right day, you'll start tomorrow, you'll start Monday and you create that complacency for you and you don't take action, you give your brain a little bit of momentary relief. This is really important to understand.

So the results that you're getting from a think-feel-act cycle like this that is driven by thoughts I'll start Monday, I'll start tomorrow, I'll start next week, is

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one, you're making the habit stronger because you're not changing anything, and two, you're giving yourself a little relief from discomfort.

Now, I want to explain that second piece to you because you might miss this. So remember, change requires discomfort. You cannot change anything in your life without also feeling uncomfortable because you are doing something other than what your brain wants to do. Your brain wants to drink the drink or eat the food or spend the money or watch the show. Whatever it is.

And not doing these things will force you to sit with an unanswered urge. It will force your brain to be with a desire that you won't fulfill. And that unfulfilled desire feels a little uncomfortable because you're so used to feeling desire and acting on it and feeling desire and acting on it. Your brain is so used to getting a reward. And if you want to interrupt this habit cycle, it means allowing for discomfort on purpose.

So here's what's happening. Before you even feel the discomfort of change, the discomfort of saying no to a drink, your brain's already kind of anticipating it. "That won't be fun. I don't know, I don't really want to say no tonight. I'm going out, I'm meeting up with people." And so you think this thought that is just a lie that Monday will be better and that Monday you will have more resolve and you give your brain a little bit of relief from the discomfort of change because you don't end up changing.

Do you see that? I'll start Monday, I'll start tomorrow, I'll start next week, these are all thought errors that give your brain momentary relief from discomfort. Now remember, the brain is set up for survival in a way that it is fixated on let me find pleasure, avoid pain, and do both as efficiently as possible.

This was a really ingenious way that our brain evolved to help us survive when the world was a very dangerous place. But now here we are living in a world where frankly, survival is not on the line every second of every day. So what's happening is that our brain has not yet caught up with our new

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reality, and it's still trying to find pleasure, avoid pain, and do both really efficiently.

And a thought like I'll start Monday or I'll start tomorrow or I'll start next week, it helps you avoid the pain, which is the discomfort of change. It helps you go after the pleasure of whatever you desire right now. And it is incredibly efficient because you've thought it over and over again.

So your brain kind of sees this as like, the perfect thought. Because it helps you keep going after reward, not changing the habit, not interrupting the habit cycle, just feeling that desire to drink, feeling that desire to eat, and going for it, and getting that reward.

So now here's the thing. It is not a lost cause. This is where you come in. You have a human brain, which means that you are able, you can learn how to supervise your own brain. You can learn how to observe it, how to understand it, and ultimately, how to change the thoughts that you are thinking that are keeping you stuck. You can evaluate whether your habits are helping you or whether they are creating a lot of negative consequences.

And just because you have a thought over and over does not actually mean that it's a good thought or that it's serving you. Part of your challenge is to see a thought like I'll start Monday, I'll start tomorrow, I'll start next week for what it really is. It is not the truth, it is a thought that your brain has practiced thinking over and over as a way to get relief in the moment.

Because when you think I'll start Monday, you don't have to take action or face any discomfort in the here and the now. It's like a get out of jail free card for your lower brain, and it's a thought that preserves the habit cycle. The habit is able to unfold over and over again and the brain is able to get rewarded over and over again.

Because here's the thing: I want you to really consider this. What is so magical about Monday? Really? What is so magical about Monday or tomorrow or next week or next month? A new week, a new day does not

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mean a new you. But in that moment, when you think that thought, when you really believe, "You know what, now's just not a good time, I'm just going to start tomorrow, I'm just going to start Monday," what you are doing is telling yourself, "I'm going to be different. I'll have more resolve. I'll have more determination. I'll have more will." But what are all these things but feelings?

Your brain is treating Monday or tomorrow or next month as if these things create your feelings, as if they create your resolve, your determination, your will, when of course the only thing that creates your feelings, the only thing that creates your emotions is what you are thinking.

So here's the thing: unless you change your thoughts on Monday, you're not going to feel any differently and you aren't going to take any different action. The impulse to start something, to delay taking action, to wait until Monday is based on faulty thinking.

You know unconsciously that changing the habit will be difficult. But it's easy to lie to yourself and say, "You know what, I'll be different, I'll be a new person at the start of a new week or a new month. And that new me will have more resolve, more determination, more will." But that can't happen unless you change your thinking.

So not only does a thought like I'll start Monday fool you into believing that Monday somehow creates a new you, but also that you'll have a new life. Right? That things will be easier, things will be less stressful, things will be more manageable. I see this all the time with people.

They tell me, "I really want to change my drinking. I'm really - I'm so sick of the consequence, I'm so sick of this habit, I'm so sick of waking up and feeling how I feel the next day. But I've just got too much going on right now. I think next week or next month or next year it will be easier." But of course, that too is a lie. There is no calmer period coming.

Yes, the circumstances in your life may change, but what makes them stressful or difficult is always your thinking. And unless you change those

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thoughts, you will constantly be waiting for some new better future that isn't coming. And this is the reason why Monday comes and goes and nothing changes. You're holding on to this faulty belief that Monday changes you. Monday doesn't change you. Monday is a neutral circumstance, it's just a day of the week, just like every other day. Monday doesn't change how you feel.

And the only way to change how you feel so that you can take different actions and get different results is to feel new emotions by thinking new thoughts. Waiting for that "right day to come" and you're going to wait forever.

So if you take all of this in and you really understand that Monday does not mean a new you, Monday is just a practiced thought that your brain has used to get momentary relief and to avoid the discomfort of change, the question is then, what do you do?

First, you have to see this thought for what it is. It is your brain's attempt to keep the habit and avoid discomfort. I'll start Monday, I'll start tomorrow or next week or next month is a lie that you have believed for way too long. So you really have to call this thought out when you notice it.

You have to say, "Oh right, I'll start Monday. That's just a lie I keep telling myself so I don't have to change the habit." Or remind yourself, "You know what, there's nothing special about Monday except the fact that it's not this immediate moment." You have to remind yourself delaying until Monday is just a stalling tactic that my lower brain uses to try to get relief from the discomfort of change. Or you can tell yourself, "You know what, there's nothing magical about Monday. I don't magically become a new person."

Or you can just really remind yourself you have two choices. Either you can take action now or you can keep delaying. Those are your only two options always.

Now, some of you will say, "Okay, but listen, I do sometimes take action on Monday, or I do sometimes sign up for something and take action on the

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first of the month. It's just that that action never seems to stick. My enthusiasm starts to fade," and that's what I'm going to be talking about in part two next week. Why that happens.

But for now, I want you to consider this. How often in your life have you told yourself, "I'll start Monday, I'll start tomorrow, next week, next month, six months, when things calm down?" How often have you told yourself this lie? How often have you believed it? And when are you going to start really seeing these thoughts for what they are?

They are just a way for your lower brain to keep the habit cycle going, keep getting that immediate reward, and delay or avoid ever having to face discomfort. Because today, right now, this very moment is as good as any other to change your drinking. I promise. If you can really embrace that thought that this moment is as good as any other, you will save yourself so much lost time. So think about that.

Alright everybody, I'm going to see you next week for part two. In the meantime, if you have questions or ideas, you want to hear me talk about something specific on the podcast, you can always email me 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-

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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.