

## Ep #80: My Self Coaching



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #80: My Self Coaching

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 80.

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.

Hello, my friends. So listen, we're going to do something a little bit different today. Because I get the question all the time, "Okay, so what does your self-coaching look like? You're talking about the think-feel-act cycle and how your thoughts create your feelings and your feelings drive your actions and how your thoughts are optional and how you can really name with and sit with your emotions. But what do you do? What does your coaching look like?" And I want to give you guys kind of a behind the scenes look so you can see how I am practicing this work all the time.

Now, you know that being able to manage your mind, being able to respond to your urges in a different way, learning how to handle your desire instead of immediately acting on it, these are all the tools that I learned and taught myself how to do when it came to changing the habit of drinking. But they are also the exact same tools that I use in so many parts of my life. They're the reason why I have a coaching business, they're the reason why I wrote a book, they're the reason why I do this podcast every week. They really are the foundation for successfully being able to manage your own mind, and that is what makes all the difference.

You know, I had a client say to me recently, and I told her I was going to steal it because it was so perfect. She said, "You know, I want to turn the critic on my shoulder into the coach on my shoulder." And there really is no better way to think about it, and that's truly what I believe I have been able to do. I definitely had a critic on my shoulder that for the longest time I just let run her mouth.

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I was not doing anything to intervene in large part because I didn't know how to. And now I really do have a coach on my shoulder, and that coach is able to help me navigate so many different situations, and I want you to be able to develop that skill as well.

So I'm going to break this down today into five different parts of my own self-coaching, and I think they really break down into building awareness with myself, acceptance, that's a big piece, practicing, now practicing is a huge thing that I talk with a lot of people about. We kind of want to learn these tools and then just skip ahead to the point where we feel better instead of getting on the bike. Practicing is huge.

Interrupting, interrupting your thoughts, interrupting your actions, interrupting that think-feel-act cycle and your habits instead of letting your brain go on autopilot. That is huge. And then just the idea of learning. Using everything as a moment and an opportunity to learn will make all the difference.

Alright, so let's start with awareness and what awareness looks like for me. So one of the things that's really important for me and has been for a while now is allowing myself to have time with just me and my brain. Now, back in the day, that was the last thing that I wanted. I did not really want to have unstructured, unoccupied time with my brain because my brain didn't have anything good to say.

But I had to really develop that, I had to really create space for it because you got to see what your brain is saying. You got to understand what your automatic thoughts are if you're going to change them. So what this looks like for me now is a morning walk. I love my morning walk so much. It is the very first thing that I do in the morning. And I will tell you, I do not check my phone, I do not check my email, I get dressed and I go for that walk and I spend the duration of that walk just me and my brain and that's it.

It's early enough that I'm really not interacting with too many other people in the world. But I think it's really important to just have that time to see, hey, what's in there? What am I thinking about? Where is my brain going? And it

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goes different places all the time. Sometimes I'm really, really wrapped up in something about work. Sometimes I'm really able to appreciate just walking. Sometimes I might be worried about something going on with my family.

But that morning walk, that time to just see where my brain wants to go is so important because what I will tell you, what used to happen is I would wake up and I would roll over and I would immediately check my phone. I would immediately go to email, I would immediately look at text messages. I might even go on social media. I mean, it's crazy. So I was filling my brain up with things instead of just seeing what was there. So that is a big piece of awareness.

Another piece for me is always writing things down. I cannot stress this enough. You have to get your thoughts out of your head if you want to look at them in an objective manner. If they're in your head, it is too difficult. And so I will write things down all the time. I will spend time just seeing like, hey, what's in there? Let's write this down. And especially if I'm struggling, especially if I'm in the middle of a negative emotion and I might be out and about, maybe I'll grab my phone and open up the notes or open up a text message to myself and just write down what I'm thinking, write down those thoughts.

That really helps you because so much of this work, and of using the think-feel-act cycle is can I separate out what is happening, the circumstances, the facts around me, and what I am making it mean, my interpretation of those facts and those circumstances? And for most of us, this is not a skill that we are used to having. It's a skill we have to develop. And most of us just see our thoughts as like, no, that's true. My interpretation, that's true, that's right, it's not optional.

So when you write it out, when you get it out of your head, it gives you a little bit of distance so you can start to see, oh, okay, this is a circumstance, the circumstance is I'm waiting in line, and my thought is, I don't have time for this. I'm going to be late, why is this taking so long? Is this cashier new?

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Right? Whatever it is, just to really start to separate out, you have to write it down.

So those are three ways that I really try to work on always building and cultivating my awareness. Now, the next piece is acceptance. And acceptance is huge. I actually talked about it in the last podcast quite a bit about how we really need to cultivate acceptance as part of your own emotional health and wellbeing.

Acceptance for me starts out with just naming what I'm feeling. What is that emotion? That is the thing that so many of you, and for a long time I did as well, just want to blow right by. I don't want to name it, I just don't feel good, I feel ugh, I feel meh. I feel terrible. Got to name that feeling. Because once you name it, all of a sudden you know what you're dealing with, number one, and then you can remind yourself, hey, nothing has gone wrong.

So I'll tell you, when this comes up for me, and most frequently the way it comes up for me I would say in terms of a negative emotion is the emotion of anxiety. So I'll just name it. Hey Rachel, you're feeling anxious right now. Nothing has gone wrong, you're totally okay. And the reason you're feeling it is because you're thinking anxious thoughts.

Now, that part is really important because of course, in the moment, my brain doesn't think that I'm feeling anxiety because I'm thinking anxious thoughts. It thinks that I'm feeling anxiety because something has really gone wrong. And so just naming what you're feeling and then the reason, reminding yourself the reason why you're feeling it, that's huge.

You know, I was actually back in Connecticut visiting my family a couple months ago, and my grandmother - I had actually planned to go back to see her in part, and right before I got there she ended up in the hospital. And she had to get a pacemaker put in, she's 95 years old, and it's really hard for me to be so far from my grandmother. I'm incredible close with her and my husband and I were driving to the hospital and I was just - I was so sad. I was really, really struggling with it, but not only that. It's very hard for me personally, to acknowledge when I'm feeling sad.

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I want to move right into another emotion. I want to just be angry. Angry feels a lot more comfortable. And so it was really important for me - I remember when we were driving there, my husband was driving and I just got out my phone so I could start typing what was going on and just recognize, hey, you're just feeling sad, and that's okay. It's okay for you to be sad, nothing has gone wrong, this is a normal emotion, you don't have to run from it, you don't have to shove it down, you can just let yourself be sad because I was. That moment, I had a lot of really sad thoughts going on like what if this is the last time that I see her? What if she doesn't recover from this surgery?

And so just allowing myself to feel that emotion, just naming it made a big difference for me because in the past, I would have tried to push it as far down, bury it as deeply as possible. And of course, we know that doesn't really work. Not so sustainable.

Now, the next thing that is a key component to my own self-coaching is practice. And practice is the thing that everybody wants to bypass. You listen to the podcast, or you read the book, and you think, "Oh god, this makes sense. I get it." All of a sudden, I have this framework to understand why I do the things I do in life, why I drink more than I want. Okay, so how do I feel better, right? We want to jump right to the end.

But practice is so key because listen, if your brain has a habit right now that's not serving you, it needs to learn a new habit. It needs to learn new thoughts to drive new feelings and new actions. And so practice is something that you cannot skip on. And really, it's the exact same way that, you know, we wouldn't sign up for a marathon and then not practice running. We wouldn't show up on the day of the race or at least most people wouldn't show up on the day of the race having done no prior running before. You have to practice.

One thing I love to practice and I did a whole podcast episode on it. It's episode number 48, are powerful questions. Questions that can redirect my brain to see a situation or to think about something differently. So often we get stuck in dead-end questions, right? A question like, why can't I drink

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like everyone else? How come I always screw everything up? What's wrong with me? These are all dead-end questions. You're not going to come up with a good answer here.

But you can practice a powerful question like, what thought am I thinking that makes me feel this way? Now, that is a really powerful question because it is asking your brain to identify the thought and not the circumstance creating how you feel. And I still practice this question quite a bit.

I also practice doing things that scare me a lot. Much more than I was ever willing to do, especially when I was drinking, especially when I was all about just covering up how I felt. I do things that scare me, do things that push me outside of my comfort zone all the time. I do it with things like heights. Heights are something that I do not love, moving to California has been kind of a crazy experience for me because I am often saying to my husband, you know, for the wealthiest state in the union, I don't understand why they don't invest in guard rails. There are a lot of roads that I think should have guard rails that don't.

But I do a lot of things where I really challenge myself to take on something that scares me. So I actually share some of these experiences in the podcast. So episode 14 I talk about going to something called the Tactile Dome in San Francisco, which is a really kind of crazy dome where you are in pitch black and you really have to feel your way through it, that's something that normally I would have said no thank you, not interested.

I also talk about in episode 26 going to Alaska and being in Denali and going on a bus ride that was probably the most scared I have felt in a while and the coaching that I did around that to really deal with the heights and deal with my fear. So I'm often really pushing myself to do things like that before I feel comfortable before I feel ready.

But I also push myself to do that in my business. You know, I've really dropped the idea that I have to do and have to get everything perfect before I launch something. I always launch before I feel ready. I launched

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this podcast before I felt ready. So doing things that scare me continually teaches my brain, hey, you can survive. Hey, all that negative emotion that you felt, it was okay. You came through the other side. It's not a big deal.

And I also - I practice in really small ways. You don't have to head to Alaska to practice. I practice things like waiting in line without any distractions. No cellphone, no social media, just practice waiting. So this is something that comes up for me quite a bit. There's a lunch place that I go to around the corner from us, and they make fantastic salads, but they always have a very, very long wait, but I think it's worth the wait because I really love their salads.

And I remember one day I decided, okay, you know what, this is going to be a time I'm just going to practice being here. I'm going to practice waiting, I'm not going to distract my mind, I'm not going to look at my phone, and it was so fascinating to see where my brain went. It was so fascinating to just watch my brain be like, "How much longer? Why is this guy screwing up my order? Did this person cut?" Like, it was just really fascinating to watch that.

And I had this moment when I had been waiting, and I'd probably been waiting maybe 15 minutes, and I realized, you know what, you could be thinking about anything you wanted to. Really anything you wanted to be thinking about you could be thinking about in this time and my brain just wanted to fixate on, hey, how long is this going to take?

So it was a really interesting exercise for me to just remind myself, oh right, where does my brain naturally go? Doesn't always go naturally or normally to hey, let's check out or think about all these good things. It goes to kind of I want to feel anxious or annoyed or frustrated or irritated.

And then finally, one of the things that I do to practice, you know, I talk a lot about how if our thoughts are optional, we can practice thinking new things, and those new thoughts will create new feelings. Well, you have to actually practice the thoughts. And so I use a lot of thoughts that I'm personally working on in my own self-coaching, I'll use them as passwords.

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And the reason why I do that is because you know, for example, the password right now that I'm using to open up my computer every morning or every time I sit down in front of it, well, it's a thought that I'm thinking or that I want to start thinking, I want to start incorporating into my life. And so I find using it as a password forces me to type it out, it forces my brain to practice saying it, practice developing that new neural pathway and making it more of a habit, more of a habitual thought.

A huge piece of my own self-coaching practice is interrupting the cycle. Not just letting it play out on its own. So where does this first start with? Well, that's interrupting my self-critic. Because listen, I have done a lot of work to build up and develop that coach on my shoulder, but I still have a self-critic, she's still there, she likes to talk sometimes. And really not listening to her but also just interrupting her. Interrupting that thought. No, I'm not going to believe that. No, I'm not going to obey this, I'm not going to listen to you.

And I'll tell you, I very first learned how to do this - I learned how to do this in my early 20s and I had gotten a book, I think it was The Power of Patience, I think that was the book, although I'm not 100% sure because I don't still have it. But it talked about what happened when you accidentally hurt yourself, when you accidentally stubbed your toe and what you would think.

And I remember thinking, what a weird topic. Who cares what you think when you stub your toe? But it really introduced me to that idea of, yeah, there are automatic thoughts happening all the time and the idea that they were putting forward not necessarily saying think-feel-act, but the idea that they were putting forward was alright, how you respond, what you think is going to determine emotionally how you feel about it.

And I remember kind of waiting for the next time that I stubbed my toe and remembering like, oh, I'm supposed to pay attention to what I'm thinking, and it was just a series of expletives. You're so stupid, oh my god, I can't believe you did that, and a lot of expletives. And it was one of the first places in my life where I started really practicing okay, well, what if I just

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interrupted that? Like, what if I just stubbed my toe and I stubbed my toe, and it didn't have to mean anything about me?

And I was shocked to really discover, oh god, it seems like weirdly it hurts a little bit less when I'm not adding on top of physical pain, I'm not adding emotional pain, I'm not adding the negative emotion of annoyance or irritation on top of whatever physically I was feeling in my toe.

I also try to interrupt myself a lot in small ways. So one that I have practiced for a long time is just what I say to myself when I catch my reflection, when I see myself in the mirror. Because let me tell you, that self-critic, she did not have anything good to say for a long time. She would catch a reflection of herself and just, "Ugh, you look terrible, your hair looks bad. It's frizzy. What's wrong with your skin?" There was nothing positive there.

And so just really catching myself, really interrupting, being aware of what I was saying but then really acknowledging, you know what I'm not going to do that, I'm not going to say that, that was a big step for me to say, I'm going to be able to look at my reflection and not have a lot of negative self-talk. I can interrupt that.

I also really pay attention the language that I use. I talk about this with you guys all the time. Language really matters. When it comes to the work of coaching yourself, it is the opposite. When people say, oh, it's just semantics. No, here semantics matter. It matters the words that you use. Because the thoughts that you think create how you feel.

So one good example, I really practice trying not to use the word should against myself. Because should really never creates a positive emotion. It really doesn't. And so I'll even - I mean, my husband will notice this all the time. I think he's also started picking up doing it as well, that we'll both say, "I should have done..." and then catch ourselves and just really reframe it really quickly. Like I want to, or I'll do it later. Just taking that should out, because should really - there's no upside to it.

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And then finally, I do a lot of interrupting work around urges. Now, here's the thing: I don't really have the urge to drink anymore. It doesn't really appear for me in my life. That took a lot of practice. But I still have urges. Because we have urges for everything, and the place where I most recently have been practicing and applying the very work that I learned to do around the urge to drink and how to respond to that differently, I am now using with the urge to distract myself while I am working.

There are so many potential distractions. I watch my brain kind of unleash the thoughts of like, "Well, maybe you could check Twitter, what's happening in the news, go to the New York Times. Oh, you just got an email, what's that?" And I really have done so much work and am continuing to do a lot of work in this area right now is if I say that I am recording a podcast, or drafting a podcast let's say from noon to one, can I do that work uninterrupted?

Or what my brain was previously doing was like, write a little, look at my email, write a little, check my phone. All these urges were coming in and distracting me and saying like, no, let's do this, no, why don't you do that, let's look over here, let's pay attention to that thing. And so it has been amazing and transformative to see how much more productive I am to take this work that I have done around drinking and smoking and eating and apply it to my focus and my attention. And I will tell you, I get so much more done in the day.

Finally, the fifth piece of really knowing how to coach yourself is understanding that all of this is about learning. If you can look at all of your actions, everything you decide to do and use it as an opportunity to learn and to grow and to be curious instead of beating yourself up, that will make all the difference.

I was actually teaching a class on this recently and I was talking about really developing awareness around the areas in which you judge other people. And I had a woman who raised her hand and she said, "Here's the thing, Rachel, I notice myself judging other people, I have that awareness,

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but then I always feel like a terrible person when I notice that I'm doing that. And then I'm stuck."

And it was such a beautiful example, we were able to work through it together really quickly because the reason she was stuck, of course, the judgment itself is neutral. Your brain judges. Everybody's brain judges. That's not the problem. The problem was what she was making it mean, and she would make her judgment of other people mean I'm a terrible person. And when she thought that thought, she felt shame and when she felt shame, guess what? What do we do when we feel shame? We hide. We don't want to look at it.

And so one of the things I said to her was, "You know what, I notice myself judging people all the time. But I don't make it mean anything about me. I'm just like, oh, that's interesting. That's curious, where did that come from? What does that mean? How does that connect back to me?"

You can take everything in your life and apply that kind of curiosity. I talk about this a lot with drinking. I actually did a whole podcast episode on the idea of using curiosity to your advantage. It's episode 29, and it's the idea that the way out of stopping beating yourself up is not to practice self-love, it is to practice curiosity.

Because for most of us, when we are really in the throes of beating ourselves up, when we are really in a shame spiral, self-love is just too big of a reach, it's too much of a stretch. But curiosity, being curious about yourself, being curious about your reactions or inactions, whatever it is, that usually feels much more attainable for people.

And so I deploy curiosity and learning all the time. All the time to just look and see, hey, why did I do that? Why is my brain thinking that? Why did I take that action? If you can be curious about it, it opens up so much space for you.

And so this is what my own self-coaching looks like. I'm always trying to build and cultivate awareness, I am practicing acceptance, especially

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acceptance for what I am feeling, I'm just practicing, I acknowledge that practice is a key part of this. I can't just intellectually sit back and consume all this information. I have to actually apply it. I have to test it out, take it out for a spin, see where it doesn't work, and then figure out why.

Interrupting my thoughts is a huge piece, and it really is taking the concept that your thoughts are always optional. You don't have to believe them. And this is how you put that into practice, by interrupting them, by not just blindly believing them and obeying them, especially when it's your self-critic who is so loud and talking so much.

And then finally, seeing all of this, seeing all of the things that I want to create, all of the change that I want to bring into my life as opportunities to learn and be curious, instead of opportunities to get fixated on perfection and judgment and failure and what that might mean about me. Just being curious. Just opening up my eyes to, hey, I wonder how that's unfolding in the think-feel-act cycle, I wonder why I got that result? I bet I can figure it out.

So I hope that this has given you a sense for how you can start to apply these tools in your own life. I will tell you, what is so powerful about this work is that yes, you can come to it to learn how to change the habit of drinking but you can change your whole life. I had no idea that's what I was doing, but oh my gosh, so grateful, so grateful that I found this way because these are the tools that I used to change my drinking, to change my desire, to manage my urges, to develop more emotional resilience, and they are the tools I still use. And I use for my business, I use in my relationship, I use with myself. It really is unbelievably transformative.

Alright, I hope you guys have enjoyed this podcast. It was a little different. If you have any questions for me, you can always drop me a line at [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

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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.