

Ep #79: Your Emotional Health



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast, episode 79.

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. Today we are talking about your emotional health. This topic is so important. If you listen to me, if you listen to this podcast, you know that I say all the time, changing the habit of drinking more than you want is so much bigger. It is so much bigger than just did I say yes or did I say no to a drink. You have to understand your emotions. You have to understand what you are feeling because the action of drinking does not appear out of the clear blue sky. It is always fueled by a feeling.

And not just that immediate feeling of desire, but it can also be fueled by the feeling of stress or anxiety, loneliness, boredom, awkwardness, whatever it is. So you really have to understand your overall emotional health. Alcohol is a quick and easy way to temporarily mask how you're feeling, but the problem is that it does nothing to change that underlying emotion.

So for example, if you have a drink at a party because you're feeling awkward and you're hoping that that drink is going to temporarily cover up the feeling of awkwardness, it may, but guess what, the next time you go to a party, you're going to have that same feeling. If you're drinking because you're stressed out, having something to drink will potentially temporarily mask that stress, but you're probably going to be stressed out about that thing tomorrow.

That's why I talk about alcohol as being a problem staller, not a problem solver. It's not solving the problem. It's not doing anything to change the underlying emotion. It's just masking it and covering it up.

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So today we're going to talk about your emotional health. It is such an important topic. We're going to talk about why it matters, what does good emotional health look like, and this one may surprise you, what gets in the way of your emotional health, how do you invest in it, and what does investing in it look like.

Now, these last two pieces I think for a lot of you is going to be something really new because so many people are not used to thinking of, oh, I should invest in my emotional health. We think about all these different areas of our life that we want to spend time and money and energy towards, but not a lot often goes towards emotional health, and I want to talk about why that is.

So first, why does your emotional health matter? It matters because it's everything. All you have to do is understand the think-feel-act cycle. Your thoughts create your feelings and your feelings drive your actions. Those actions will create your results in life. So then it is really important to pay attention to how you are feeling in your emotional wellbeing. How you feel determines your actions and your reactions, and ultimately, all the results that you get in life.

So how much you drink, how much you eat, how much you spend, how much you save, whatever it is, whether or not you apply for the new job or you hold yourself back, whether or not you go after your dreams, whether you write the book, whether you run the marathon, whether you set goals in the first place, your actions are everything here. They really, really matter, and those actions are always fueled by what you are feeling.

And so your emotional health, it's not a luxury. It's not something to think, oh, well if I have some extra time then I'll pay attention to it. I have some extra money, then I'll invest in it. No, it is the key to everything in life. If you want to make more money, if you want to start a business, if you want to get in shape, if you want to be a better mom or a better partner, and if you want to change your drinking, all of that is possible only when you manage your emotional life. And you let that fuel, you let your emotional life fuel the

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actions needed to get there. Because when you feel better, you take better actions. And when you take better actions, you get better results.

So the question is okay, what does good emotional health look like? I'm going to run you through what I think are the four pillars of good emotional health, and it might not be what you would expect to hear. I think that the four pillars are acceptance, compassion, vulnerability, and responsibility. And I'm going to talk to you about each of those.

But now, you may have been expecting that I was going to say something like joy and peace and calm and gratitude, which by the way, are all great things. I'm not knocking them. But I really want you to understand what makes for a very strong foundation. And when it comes to a strong foundation of good, positive, supportive emotional health, you really need acceptance, compassion, vulnerability, and responsibility. On that foundation, you can build everything else.

Now, acceptance is really key. And there are two parts to it. When I'm talking about acceptance, I'm talking about both accepting whatever is happening in your environment, so whatever circumstances there are, and also accepting how you are feeling. What emotion are you experiencing right now?

Now, a lot of you are not in acceptance. I was not in acceptance for a long time. I was fully in resistance. I was resisting everything that was happening around me, I was resisting a lot of things about people in my life, about myself, about my job, about money, I was in full on resistance and I definitely was resisting my emotions. I was definitely resisting how I was feeling, which is why I always wanted to turn to a drink to feel better.

And so I want you to really ask yourself, how much time do I spend resisting both what is happening around me and also what I am feeling. And listen, this doesn't have to be big things. You can be resisting being in traffic. You can be resisting waiting in the grocery line, right? It can be very small things, but trust me, they add up.

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And I know a lot of you are also resisting how you are feeling. You're resisting the stress, you're resisting the sadness, you're resisting loneliness, you're resisting anger. What do we do? We take those emotions and we tell ourselves, I don't want to feel it. I don't have time for it right now, I'm just going to push it down. Or I'm going to cover it up.

So I was definitely resisting awkwardness all the time. I talk about how that emotion was the emotion that just made me want to run and hide. And so when I learned that a drink could temporarily cover up that feeling, I was all in for the drink or drinks, should I say. So that was something that I had to really do the work on say listen, if I'm going to change my drinking, I have to stop resisting feeling awkward. Otherwise, I can take out the alcohol and I'm just going to hide from the awkwardness in other ways.

Awkwardness is a normal human emotion. We are all supposed to experience it at some point in our life, at different times in our life. That's okay. The problem is when we think it's an emergency and we have to immediately solve it. But if you're willing not to cover it up, then of course you can find the thoughts that are making you feel awkward. But just ask yourself, okay, so how often am I resisting what is happening around me and what I am feeling?

The second pillar is compassion. And I'll tell you this: compassion has to go in two directions. It is developing compassion for yourself and compassion for other people. That piece of it is really important because here's the thing: the more you're able to develop compassion for others, the more you are able to drop your judgment of them, to drop your self-righteousness, the more you are able to drop the harsh standards and the animosity with which you treat yourself.

This is so important. The more compassionate I become with others, I see the more compassionate I am with myself, and it goes both ways. And I want you to think about that. Where are you struggling to find compassion, whether for yourself or for others, and why? So many of us, especially when we look at other people and we assess their actions, we're totally stuck in judgment. We're totally stuck in self-righteousness. And really, it

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feels protective. It feels protective to be like, "Well, at least I'm not like that. At least that's not what I'm doing."

But I will tell you this: compassion is foundational for your emotional wellbeing, and if you are truly going to develop it, you have to develop it in both directions. You have to develop compassion for yourself, and you have to develop compassion for others, and they feed off each other. That's the best news.

Now, the third pillar is vulnerability, the ability to practice being vulnerable, which a lot of people mistakenly think is all about being weak. It's a weakness. But vulnerability is the opposite. It is the strength in fully showing up as your complete human self no matter what is there. And the reason why it is so difficult for a lot of people to practice is because in that moment where you fully show up, you take down the barriers, you take down the shields, you just present as you truly are, that is the moment where you experience risk and uncertainty and exposure. Because of course, what comes up is what will people think? Will people still like me? If I reveal who I really am, can I still belong?

Vulnerability is a core foundational piece for emotional wellbeing. I will tell you, I think back about all the different ways that I have practiced vulnerability in my life, certainly just stepping forward and becoming a coach and sharing with people my story about my struggles around drinking and changing the habit, that was a big place of me being really vulnerable.

But I also think back to my relationship with my husband and I remember early on in the relationship when we hadn't said I love you to each other. And I was really feeling it towards him. I mean, I really was in love with him and I really wanted to tell him but I was terrified at the idea of being the first person to say it and what would that mean. And I remember telling myself, "You know what, just do it. There's no reason not to. You can just show up. It's how you're feeling. You can show up and you can tell this person that you love him and it doesn't even have to be reciprocal. But why hold back? Why deny that love?"

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And that really was a true moment of vulnerability for me to say I love you first, instead of sitting there waiting for the other person to be the one. But vulnerability is also the moment when you say, "Hey, I'm wrong, I made a mistake. I did something I didn't want to do." It's really owning your full humanness. Because we are both the dark and the light and the good and the bad. We - as much as we try, perfection is not attainable.

The fourth pillar is responsibility. Responsibility for yourself but also responsibility for your emotions, how you are feeling, and your results. So instead of handing over responsibility to how you feel to your husband or your job or your boss or your lot in life, you take responsibility for it and that's what the think-feel-act cycle show you how to do. Because suddenly you can see, oh, it's my thoughts, it's what I'm thinking, it's what I'm making this situation mean. It's my interpretation of the events around me. It's my interpretation of what this person said or what this person did that is creating how I feel right now.

Once you have that understanding, you really are able to step into full responsibility. Now, I will tell you, I was the queen at handing over responsibility for how I felt to everyone in my life. And this especially showed up for me in previous relationships. I really believed that it was the guy I was dating, it was his responsibility to make me feel good about myself. I didn't know how to do it, I didn't understand it was created by my thoughts, and so I thought, "Okay, you can be in charge of it. You make me feel good. You make me feel special."

And you know what? Nobody wants that. Nobody wants that burden. It's the responsibility knowing that you have to do that for yourself. Not only are you responsible for your results in life, not only am I responsible for what I put in my body, and whether or not I apply for the job, whether or not I start a business or stay stuck hiding, but I'm also responsible for how I am feeling. And let me tell you, that's actually great news. Because if I'm responsible, then it means I'm also in the position to change how I feel.

Now, acceptance, compassion, vulnerability, and responsibility, these make up what true good emotional health looks like. But for a lot of you, I know

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for me there was a long point in my life where they weren't showing up at all, or barely showing up. And so what gets in the way of emotional health?

Well, I want you to think of that foundation, that foundation of acceptance, compassion, vulnerability, and responsibility, and then I want you to think of, okay, what would chip away at it? What would wear it away? What would create cracks in the foundation?

There are four things. Being stuck in confusion, fear of failure, unmanaged anxiety, and the blame game. I'm going to talk to you about all of those. Stuck in confusion is a really big one that a lot of you overlook. Now, for anyone that's ever worked with me as one of my clients, you know that one of the things I do not let people say in coaching sessions is I don't know. That thought, that statement, not allowed.

Because here's what happens: as soon as you tell yourself I don't know, you will be stuck. You create confusion, and when you're confused, you don't take action. So really, it's so important to avoid I don't know, I'm not sure, I don't know how I'm going to figure this out. I always tell people and tell myself, just take a guess. Take a guess how you might figure it out. What you're supposed to do, just take a guess. Or take action and find out. If you're not sure which way to turn, just turn. See if that gets you there. If it doesn't, turn the other way.

Otherwise, you will stay so paralyzed in life, paralyzed because you're so fixated on I don't know, what's the right thing, what's the right decision, what's the right thing that I'm supposed to do. Just try something. Telling yourself I don't know will paralyze you. It will keep you stuck and there is no way that you can have a strong foundation of emotional health when you are stuck in confusion.

Now, another piece that chips away is the fear of failure. Not taking an action because you are afraid of a negative emotion, because you are afraid of what it will mean about you if you don't succeed, if you don't get the result you were hoping for. So what so many people do and what I did for a long time is you keep hiding from failure, thinking that that keeps you

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safe when really, it keeps you small. If you fail, if you don't get the result that you were hoping for, the only thing that you are running from is negative emotion. And the only reason you will experience that negative emotion is because of what you make failing mean. It doesn't have to mean anything about you. But if you are stuck in this fear of failure, it will get in the way of true emotional health.

Unmanaged anxiety is another really important thing that you have to be on the lookout for, and I'm going to tell you this: anxiety is normal, it is a normal emotion, everyone has it to some degree. The problem is not anxiety. The problem is unmanaged anxiety. The problem is when your brain spins out of control, when you jump on the boat of catastrophizing, when you can't stop getting yourself out of worst-case scenario, when you can only see a negative future. Unmanaged anxiety, again, will keep you stuck right where you are. It will be so difficult to take any action unless you start to manage it.

And then the last thing that gets in the way of emotional health is the blame game. So it's the opposite of taking responsibility. When you're in the blame game, it's everybody else's fault but yours. Why can't I drink like everyone else? That's a question that just plagued me for so long. But it was the perfect example of being in the blame game. Because the way I saw it, it was like the universe was playing a cruel joke on me, I was totally resisting what was happening. I was just stuck in why, why, why, why is it me, why does everyone else not have a problem with this.

I was so fixated on everything external to me, I couldn't turn my attention inwards and take responsibility for my own choices and my own actions and doing the work to understand the habit. I just wanted to blame. I just wanted to feel bad for myself. And think about where this shows up in your life. Where too are you blaming? Blaming other people, blaming what happened at work, blaming the traffic, blaming your lot in life, blaming your parents. Where else do you find yourself blaming instead of taking responsibility?

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So think about how all four of these show up in your life right now. Being stuck in confusion, fear of failure, unmanaged anxiety, and the blame game, and how it compared to the pillars that you need for strong emotional health. Acceptance, compassion, vulnerability, and responsibility.

So the question for you then is to think about once you have assessed where you are, well, are you investing in your emotional health? Are you spending time, energy, and money on your wellbeing?

When I ask people this, I often kind of get blank stares. That look of like, "Huh? Shouldn't I just feel good? Aren't I just supposed to be happy? What do you mean investing in my emotional health?" We're so frustrated that we just don't feel good already and we think that we should, but the idea of investing, of spending time and energy and money for a lot of people feels really foreign.

And it's really interesting because when it comes to our physical health, I think most people recognize that you do have to spend time, energy and money. You do have to set aside time in the day to work out. You do have to spend money. Maybe it's not on a trainer, but maybe it's just on running shoes and workout clothes. You do have to spend energy. Physical activity requires energy. You're out of breath, right?

So when it comes to our physical health, we understand that we have to invest in it, but when it comes to our emotional health, it doesn't always work that way. People don't always have that same kind of framework. And it's fascinating because most people would say when asked, okay, so what are your priorities in life, they say, "Well, my physical health, I want to be able to move my body, my emotional health, I want to feel good, I want to be happy, my family, my career, my belongings, then maybe entertainment. That might be my list of priorities."

But most people spend their money in almost the opposite way. Spend time and energy and money first on belongings, right? Stuff. And also, then being entertained. Then maybe we spend money and time and energy on

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our physical life and then maybe our family and career, and almost always an investment in our emotional health is last.

Most people will spend nothing, zero on learning how to manage their mind, learning how to manage their thoughts and emotions. They just let it run wild. I did for a really long time. Even though we say that our emotional health, our emotional wellbeing is one of the most important things to us, but we don't actually translate that importance into time, energy, and money.

And here's the crazy part. This was also a crazy thing for me to recognize in my life. At a point in my life, I was spending way more money on alcohol than on anything that had to do with my emotional wellbeing or how to manage my mind. And which do you think is going to make you happier? I promise you that learning how to manage your mind, learning how to implement and utilize the think-feel-act cycle as a tool will make you feel better more than any drink.

Because alcohol cannot make you feel great for that long. You know it. You have to keep drinking and also you have to deal with the repercussions the next day. But yet learning how to manage your mind and your habits, really mastering your emotional health is what determines the quality of your life more than anything else, day in and day out.

I want you to really hear that. Your mental health, your emotional wellbeing determines the quality of your life more than anything. Yet when it comes to your emotional health, your emotional wellbeing, how much time, energy, and money are you spending on it versus how much time you're spending doing things like drinking?

It's an important thing to consider because if you're not investing in your emotional health in a sustainable way because drinking to feel better is obviously not a sustainable way, then how are you coping with how you feel? Most people are turning to things to cover up how they feel or turning to things to entertain them. So I'm going to drink to feel better or I'm going to go out to the bar so I can be entertained. I'm going to eat to feel better or

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I'm going to a restaurant to be entertained, I'm going to buy a bunch of things, I'm going to go after the house, the car, the clothing. I'm going to distract myself from how I feel by burying myself in work or my to-do list. That's how most people try to cope with negative emotions, and none of these are sustainable.

And the reason why we do this is because we believe well, the alternative is that I have to feel my feelings. I don't want to feel my feelings, that would be so uncomfortable. I don't want to feel the stress, I don't want to feel the anxiety, I don't want to feel the annoyance or the irritation or the anger, that would be too uncomfortable. So I'm just going to find all these things that I can consume, whether in my body or in my life and I'm going to use that so I don't have to feel uncomfortable.

But I really want you to think about this and I want to go back to that idea of how we invest in our physical life. Because most people understand, if I want to get stronger, if I want to build muscle, I got to do something like lift weights. And when I lift weights, guess what happens? I experience discomfort. That's part of the game. You don't freak out, you don't panic, you don't cry. You expect that it will be uncomfortable to make yourself physically stronger because that's the only way to build muscle. You have to challenge the muscle fibers to grow stronger. You create these little tiny tears every time you're lifting weights. And when they heal, they become stronger.

So discomfort is part of the process of becoming physically stronger, physically healthy. And here's the thing: it gets easier. We start out with the five-pound weight and we get to a certain number of reps and it's too much, it's too uncomfortable, but one day after doing that, five pounds is pretty easy and maybe we move to 10 pounds. But discomfort is always part of the process.

Now, when most of you are thinking about what it takes for your emotional health or your emotional wellbeing, you're like, listen I want to feel better but I don't want any discomfort. But if you want to get emotionally more resilient, emotionally stronger, you have got to be willing to face discomfort

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and most of you panic in the face of it. You freak out. You say, "Oh my god, I can't come home and feel stressed. That would be terrible. Got to have a drink, got to eat something. I got to tune out."

But stress and any negative emotion, it's normal. It can't hurt you. Your brain just mistakenly believes it's an emergency. And that's why you're not willing to tolerate any kind of emotional discomfort because your brain believes that something has gone wrong when really nothing has. And your brain believes that you shouldn't feel any emotional discomfort, any challenging emotions, when of course, that's what it takes to build a more resilient and stronger emotional foundation.

So when I talk about what investing in your emotional health and your emotional wellbeing looks like, it looks like either working with a coach or learning how to coach yourself, learning how to manage your mind. It looks like learning how to separate out thoughts from circumstances so that you can really see the difference. It looks like challenging and questioning your thinking and not just accepting everything as true but knowing that your thoughts are always optional. It looks like bringing your brain back to the present moment.

When you're off in that negative past or you're off in the negative future, coming back to where you are right now. It's setting aside time to not only identify how you're feeling, which a lot of you don't even do that, but feeling it instead of running, teaching your brain that it is survivable. It looks like taking new actions and teaching your brain that it can do the things that it is afraid of. And all of this requires time and energy and money, and my question is are you willing to invest in that? And if not, why?

Because there is nothing, there is nothing more important than your emotional health. Your wellbeing is everything. Understanding that will not only help you change the habit of drinking, it will help you change anything you want to change in your life. But you have to be willing to invest.

Alright, that's all for this week. If you have any questions, if you want to hear me talk about a particular topic on the podcast, you can always send

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me an email at podcast@rachelhart.com. Otherwise, I will see you all 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.