

Ep #119: It Doesn't Matter



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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Ep #119: It Doesn't Matter

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 119.

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.

Well hello all of my friends. Listen, I'm doing an episode today on a single thought. Just one thought. I do this sometimes because you know, your thoughts are incredibly powerful. As soon as you understand the think-feel-act cycle, that your thoughts create your feelings and your feelings drive your actions, when you learn that because you want to change the habits that are not serving you, you've got to pay attention to what's happening in between your ears.

And sometimes shifting one thought can make such a difference. I'll tell you, I did a whole episode, episode number 59 on the thought, "I deserve it." Oh, my lord, that was a thought that kept me stuck for so long. I watch my clients struggle with this as well. I did another episode, episode 21 on the thought, "I can't drink," what happens when we tell ourselves that we can't do something and how it can actually work against you.

And today, I'm going to talk to you all about the thought, "It doesn't matter." It doesn't matter. How often have you heard yourself saying this? Believing this? Not just about the change that you're trying to make when it comes to your drinking, but about so many things in your life.

I used to use it all of the time when it came to my drinking, when it came to what I ate, when it came to my commitment to go to the gym, when it came to spending money. All the time I was telling myself, "It doesn't matter." It's such a perfect thought to look at because you know what, it sounds like it's not really that big of a deal.

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It's not like you're walking around saying, "Oh my god, I'm such a failure. I'm so broken." Now listen, I was saying those things too, but I think it's important to look at the thoughts sometimes that we believe aren't a big deal. A lot of times we are able to recognize negative self-talk, we're able to recognize the thoughts that are really mean or lack compassion.

But we miss some of the ones that sound a little innocuous. They sound like they're not a big deal. And "it doesn't matter" is one of those thoughts. As soon as you start to understand how the habit of overdrinking works in your brain and it is a habit that is built by repetition - it really is. It is built by rewarding your brain over and over again with a drink. As soon as you understand that, you will start to get a new perspective on the thought, "It doesn't matter," and that's what I want to dive into today.

Now, I'm going to tell you, it can pop up at all different times in your life, but I want to look at one specific time where I see it come up for my clients over and over again. It is the very same place where it used to come up for me over and over again.

And where that would happen was when I did something that I had told myself I wasn't going to do. After that moment, after I planned not to drink and then I had a drink or two or three or more, or my weight loss was going well and then I had one of those weekends where you just ate everything in sight, that's where "it doesn't matter" would often come up and where I think it will be so detrimental to your progress moving forward.

Because think about it. How many times in your life have you headed out to an event or come home from work telling yourself I'm not going to drink? Then you have a drink. You make the decision. And when you finish that glass, do you think to yourself, okay, well my plan was for zero so that didn't happen, I had one, but I can get back on track this very moment, I can commit to zero now?

Or in that moment do you tell yourself it doesn't matter, I already screwed up, I already failed, who cares? I see this with weight loss as well. How many times have you stepped on the scale on Monday morning and you

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see that the number has gone up and what do you do? Do you double down on your commitment or do you feel defeated?

And so when you head out the door that morning, maybe you stop by your favorite bagel place because you're telling yourself the whole time well, it doesn't matter? Here's the thing, the reason why I am highlighting these two areas is because in this moment, the thought "it doesn't matter" is a stand in for see, nothing I do works. It never changes. Things were going really well, I didn't drink for four days and then I caved, or things were going really well and I lost five pounds and then I gained it back.

And what you end up doing is you tell yourself in the moment that all your hard work went down the drain, that all of it is lost, it doesn't matter. I want you to imagine what you think the trajectory of success is supposed to look like. Just for a second.

You know, I often share this picture with my clients, and all you have to do is imagine one of those line graphs that we learned in math class, you know where there's an x axis and a y axis and it shows on the graph how two things change in relation to each other. You plot out points and it shows the trajectory of change.

So this picture that I share, the horizontal axis, the x axis is time. So it's showing the change of time. Start with zero time and then maybe a day, two days, three days and four days, whatever. It shows the change of time. And that vertical axis, the y axis that goes up and down, that's progress.

And so you have your horizontal axis of time and your vertical axis of progress and they meet. They meet at a corner and that is where no time has passed and no progress has been made. You start at zero. And points on that graph can show you the change that you are making in progress over time.

So if you have that in your head, I want you to think about well, what should progress look like? Now, you may logically know that this is not the correct answer but I will tell you that most people believe that progress should be a

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perfectly straight line. So imagine a line starting where the x and the y axis are meeting. Starting at that zero point, and from there it is just a perfectly straight diagonal line headed up. Summiting the mountain.

This is what we think progress is supposed to look like. And I love this picture because on that image, that is our expectations. Our expectation is that progress should be this perfectly straight diagonal line, always headed up. That's how we want things to be and that's what we tell ourselves progress should look like.

But on the picture I share with my clients, there's also a second line, and that second line is reality. So instead of plotting out our expectations, we look at what reality looks like on this line graph in relation to progress and time. Reality does not look like your expectations. The line, if you can picture it right now, it looks pretty squiggly.

There are a lot of ups and a lot of downs, a lot of peaks, and a lot of valleys. But it's still headed in the same place. It's still moving upwards despite the peaks and the valleys, despite all the squiggles. It's still headed in the same place as our expectations, it just looks very different. And this is where the thought "it doesn't matter" comes in.

Because I want you to think about the last time that you told yourself you were going to show up differently in life. It can be related to your drinking or not. The last time you told yourself I'm going to do something differently, you probably started out strong. You probably started out with enthusiasm.

Your progress in relation to time was probably headed in a nice trajectory. You were headed towards that peak, and then what happens? Instead of it looking like your expectations, instead of it being that perfectly beautiful never up never down, no squiggles diagonal line, what happened? You hit a valley.

The line tumbles down, you have a setback, you decide to drink or you decide to eat or you decide to spend the money, whatever it is, whatever

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you're working towards, and that's when the brain loves to tell you, "It doesn't matter."

Because in that moment, when you make the decision that is not in line with what you want to do, where you want to go in life, your brain thinks that you've lost the thread. It thinks that you're no longer on track, but actually you are right on schedule. You're just imagining the wrong line. You're imagining what your expectation of reaching your goal looks like, that perfectly beautiful straight, diagonal line headed upwards. You're not imagining the reality. The squiggles, the ups and the downs and the peaks and the valleys.

And so in that moment, what happens? When you start to ask yourself why did I drink that, why did I eat that, why did I spend that money, you start to tell yourself see, I'm not making progress. Progress only looks a certain way. It's just success, success, success, one after another. But of course, that's now how it works.

Because if your brain knew how not to overdrink right now, it wouldn't be overdrinking. If your brain knew how not to overeat right now, it wouldn't be overeating. These are skills that you are learning, so guess what, you cannot just be a series of one win after another. You are going to have moments where it doesn't work.

Changing a habit, it requires creating new neural pathways in your brain. Your brain is literally learning how to do something new. You are teaching yourself a new way to react and to respond, not only to your thoughts and to your feelings but also to urges because right now what happens when we overdrink or we overeat or we overspend? We have an urge to do something and we're obeying the urge.

We need to learn a new way to respond to the urge. But I want you to consider this because this is really what matters more than anything. Any work, and I mean any work that you do to teach yourself something new, to teach yourself a new way to react or to respond to your thoughts or your feelings or your urges is never lost.

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I want you to really hear that because it is not what most people believe. It is not what you have been believing up until this point. Any work that you do to teach yourself a new way to react or to respond to your thoughts and your feelings and your urges is never ever lost.

This is so different. It is radically different from our mentality of an all or nothing world. What do we tell ourselves? You had a drink and you were on a break? Back to square one. No, it doesn't work like that. I can't even tell you how long I was caught in this mentality. I'd told myself I wasn't drinking and then I'd drink, then I was back to square one.

It simply does not work like that, and the reason why we think that it does is because we have such a fixation that the way to succeed is to cross days off a calendar. It's just to accumulate numbers of non-drinking days. And if that is the goal, when you make the decision to drink, what do we tell ourselves? I got to go back to the beginning now, I got to start counting again. None of that work, none of that progress, none of those decisions to say no, none of them count.

I think I've talked about this before on the podcast but I always love thinking about the idea of crossing a bridge. So I want you to imagine that you are on one side of a river and there's a bridge spanning the river, and you are trying to get to the other side.

Now, as you start that journey, as you are crossing the bridge, if you were to fall down at some point during that crossing, you would not stand up and walk back to the beginning, right? We wouldn't do that, it doesn't make any sense when we think about it in those terms, but that's what we do all the time with the work to change habits.

We start crossing the bridge, we start walking, we're on our journey, then we have that moment where we stumble, we have that moment where we fall down and we skin a knee. And what do we want to tell ourselves? That none of the work, none of the journey, none of the steps you have taken up until this point matter, that you have to go all the way back to the beginning.

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That's what the thought "it doesn't matter" is telling your brain. It's telling your brain that all of the previous work that you did, all of the actions that you took before that moment don't count. It's telling you that your work doesn't count. But here's the thing; your actions are never lost. They always count. They are never just down the drain because all of your actions matter.

This really is a huge shift in your thinking, and I know some of you are thinking right now, "Okay fine, all of my actions matter, but Rachel, I have that moment where I fall down or I stumble or I skin my knee and then the habit takes over and I'm back to square one and I'm overdrinking and I'm overeating and I'm overspending, I'm just overdoing it. Why else am I back to that same place if all those actions matter?"

And what I want you to recognize is that you truly, truly, truly are not back at square one. You are not at the same place. Creating that new habit means changing how you respond and react to the decisions that you make, and so think about this. If you drank last night and you weren't going to, how are you responding and reacting today? Are you beating yourself up? Are you in a shame spiral? What are you doing?

If you step on the scale in the morning and you see a higher number, how are you responding and reacting? Are you feeling defeated? Are you feeling guilt and shame and embarrassment? Because I want you guys to think about this; changing any habit is not just about oh, I said I wouldn't do x and then I did it. I said I wouldn't drink and then I drank, I said I wouldn't eat the sugary food and then I ate the sugary food.

That is not how you change a habit. That's one piece of changing a habit, but it is not the complete picture. Because the complete picture is what you did, how you reacted, how you responded when you didn't do the thing you said you would. It's two parts. You have to do both of these parts.

And the problem is we are only looking at the first part, we're only looking at the promise or the commitment that we make to not drink the drink or eat the food or spend the money. We're only looking there. And when we hit a

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road bump, when we have an obstacle, when we have a setback, our focus is still only there. I did the thing I said I wasn't going to do.

But if you really want to change a habit, that's not the only place that you have to pay attention to. You have to pay attention to how you respond and how you react the next day. What happens then? And that's where "it doesn't matter" comes in for so many people, that's where it came in for me over and over again.

"It doesn't matter" ignores the next day, it ignores that you can change how you respond and how you react when you don't do the thing you said you would. "It doesn't matter" sends you down a path of who cares? Screw it, all my work is for naught.

I want you to think about how many times in your life you have set out to do something, maybe it was to take a break from drinking, maybe it was to lose weight, and how many times you have been on this seesaw. You stop and you start and you stop and you start and you stop and you start over and over and over again. That is literally what I did for all of my 20s. Stopping and starting, stopping and starting.

But here's the thing; I want you to think about how much time there was between the stops and the starts, between the moment where you said you were going to do something different and you didn't do it, and the moment where you decided to pick yourself back up and to keep going. Because this is what it would look like for me.

So I would tell myself alright, I'm taking a break, I can't do this, I don't like the results that I'm getting, I just got to say no for a while. And it would work for a while. Sometimes I'd really get some steam going. And then a friend would be in town and we'd go out, and I'd have the best intentions but I'd end up getting drunk.

And then the next day I was so sure that everything I had done up until that point was all down the drain. I'd lost all that hard work, it didn't matter anymore. And then I would tell myself, "Well, it doesn't matter," and I just

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essentially was giving myself permission to throw in the towel, do whatever I wanted, drink as much as I wanted.

And I would go on that way for a while until I got to the point where I got pretty sick of myself and pretty sick of my behavior and the repercussions and I would start the process all over again, and that's what we do. We spend so much wasted time and wasted energy falling back into the habit of overdrinking or of overeating because we're believing that it doesn't matter. We're believing that everything we did before doesn't count, it was all down the drain.

But imagine if you didn't spend weeks or months or years in between starting and stopping. Imagine if you woke up the next day and you responded and reacted differently to your choice from last night. Imagine if instead of telling yourself that it didn't matter, you went to work to learn why it did.

Now, I know that this is frustrating for you guys. It was frustrating for me. It was frustrating to be in this place of doing so well and then the friend would visit or it would get crazy at work or I would go on vacation and it would seem like I was back to all my old habits.

But I want you to know that the moments where it is so frustrating, the moments where you don't understand why you're making the decision that you're making, why you're picking up the drink, why you're eating the nachos is the moment where your work is. That is the moment for you to learn, that is the moment for you to understand how the habit is working.

We want to learn when we're feeling good and our schedule is happening perfectly and nothing is unplanned and nothing unexpected is occurring in our life. But that's not how the world works and that's not how your habit works. That is your moment to have the opportunity to learn. We get in habits of beating ourselves up and tearing ourselves down, believing that we can't change, and those habits are just as detrimental as the habits of overdrinking and the habits of overeating.

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"It doesn't matter" is a lie. And the way that you know that this is true is let's just define the it in "it doesn't matter." You know I love doing this. I love really going deep onto what we are telling ourselves and what words mean. the it in "it doesn't matter" is your actions. That's what you're really saying.

When you're telling yourself "it doesn't matter" over and over again and when you believe it, what you are really saying to yourself is my actions don't matter. What are you doing is you have subscribed to a world where the results that you have are outside of your control. They just happen. You're powerless to change them because your actions don't matter.

You become the victim of your own life. But here's the thing; your actions always matter, and so "it doesn't matter," the idea that your actions don't matter is a lie. Habits are built through repetition. Repetition is just doing the same action over and over again.

So what you decide to do or not do is essential if you want to change any habit. There is no habit change without taking different actions, period. But if you tell yourself it doesn't matter, if you believe my actions don't matter, which is what that thought really boils down to, you will never ever change the habit.

Your actions always count. They are the stuff, they are the very thing that is creating, that is laying down new neural pathways in your brain. Your actions are what create the results of your life. It always matters. Your actions always matter. You have to stop believing this lie.

Alright everybody, that's it for today. 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 would head on over to iTunes and leave a review. And as a special thank you, I've updated and expanded my free urge mediation 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.

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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.