

Ep #111: Rejection



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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 111.

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, hello everybody. Now listen, I am doing a new segment where I'm going to start answering listener questions. So if you have any questions about anything related to your drinking, anything you've heard me talk about on the podcast, just send me an email at podcast@rachelhart.com and I will make sure you get an answer.

Alright, so today we're going to be talking about worrying what people will think if you don't drink. Oh my lord. This used to be such a big issue for me. It used to be a place where my brain would spin and spin and spin, and I had so much anxiety because I had all these thoughts. People are going to think I'm no fun or that I'm boring, that I'm a buzzkill, that I'm a killjoy, that something's wrong with me.

Or maybe they'll think I have the dreaded problem. All of those things, my brain was so paranoid about, and it's so interesting because I talk about this a lot on the podcast. When we look into the future and our brain is trying to envision what is going to happen, listen to what I was describing there. I was describing only worst-case scenario. I was describing kind of everything that could go wrong or that would be negative because of course, people would discover that you don't drink and think that's amazing.

Isn't that crazy? I was like, I don't really think that that's possible. Obviously, they would only think the negative things. They would only think that I was no fun, they would only think that I was a problem. But I want you to just consider that, especially if this is something that comes up a lot for you, that someone could actually think the opposite. They could think it's

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amazing. They could think you are more fun because maybe they don't think drunk people are all that fun.

Who knows? Just open yourself up to that possibility. You know, I work with women of all ages. People are always sure the very first time they talk to me, they're always really sure that they are going to be my oldest clients, and invariably, they never are. I work with women in the 20s and women in their 70s. But still, that fear of what if, what will people think? That fear of rejection, it really can loom very large for people.

And a lot of women will say to me, and I remember thinking this myself, "Why am I still fixated on this? I'm not in high school anymore. Why aren't I over wanting and needing to be liked? Why do I care so much?" And that's what I want to talk to you all about today. I want to talk about how worrying what people will think is very often connected to rejection. How it connects to your decision to drink, why the brain is afraid of rejection, the things we do to hide from rejection, and how you can start making headway.

Because if you don't make headway on this piece, what you will do, if you do end up changing your drinking or deciding that you're going to take a break, you will end up hiding. You will end up isolating. And you know what? You may feel physically healthy but I'm promising you, it is not sustainable. It is not sustainable to hide out forever at home.

I want you to think right now if this is something that you wrestle with, that your brain has a perception that when it comes to drinking, everyone does it. This is going to be especially true for those of you out there who are really wrestling with the idea of you know what, maybe it's time for me to take a break. Maybe it is time for me to try something different. I don't like the results that I'm getting.

So why do we have this perception that everyone does it? Now remember, your brain scans for evidence all the time to prove its current belief systems true. I remember I did this all the time. I had no idea that my brain was doing this. But I was always scanning the room to see who was drinking, and I was always scanning to notice whether or not I was the odd man out.

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I remember, I actually had a good friend of mine when I was living in New York who didn't drink. And it was fascinating because she did not fit with my belief system that everyone drank and everyone thought it was fun and everyone wanted to do it, and people who didn't do it were weird. She didn't fit with that belief system.

And so what did my brain do? Just decided that she didn't count. Just dismissed her. I mean, I was still friends with her but my brain couldn't wrap its head around the idea that she didn't drink. You would think, maybe you could use that as a piece of evidence that not everybody does. But I remember that I just thought she doesn't count. I made kind of a little asterisk, a little exception to the rule that everybody does it and everyone wants to do it and everyone loves it and people who don't are weird.

She became the exception to the rule. And I remember thinking, well, it's different because everybody knows that she doesn't drink and she never has so no one would think that her not drinking means anything or that she has a problem, which is also crazy because of course people could assume that if they wanted to.

But what I told myself back then is I said, well, it's different for me, people could assume that something's wrong with me or that I might have a problem because these people knew that I used to drink and now I wasn't. Because remember, I was flip-flopping back and forth all the time in my 20s. And it's so interesting because now that I have made the decision in my life to no longer drink, it is fascinating to see how my entire world has flipped.

Because now my brain spots so many people who actually don't drink. All these people that my brain couldn't see before. And not only that, I think it's really fascinating that now when I mention to people if it comes up in a social situation that I don't drink, I'm always so surprised how many people will say to me, "Yeah, I don't really like it." Or, "Yeah, I've been thinking about not drinking either."

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Or people will say, "Yeah, you know, I just have a glass to be polite." It's mind-boggling because I have my brain from my 20s where I was so sure that everyone drank and everyone loved it and the only people who didn't do it were Mormons and alcoholics. That was it, and my one friend that I made an exception about.

So it's so fascinating now to see now I have all this evidence that actually, what I believed to be true is not really the case. So it's interesting just to question your brain, just to question your belief system. Just because everyone at the table is drinking does not necessarily mean that everyone is enjoying that. Isn't it fascinating? It's like everything in life. Alcohol is like everything. Some people love it, some people don't like it at all, and some people are kind of like, I could take it or leave it, kind of neutral about it.

But when you love it, when you feel like, it's so good, I just have so much fun and my life would be so boring and I just would always feel like I was missing out, when you really love it, you assume that everyone else does too. So wrapping your brain around the idea that other people might not and they could be totally normal people, it might feel kind of inconceivable to you right now.

So the first thing that I really want you to understand is that how your brain is currently perceiving the world, whatever that looks like for you, whatever it is around alcohol, it is just because your brain is scanning for evidence to prove that what you currently believe is true. And I want you to consider that your brain might be wrong. It might be wrong about the idea that everybody drinks and everybody loves it and people who don't drink have a problem. You might just be wrong.

So let's think about this. What are you afraid of? Let's talk about this piece. This is what I really spun out on for so often. I was afraid that someone might think that something was wrong with me, and that was, oh god, that was the kiss of death. Why? Because you know what, at that point in my life, I already thought that that was true. I already believe that about myself, that something was kind of wrong with me.

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So I want you to consider, nothing is wrong with you. You're unbroken. If you really believe that, then the thought of having someone find out or discover that you don't drink wouldn't be as scary. It wouldn't be a problem. But if you believe the opposite, if you believe that something might be wrong with you and that you might have a problem and that not drinking is a sign of both of those things, then someone else thinking that, it just confirms your own fears and it's why you might find yourself struggling so hard to avoid it.

I talk about this a lot. All the things that I would do to hide when I wasn't drinking. So when I was much younger, especially when I was just newly out of college and I would go to house parties in New York, I remember everybody would drink out of these plastic red cups. And so at that point it was kind of easy to hide what was in your cup because it was a plastic red cup that you couldn't really see through.

But as I grew up, I remember that people weren't using the red cups anymore. At least not at the parties that I was going to, and I remember trying to get drinks that looked like they might be a cocktail. So I'd get a soda and a lime and a small glass that looked like maybe it could be a vodka tonic. I remember thinking like, I just need to get to the restaurant first. I'll get there first and I'll place the order before the other person gets there and then they won't have a sense of what I'm drinking.

I would make all sorts of excuses. Sometimes I would even stay home. So I had all these elaborate attempts to hide my decision making around alcohol. I remember being just so nervous that someone was going to ask me, "Why aren't you drinking tonight?" And so in the lead up to going out, I had all this anxiety because I was so worried about whether or not that question would come up and how I would answer it and what they would think of it.

It was all boiling down to the fact that I was so sure that my answer might be the thing that would have them reject me because it would reveal some deep dark secret about me. And so drinking, at times in my life, almost

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became about trying to prove that I was normal. It's so crazy when you think about it. Just think about this for a second, guys.

When you're trying to drink to prove that you are normal. Let me consume this thing that intoxicates the brain to prove that I am unbroken. I want you to really think about that and how kind of crazy of an idea it is, but how many people do it. How many of you do that? Like well, if I can just drink normally, then I'll be normal. So I have to prove that I can drink.

It's such a crazy loop that you can get caught in. I remember being so terrified of being found out, of having people think that I was different, of having people think that something might be wrong with me, so my anxiety was really intense, and it felt sometimes like I was going to die. I just wanted to run and hide, and that's what shame does.

But here's the thing; I want you to understand, if you can relate to this, why you are freaking out. And sometimes you know what, the best explanation is just to understand how what your brain is currently doing might be helping you. And I think when it comes to the fear of worrying what people will think and the fear of rejection, this is a really powerful place to understand how might my brain, how might all this anxiety actually be helping me.

Because here's the thing; the anxiety that you might have about rejection is serving a purpose, or at least it served a purpose for humans in the past. I want you to think back thousands of years. I talk about this all the time on the podcast. Think back to a time when the world was a dangerous place, your survival was not given. You had to expend a lot of energy just to stay alive.

Guess what helped survival? Guess what helped humans stay alive. Living in community, being part of a tribe and being accepted by a tribe. When you are part of a community, when you are accepted by others, your chance for survival increased because guess what, when you have more people, when it's not just you roaming the world, there's a group of you and

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you're all in it together, it's easier to find food. It's easier to stay safe from predators, it's easier to stay warm, it's easier to build shelters.

Rejection by a tribe thousands of years ago literally reduced your chances of survival. Rejection meant death. I want you to think about that. When it came to survival, when humans were evolving, rejection meant death. So when the idea of being rejected by another person feels unbearable inside of you, there is an evolutionary reason. There is a reason why your brain wants to run and hide and avoid rejection at all costs and will do anything to get away from it.

Your brain, the human brain evolved. It was hardwired to avoid rejection because if you could maintain your status as part of the tribe, part of the community, that would help you survive. When other people rejected you, if you were cast out, that used to mean death. Humans evolved to avoid rejection. You have to understand this, and you have to understand what it means for you now.

Because when you notice rejection coming up for you or the fear of rejection and it feels unbearable, it feels like let me just do anything to avoid it, let me do anything to not have to feel it, you start to understand where that is coming from. You start to see, oh, this really isn't about me. It's not really about whether or not I'm drinking tonight. This is some old stuff. This is some old programming hardwired into the brain, and the part of my brain that thinks rejection is necessary to stay alive.

So think about what this means for you. You have to start learning how to manage your mind because if you don't understand why it is that rejection feels so terrible and why it is that humans now and back in the day were designed to avoid rejection, you'll just believe it. Oh, this is this terrible thing that must be avoided at all costs. You have to recognize why you feel this way because feeling this way, the fear of rejection isn't a problem. The problem is when you listen to that fear blindly.

The problem is when you let that fear of rejection run your life and keep you hiding, and maybe even keep you drinking when you really know that you

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don't like the results that you're getting. You have to be able to talk back to your brain. This is how you start to make headway. You have to understand why the rejection is there. It's old programming. That fear of rejection.

You have to understand that even though it feels like you're going to die, even though it's bringing up all this anxiety, it was connected to human survival and right now you are okay and you are safe. And so in order to make headway, what do you have to do? You have to feel the anxiety about god, what are people going to think? What might they make it mean? What do I think it means?

You have to notice that fear of rejection coming up. You don't push it away. You don't hide from it. You don't make decisions that aren't in line with what you want to do. You remind your brain hey, I'm onto you. I know what this is about. You think this is a life or death situation. It's not. I know why that fear of rejection feels so strong and feels like I would do anything to avoid it because it used to mean death. We're just going to a party, we're just going to happy hour. This is just dinner at a fancy restaurant. I'm okay.

You have to be able to start to talk back to your brain. I know why you're here. I know what this feeling is all about. You think that I'm going to die. I'm totally okay. My survival is not threatened. I'm just not drinking tonight or I'm not drinking this week, or this month, or maybe I've just decided that I don't really want to drink at all anymore. Whatever it is, it's going to feel uncomfortable but I'm also going to be okay.

Because that is exactly what I had to go through, it is exactly what so many of my clients have to go through to really start to show the brain over and over and over again that you're going to be okay. That not drinking, worrying what people will think, dealing with other people's opinions, it's all going to be okay because that's really how you start to get new evidence.

New evidence about is it really true that everyone in the world drinks and that if you don't drink it's weird or that you have a problem? Or is that the world that your brain right now is only available to see? Because it is so set on finding evidence to prove your current belief system true. That really is

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how you are able to create the space to open up your world to see that there might be another possibility.

But when you are stuck in worrying what people will think and you are so terrified of it and you feel the anxiety come up and you'll do anything to avoid it, you'll do anything to have people not ask you, you'll do anything to give the impression that you are drinking, you are missing why it is that your brain is on high alert, why it is that your brain thinks this is about life or death.

Because you know what? Being rejected used to mean that. It used to mean that for humans. It doesn't mean that for you now. This is how you start to do the work of managing your mind, and soon, you can turn worrying what people will think about your decision not to drink, you can turn that into something you can use to your advantage. You can use it to better understand your brain, better understand your negative emotions, teach yourself that even though you feel a negative emotion, you can still take action, and that, my friend, is how you learn to unwind the habit. That is what makes such a tremendous difference.

Alright everybody, that's it for this week. I will see you next Tuesday. Alright, bye-bye.

Hey guys, if you're finding this podcast helpful, and I really hope you are, I would love if you would head on over to iTunes and leave a review. And as a special thank you, I've updated and expanded my free urge meditation give away. 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.