

Ep #85: All or Nothing



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 85.

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.

Welcome back, everybody. So recently, I had someone say to me, "I feel like there's a good version of me and a bad version of me. And either I'm all in one camp or I'm all in the other." And I so remember this feeling. There was a good Rachel and there was a bad Rachel. And either I was doing everything right and doing what I said I was going to do, or I had thrown it all out the window and I'd given myself permission to eat and drink and smoke and spend as much as I want. Good Rachel and bad Rachel.

And here's the thing: you probably identify with this because a lot of people do. And when you identify with these two versions of yourself, the good version and the bad version, what most people will say to me is, "Okay, so how do I cultivate more of the good version of me because when I'm doing everything right, I feel really positive about myself and I want more of that."

And what I tell them, and what I'm going to tell you often surprises people because what I believe is that you have got it all wrong. If you are feeling good about yourself when you're doing things "right," that is really a problem. This work is not about creating the good version of you and banishing the bad version of you. And in fact, understanding yourself in that way will keep you stuck.

So that's what I want to talk to about today. I want to talk to you about why you have that all or nothing thinking. I'm either totally in the good camp or I'm totally in the bad camp. The problem that it creates, especially when you want to change a habit, but especially when you want to change a habit like drinking that is wrapped up already for so many people in all this

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shame, and what you actually need to work on and know it is not cultivating the good version of yourself. I promise. It's not.

So here's the thing: all or nothing thinking is fueled by perfectionism. And I have talked about perfectionism many times before on the podcast. I think this is such a crucial piece to unwinding the habit of drinking. And most people don't understand perfectionism and overdrinking as having anything to do with each other, but trust me, they are very connected.

Perfectionism is that do perfect, be perfect mentality, right? You can never let yourself make a mistake. You can never cut yourself any slack. Everything has to be perfect. Nothing else is acceptable.

Now, perfectionism is rooted in the emotion of insecurity. It is rooted in feeling deficient. When we are stuck in perfectionism, we're thinking, "Well, I have to be perfect because if I'm perfect, then I can feel confident, then I can feel complete, then I can feel like a good person."

And so what happens is perfectionism is how people unconsciously try to seek out and feel worthy as if worthiness is caused by what we do rather than what we believe. Worthiness is not caused by what you do. It's caused by what you believe. Remember, worthiness is a feeling. If it's a feeling, it's created by your thoughts. What you think of yourself, not your actions.

Perfectionism is all about your actions. It is all about trying to make sure your actions are always perfect in the misguided attempt of believing that that's how you feel better. But that is not how the think-feel-act cycle works.

So here's how it plays out when it comes to all or nothing thinking. So you're taking a break from drinking and you're doing well, you're saying no, and you have all these positive thoughts about yourself. I'm being so good, I'm sticking to my plan, look how disciplined I am. And then you make the decision to drink. And suddenly you have all these negative thoughts about yourself. Ugh, I'm such a screw-up. Such a failure. I knew this wouldn't work.

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So then as soon as you start feeling negative, as soon as you haven't done something perfectly, as soon as you've made that mistake, what do you do? You throw everything out the window. All the work that you've done, you just give up. Well, it doesn't matter now. My streak is over.

This is why I think that counting days is such a problem. When the fixation is all about how many days you have, well, it really is about this kind of perfectionist mentality, that the way that I feel good is through my actions rather than the way I feel good is what I think about myself. Because I always say when it comes to days, you could have 30 or 60 or 90 or 365 days under your belt of not drinking. If you decide to drink on one day, you don't go all the way back to the beginning.

Like, the idea that you have to start counting from day one again doesn't make any sense because you haven't lost all the work, all the awareness, all the understanding that you have gained over that period of time. But that's how we treat it when we're in all or nothing thinking. It's, oh, I got to do it perfect or else I got to start back at square one.

This is where the problem is. People will say, "Okay, so if I am stuck with this all or nothing thinking and I feel negatively about myself, I have all these negative thoughts when I'm not doing what I say that I'm going to do, let's cultivate more of me being all in. Let's cultivate more of the good version of myself because then I will feel better." And it sounds so lovely, doesn't it? It sounds like, yeah, that sounds like a good idea.

But it is the problem. Because here's the thing: if how you feel about yourself is dependent on what you do, then guess what? You will have zero, and I mean zero ability to bounce back from a decision that doesn't serve you. Because what you've done is tied your self-worth to your actions. So you will always strive to try to be perfect when it comes to your actions, believing that that is the only way, that is the only avenue available to feel good.

Listen, I was caught in this loop for years. I felt terrible about myself, I was insecure, I felt deficient, and I really believed that the way to fix it was to

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make all my actions perfect. So I obsessed about doing everything right, never making mistakes, which P.S. is exhausting. It really is. The idea that you must do everything perfectly is exhausting. And it is one of the reasons why drinking became a means for relief. Because it was one of the few areas in my life where I didn't force myself to be perfect. I allowed myself to be really flawed and messy and complicated.

And then when I could see how this habit wasn't serving me, well, I had a really hard time with the idea of okay, well then like, how do I release the pressure? Where's my outlet? If I'm forcing myself to be perfect in all these areas of my life, and this is the one area where I give myself a pass, well then what?

But here's the thing: when I tried to change my drinking, when I flip-flopped back and forth all the time, it was flip-flopping in this all or nothing way as well. Either I was perfect at saying no and I could feel good about myself, or if I said yes, it was proof that I was a failure and I would swing all the way to the other end of all or nothing thinking. Who cares? I'm just going to drink as much as I want.

If you're going to change, you have to get off this seesaw. You have to get off the seesaw of all or nothing thinking. And you don't do it by being perfect. You don't do it by only being the good version of yourself. You get off the seesaw by questioning why you think you need to be perfect in the first place.

So my question for you is simple. What creates your worth as a human? Now, most people when they answer this question and they're thinking about themselves, they will say, well, my worth is created by what I do, what I achieve, how I behave. They will attach worthiness to actions. That seems like an okay answer. But can you see that what you have done has made your worthiness dependent on what you do?

So if you aren't doing something that you like or if you are acting in a certain way, well, there goes your worthiness. Hence the all or nothing thinking. I've got to be perfect, I've got to be the good version of me so I

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can feel good about myself. Or I'm a disaster, and I'm the bad version of me.

But what happens when you consider not what creates your worth as a human but what creates someone else's worthiness? Now listen, I think it's always easier to start with someone that you care about. You can choose anyone. You can choose your best friend, you can choose a sibling, you can choose a parent, you can choose a child, whoever it is. And I want you to think, is their worthiness connected to what they do and what they achieve and how they behave? Do they have to earn their worthiness or is it innate?

And most people will say when they're thinking about someone else, well, of course they don't have to earn it. It just exists, it's just there, they're just worthy because they are. And I'll say, okay, but what if they make a mistake? What if they do something they said they weren't going to do? Do they lose their worth?

And most people again will say no, they're human, they're imperfect, they did something wrong, what matters is what happens after. But of course, these standards are not what we apply to ourselves. Your standards for your worthiness and other people's worthiness I guarantee are radically different.

Mine were forever, for such a long time. I believed that my worthiness was everything about what I did, what I achieved, and how I behaved, and that's how I could feel good about myself. Other people just got to innately be worthy, and got to also be human. They got to make mistakes. They got to be imperfect. It didn't take away their worthiness. But when it came to how I regarded myself, it certainly did.

And I want to tell you something. Your worthiness is innate. Not only that, it is 100% intact. Completely. It just is. You were born worthy, it is always there, you don't have to earn it, you don't have to accomplish your way into it. You've always had it.

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Now, this idea was a revelation for me because I did not believe that my worthiness was innate or intact. I could see it for other people, but not with myself. And so I was running around all the time trying to earn my worthiness by being perfect, trying to be more of good Rachel all the time. And this mistaken belief was the fuel for all or nothing thinking. When I was good Rachel, I could feel worthy. When I was bad Rachel, then I felt shame.

And the only thing I knew how to do was to try to keep being worthy all of the time. And for me, that meant being perfect. Never making a mistake, never doing anything wrong, never doing anything I regretted, never doing an action that didn't serve me.

But listen, it's impossible. There has got to be room for us, for you, for me, for everybody to be messy, to be human, to be flawed. There has to be room for mistakes. We're not robots. We are human beings.

Listen, I do the work of understanding the think-feel-act cycle and managing and supervising my mind and taking responsibility for how I feel and not blaming others. And I still sometimes do things that afterwards I think, I don't want to repeat that again.

But if those actions create my worthiness, then frankly, I'm screwed. Because I'll just stay on that seesaw of all or nothing thinking. I got to do everything right, that's the only way to feel good about myself. Or, ugh, who cares, I'm a disaster, I feel terrible about myself, let's just throw in the towel. It has to be okay to do things that you decide, yeah, I don't want to repeat that. But doing that thing, whatever it is, doesn't create or take away from your worthiness.

This is such an important concept. I really want you to consider if you think that there's a good version of you and a bad version of you, that the goal is not to create more of the good version of you because if you think that, if you have that all or nothing thinking, I guarantee that the good version and the bad version is totally connected to your actions and what you're doing.

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And that's how your brain believes that then you can finally feel good about yourself, then you can finally feel worthy.

But worthiness is not created by what we do. It's created by what we think about ourselves. And you can see that so clearly when you start to question and say, okay, what creates my worthiness versus what creates the worthiness of someone that I love? We are so forgiving, we are so understanding, we give so much space to the people in our lives that we love to be human, to not be robots, to make mistakes, to be imperfect.

But when it comes to ourselves, what do we do? Nope. Got to be perfect. All or nothing. That's the only way I can feel good about myself. It is a terrible, terrible trap to be caught in.

And so I have a challenge for you guys this week. I want you first to list the people in your life that you believe are worthy. You can make that list as long or short as you want. And then ask yourself, okay, what makes them worthy? Where do they derive their worth? Why do I think that they have worthiness?

So list the people in your life that you believe are worthy and then ask yourself, what creates their worthiness? Then I want you to ask yourself, do I feel worthy? And if not, why? What is getting in the way of you accepting yourself? What are you telling yourself that you have to do or you have to be in order to feel good enough? Write this down, guys. I always stress this. It's really important to not just try to do this work in your head but get it on paper.

And then finally, once you've answered that question, ask yourself, how would I show up differently when it came to changing the habit of drinking, or any habit for that matter if I genuinely believed that I was already good enough, that I was already worthy of love, and that nothing I did could improve or change that fact? How would you show up differently?

Now, I will tell you, it is a lot easier to show up with curiosity, to ask yourself, hey, I wonder why I made that decision, I wonder what was the

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think-feel-act cycle driving that decision to drink, if the decision to drink is not attached to your worthiness. If you're already worthy, if your worthiness is innate, it's intact, it is so much easier to then just look and understand and examine your mind and see how your thoughts are driving the habit.

But where a lot of you get stuck is this kind of, I got to be good, I got to be good, Rachel, I got to count the days, I got to do it perfectly, uh oh, day 22, I had a drink, I got to start all over again. That's not the way it works.

All or nothing thinking is fueled by perfectionism and perfectionism is the idea that in order to feel good about ourselves, in order to feel like we are enough and we are worthy, it is entirely dependent on what we do. And that, I promise, will keep you stuck because we're not robots. You're going to make mistakes. I make mistakes. You're going to do things you wish you hadn't done. I still do things I wish I hadn't done. You have to create room for you to be human. And that's really how you can shake the all or nothing thinking.

Alright everybody, shoot me an email if you have any questions or if you'd like to hear me discuss a topic on the podcast. Otherwise, I will see you next week.

Hey guys, if you're finding this podcast helpful, and I really hope you are, I would love if you head on over to iTunes and leave a review. And as a special thank you, I've updated and expanded my free urge meditation giveaway. I've created two audio meditations plus a brand-new workbook that will teach you a different way to respond to the urge to drink. The meditations are super simple. All it takes is five minutes and a pair of headphones. And each one now comes with a follow-up exercise in the workbook to help you dig deeper and really retrain your brain when it comes to the habit of drinking. So after you leave a review on iTunes, all you need to do is head on over to rachelhart.com/urge, input your information, and I'll make sure you get a copy of both meditations plus the workbook in your inbox.

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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.