

Ep #89: Motivation



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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 89.

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, I'm back. I am back. Now listen, if you are a regular listener, you heard me last week in episode 88 so you might be like, hey, what are you talking about? But I'm going to tell you something. I had a baby and yesterday he turned eight weeks old. And so I'll tell you this: episode 88, which you heard last week I sent to my producer almost three months ago now. I planned it all out so that if he came two weeks early I would have all my episodes in the bag.

So I handed that episode over and then I waited and I waited and I waited, and of course he didn't come two weeks early. He came two weeks after his due date, all nine pounds and two ounces of him. This is not a tiny baby boy. And now here I am almost three months after I recorded episode 88 and eight weeks into being a first-time mom, and I'm going to tell you something, I'm really tired.

I am really tired but I am really excited to be back with you guys. So on the first episode back I thought, you know, the perfect topic is motivation because let me tell you, I am dealing with that a lot right now so that's what I want to talk to you guys about today.

Now, harnessing motivation in my life has helped me change some huge things. It got me to a place where I'm no longer drinking and I'm no longer desiring to drink. Motivation is what helped me start a business and write a book and launch a podcast and do all these amazing, really life changing things. But this skill of motivation also helps me with all the little things in my life. Everything that I'm doing right now day-to-day, and I will tell you, I am using this skill all the dang time.

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You know, it's not just that I am physically tired and my body is recovering from giving birth - and by the way, I really had the mistaken belief, and it was a big mistake, that if I avoided a C section, which I did, that my recovery was going to be a breeze, which has not been the case. So note to self: that was incorrect.

But listen, in addition to all the physical stuff that I have been dealing with, I've also had a boatload of intense emotions. In the last eight weeks, I have felt overwhelmed and anxious and frustrated, a lot of frustration, and sometimes even just really sad. There have been so many times where I have found myself just wanting to curl up into a ball and cry. And you know what? I did that too sometimes. Sometimes you need to do that.

But I have also used the skills that I teach and this thought work and everything that I know about motivation to keep going, to keep my head above water, and to not drown under the weight of negative emotions. So what we're going to talk about is this: what is motivation? Where does it come from? And what gets in the way of it? Because if you want to change your drinking, if you want to change any habit in your life, what I hear from people all the time is, I just don't know where to find this motivation, I don't feel motivated, or I feel really motivated today and then tomorrow rolls around and it's all evaporated. So I really want to dig into this today with you guys.

So here's the thing: you know what I like to do when I do these podcast episodes. Let's just dig into the word motivation. What is it? What does it mean? Motivation is a force or influence that causes you to do something. So you can think about it this way: in short, it's really a willingness to take action, causing you to do something. But - and this is where I think a lot of people get it wrong. What is the force or influence that generates the action?

A lot of us and I will tell you I was in this boat for a long time, believe that that force or influence is given to us, that it comes from something external. So we go out searching for it. How many times have you found yourself just searching for motivation? I'm just going to try to go out and find some

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motivation, maybe if I read this book, maybe if I listen to this TED Talk, maybe if I watch this video, maybe if I can find it somewhere out in the world, then I will feel motivated to take action and change my life.

So we have this mistaken idea that it is someone or something outside of us that is in possession of motivation and that we are just waiting for them to hand it over to us, right? We're just waiting to gather it up. And that's where we have motivation wrong. It is not a force given to you by something external that compels you to take action. It is a force created by you. It is created internally. It is not an external thing. It is an internal thing.

And it really makes perfect sense when you think about how the think-feel-act cycle works. Listen, you hear me say this all the time on the podcast. Actions don't just spontaneously happen. Whatever you do or don't do in life, there is a reason behind it. Is it driven by how you feel and how you feel is created by what you are thinking. That is how the cycle works.

So here's the thing: I didn't just sit down and spontaneously record this podcast today. I had a thought, which led to a feeling, which generated the action of doing it. It really is that simple. And my thought this morning was, "Alright Rachel, you have got to carve out time to make this happen." Because you know what I did? I kept having it on my to-do list the last couple of weeks and I kept just hoping that a block of time was going to magically appear, and you know what happens when you have an eight-week old? A block of time does not magically appear.

And even when you don't have a baby, you know in your life that when you're just waiting for the time to appear so you can tackle whatever you want to tackle, it never happens. I realized I have to treat it like any other appointment in my calendar that I would never dream of missing. I would never have a doctor's appointment and just think, "Oh, I'm not going to show up."

That's an appointment, it's in my calendar. I keep it. So I felt determined when I thought that. Okay, you got to carve out time and make this happen, and I felt determined, and I sat down with my husband and we agreed that

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he would take the baby on a walk at 2pm so that I could do this work. That was my plan.

But guess what happened? One thirty rolled around and I was nursing the baby and I was feeling really tired, and then it was two, and he said, "Okay, so you want me to take the baby out on a walk?" And I just thought, just let me close my eyes, I really don't want to do this right now, I just want to take a nap. The baby was up all night, I'm tired, I can do it tomorrow, right?

Once again, no force outside of me was going to motivate me in that moment, and in fact, I had a lot of thoughts that were demotivating. But here's the thing: and because I have proven this to be true time and time again, I am able to do this with a lot more ease in my life. I noticed all those thoughts, I noticed myself thinking I don't feel like it, I'm so tired, and I said, listen Rachel, you don't want to do this right now but you are going to feel so much better when it's done. Because I have so much evidence of that being true in my life. When I finally sit down, I finally do the work, the work that my brain is like, I don't know, I don't feel like it, I always feel so much better.

So I handed over the baby, I didn't go into the bedroom and take a nap. I sat down at my computer and I got to work. Motivation is a force that causes you to take action, but that force is not generated outside of you. It is not bestowed upon you by something external. It is created by your mind. Motivation is simply a thought. And for me, in that moment, that simple thought was I know you don't want to do this right now, but you're going to feel so much better when it's done.

That was the thought for me in the moment that generated me feeling motivated to take action. And I want to tell you this: isn't this amazing news that motivation is just a thought that creates an emotion that has you taking action? It's the think-feel-act cycle at work, which means it is always available to you. You can always generate it with your mind. Most of you just aren't in the practice of either generating it on purpose. Instead, you're looking externally in your life to find it.

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So I want to talk to you about what gets in the way of motivation, what prevents you from taking action. Because if thoughts generate an emotion that drive the action, then guess what? Thoughts also impede you from taking action. What gets in the way of motivation is simply your thinking.

And now I promise, this is really good news. Thoughts that get in the way of your motivation are thoughts that you have unconsciously practiced listening to over and over and over again. And listen, they're not these deep dark terrible thoughts. In fact, I bet most of you think these thoughts all of the time and they just kind of sail on right by. You don't think that they're a big deal.

But I will tell you that the thoughts that get in the way of motivation are both pernicious and insidious in your life. Their effect might be subtle over time but they are incredibly destructive when it comes to creating change in your life and they are the thoughts that got in the way of me doing everything, including finally dealing with the habit of drinking.

And these thoughts are I don't want to, I don't feel like it, I'll do it later. So simple, right? These aren't some deep dark thoughts. I mean, how many times have you thought these three thoughts? I don't want to, I don't feel like it, I'll do it later. Just today, have you thought them just today?

Let me tell you, they don't sound pernicious but these three thoughts will keep you on the sidelines of your life. They will keep you stuck and they will kill change. Now, if you have read my book, *Why Can't I Drink Like Everyone Else*, I talk about how I was introduced to the think-feel-act cycle and all the concepts around what creates our emotions, what creates desire, what creates action in life through this peer support group called SMART Recovery.

And I'm going to tell you this: I knew about SMART for an entire year, an entire year before I attended my first meeting? Why? I didn't want to go. I didn't feel like it. I mean, I legitimately never felt like going. And I definitely thought I'll do it later, I'll do it next week, maybe I'll do it next month, now

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isn't the right time. All of these three thoughts got in the way of me just even going to a meeting and checking it out.

And I will tell you, none of them felt like a big deal, what I was thinking. It didn't feel like a big deal to think I don't want to, I don't feel like it, I'll do it later. It didn't seem as if I was thinking something really destructive in my life, and honestly, they just felt kind of true. But here's what I'm going to tell you: every time I told myself, every time I listened to the thoughts I don't want to, I don't feel like it, I'll go next week, I was obeying thinking that was sabotaging my life.

Because as long as I held on to these thoughts, as long as I believed them, as long as I didn't question them, as long as I never challenged them, as long as I ran my life according to them, change continued to be elusive and I continued to suffer. And I'll tell you this: when I finally decided to go, I remember arriving at that address. This was when I was living in New York City and I got to the address and I looked at the front door of the building and then I just kept walking. I was terrified. I was really terrified of what people would think, I was terrified about what it even meant about me that I would go to a meeting like this. I was terrified about what I might uncover about myself so I kept on walking. I had all this negative emotion.

And I remember saying, okay, you can walk around the block, but the next time that you get to that door, you're going to walk inside, no excuses. You're here, you're going to do it. And you know what, I walked around that block really slowly. I really took my time.

But that was the thought. The thought that generated the force that had me taking action, that was what motivated me. The next time you get to that door, you're going inside, no excuses. And I will tell you this: that one thought, which led to the action of finally going in after a year of knowing about this group, it changed my life.

Now listen, there are two big misconceptions about motivation. And the first misconception is that you have to erase all the thoughts that get in the way of motivation in order to be successful. So many of you believe that well, I

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have to make the thoughts go away before I can take action and they're not going away, they're still there, I keep finding myself thinking I don't feel like it, I don't want to, I'll do it later, so I can't take any action.

I say this all the time. The work that you are learning here, thought work does not entail scrubbing your brain clean and only having beautiful, pretty, lovely thoughts. It doesn't work like that. That's not what we're doing here. We are not doing this work of I'm only going to do positive thinking. It doesn't work like that.

And I will tell you, I have been practicing this for years now and I still catch myself thinking the three thoughts, I don't want to, I don't feel like it, I'll do it later. And boy, have they popped up a lot in the last eight weeks since becoming a mom. I don't want to change that diaper, I don't feel like nursing him again, I'll get to my to-do list later.

But here's the secret: I take action anyway. I didn't want to walk through the door of that first SMART Recovery meeting and I didn't really want to do the podcast when 2pm rolled around today, but I took action anyway. And that really is the secret because the more you take action, the more you see, the more you teach your brain just because you are thinking these thoughts doesn't mean you have to listen to them. And they start to become less persuasive and less compelling the more you take action and see that it doesn't really matter that you don't want to or you don't feel like it or you'll do it later because the benefits of not listening to these thoughts are so great.

Now, the second misconception is well, alright, I understand how the think-feel-act cycle works and my thoughts create my feelings and my feelings drive my actions and so if I'm going to take action I have to feel excited or enthused, but Rachel, I don't feel excited or enthused so I'm not taking action. That is a huge misconception.

You do not have to feel excited or enthused. If you do, fantastic. But if you don't, if you're not having this great big swelling positive emotion, that doesn't mean you have to do nothing. All you have to do is know what will

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happen when you live a life that is run by I don't want to, I don't feel like it, I'll do it later. It is a life of stagnation, a life of mediocrity. And weirdly enough, it's a life of increased emotional pain.

These three thoughts - here's what they do. They give us a little momentary relief from discomfort because if we don't have to take action, then we don't have to do anything that's a little uncomfortable. They stop us from facing a negative emotion so we get that little momentary relief from discomfort. But that momentary relief leads to greater discomfort because the truth is, everything in your life you don't want to do, you don't feel like doing, you're telling yourself you'll do later, well, those things aren't going away.

You can either deal with them now or you can just keep delaying action. Every time you delay taking action for these things that aren't going away, you are creating more suffering for yourself. Isn't that crazy? What feels like relief is actually creating you more pain. That's what these thoughts lead to. More pain. Not less. And that is I think what so many of us don't understand.

Seems like, ugh, yeah, these thoughts are kind of on my side, I don't want to, I don't feel like it, I'll do it later. Yeah, I should listen to them. But they will create more pain in your life. Because let me tell you, I did not feel like dealing with my drinking. I really did not, and I was not excited to take it up. I was not enthused to delve into this problem. And I definitely, I definitely did not want to talk about it with anyone, especially a group of strangers.

But if I had listened to these thoughts in the moment, if I had heeded my brain telling me I don't want to go, I don't feel like it, I'll do it later, I'll go next week, if I had said yes to all those thoughts, yeah, I would have gotten a little bit of relief in that moment. I could have walked around the block and then just kept on going home.

And then here's the thing: that relief would have been relief from having to feel the immediate discomfort of being unsure and feeling exposed and vulnerable. But in the long run, I was just creating more suffering if I had listened to those thoughts because figuring out my drinking and why I had

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the habit and why it was creating problems for me in my life, understanding that was not going to happen on its own. I could only understand the habit by taking action, by being willing to step into a place where I felt unsure, where I felt exposed, where I felt vulnerable. That was how I was able to finally create meaningful change in my life.

So you listen to your brain complain and you take action anyway. That is how you motivate yourself. It's not handed to you by some divine external force. It is just the willingness to be uncomfortable, to face discomfort. It is the willingness to listen to your brain tell you that you don't want to do it and do it anyway. And every time you do that, every time you take action anyway, you diminish those thoughts.

They're not going to go away. They still come up for me. But you will diminish them, you will make them so much weaker and it works like this with everything in life. I don't care if you want to change your drinking, or you want to lose weight, you want to start a business, or frankly, you just want to cook dinner, you want to change a diaper, whatever it is, every time you don't listen to these thoughts, you diminish the power they have over you.

That is how you build the muscle of motivation. It is a muscle. You disprove these thoughts over and over and over again. Instead of just automatically listening to them and obeying them, you hear your brain telling you I don't want to do it, I don't feel like it, I'll do it later, and you understand what will happen if you obey them. What will they produce in the think-feel-act cycle?

Will they lead to change? Nope. So you take action anyway. You're not waiting to feel excited or enthused. You just take action. And every time you do this you give these thoughts less power and you find that motivation is something that you possess, you create, it is an internal force that you get to harness.

And the best part of it is that taking action is always an option. It's always on the table, it's always available for you. That really is the best news. Listen, I used this skill to understand and unwind the habit of drinking. I

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used it to create a business, to write a book, to start a podcast. All of these things required a lot of motivation on my part. But you know what? I also used it today to do the laundry and to take a shower and to take out the trash.

Once you master this skill, you will see how powerful it is for everything in your life because I will tell you, today my brain was like, I do not really feel like doing the laundry. And I could listen to that thought forever, and you know what? The laundry would just stay dirty. Nobody's going to swoop in and do it. I would still smell of spit up.

But I listened to myself and understood where that thought, "I don't want to do it," would take me. And you know what? That's now where I want to go. So I took action anyway. So when I notice these three thoughts that kill motivation, instead of delaying, delaying taking action, which is what I would do all the time, I just take the action right then and there because I know in the long run you're going to suffer less. You are going to feel better.

Because you know, think about it. I know you guys probably can relate to this, right? So this happens to me a lot in our household that I go to throw something away in the kitchen trash and I open up the trash container and I see that it's full and I think, "Ugh, I don't want to take it out." You try to like, fit that like, one extra piece of trash in. You're like, I don't want to deal with it, maybe my husband's going to deal with it.

But here's the thing: if every time I do that, I look at it and I think I don't want to, I don't want to deal with it, guess what happens the next time I need to throw something away? It's still there. It's still annoying me. You walk by the trash five times and five times you see the garbage bag that's spilling over and five times I think, "Ugh, I don't feel like taking it out."

Guess what? That's five little moments of annoyance in my life that I have generated rather than just dealing with it, rather than just taking action the very first time. That's how you create less suffering. And the same is true for your drinking. If you wake up every time the day after you've had too

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much to drink and you think, "Ugh, I don't want to deal with this," and you bury your head in the sand and you take no action, guess what you're doing? You're just creating more emotional suffering for yourself.

Because drinking is not going to magically resolve itself. This habit is not going to magically disappear. The only way to change it is to take action, and to take action in the face of discomfort. You have to solve what isn't working for you. Every time you listen to I don't want to deal with it, you will just create more suffering.

The best thing is that you don't have to listen to these thoughts. That's what nobody tells us. We don't understand that we can question and challenge our thinking. We just assume because our brain has thought the thought that we have to obey it, that we have to listen to it. But it doesn't work like that. You can talk back to them. When you catch yourself thinking I don't want to do it, you can say, "Yeah, of course you don't, but I'm going to do it anyway."

When you notice your brain telling you I don't feel like it, you can say, "Yup, my brain is always prime to avoid discomfort, that's how the brain works. But I know that if I wait until I feel like doing something, I'm never going to change." You can find yourself telling you, I'll do it later, and instead of just listening to that thought, you can acknowledge, "Listen, you're going to feel the exact same way later. So you can create more suffering then or you can just take action now."

The best thing for all of you to take away, it is so powerful, it will change everything in your life when you understand this is that all the motivation you need is already inside of you because you create it with your thinking, you create it with your mind. You have the skills to create it. You just have to start understanding these three little thoughts, how they get in the way, I don't want to, I don't feel like it, I'll do it later, how they get in the way of change in your life and change across the board from the big things, your big goals that you want to accomplish to all the little stuff every day.

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Once you understand that, once you understand what will happen when you listen to these thoughts, when you just obey them unquestioningly, you'll start to see that you have the power. You don't have to look for motivation outside of you. You generate it inside of yourself. And that is a skill that you can use to change your drinking, but it is a skill that you can use to change everything in your life.

Alright friends, so that's what I have to say about motivation. I'm going to tell you, it's amazing to be back. I'm really excited to be here with you guys again. So stay tuned and I will be back next week with a new episode. Have a great day everybody.

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.

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.

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