

Ep #121: Picturing Yourself Without the Desire to Drink



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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 121.

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. I am just back from a trip to Dallas. I was in Dallas with my teacher Brooke and six of the most amazing women and we were all working together on building our coaching businesses, and I have to tell you, it is so incredible to be able to do work like this. It is so incredible to be a business owner.

I know I'm kind of gushing right now, but you know, I work from home and I was working this morning and I was kind of deep in thought and I heard my baby giggle in the other room and I just thought, wow, I created this. This is crazy. So just wanted to say shout-out to all those women. I love you guys so much.

Listen, we are talking about picturing yourself without the desire to drink. Now, I know for some of you it feels kind of impossible. You love to drink. You love to drink wine. You love feeling buzzed. You love coming home and opening up a bottle. So picturing yourself without the desire to drink, it might break your brain a little bit.

I remember this happening to me. I remember when I desired alcohol so much but that desire and the fact that I was constantly saying yes to that desire was causing a lot of negative results in my life. And I remember thinking, "I just wish I didn't want it so much. I wish I didn't love it so much. Then it would be easier to say no."

Because of course, I didn't understand what else to do with all this desire that I had. I had all the desire and I said yes to the desire. And so it seemed to me like the solution was okay, if I just didn't love it so much. But then of

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course my brain would get all tangled up because I started thinking, "Well, how can you just stop loving something? You can't just stop loving. You either love something or you don't love something."

It felt like this very innate, hardwired part of me, but of course, it wasn't hardwired at all. My desire for alcohol, my love for alcohol was something I had created. I had trained my brain to love it.

Now, I know most of you listening feel like this isn't really possible. It isn't really possible to stop desiring alcohol. It feels like it is something that is just baked in to how you were created. And if you feel this way, you might also think like, "Well yeah, this is my lot in life. I don't know why it is that I desire it so much. I just do."

And if I have a lot of desire for something, if I have a lot of longing, a lot of love, a lot of wanting for something and then I deny it to myself, then the only outcome is suffering. And that doesn't feel very good either, so you feel stuck between these two places. One where you keep saying yes to your desire, and then getting negative results from overdrinking, and the other, the other imagined place of suffering is saying no to your desire, being stuck with all that deprivation, and still suffering.

So that's why it so often feels when you are in the habit of overdrinking, like you are in a lose-lose situation. I want you to know that you're not. Now, I know a lot of you who listen to the podcast actually take the concepts here and apply it well beyond the realm of just overdrinking.

So you listen to me talk about the framework of the think-feel-act cycle and that idea that your thoughts create your feelings and those feelings, your emotions actually drive whatever you do or don't do in life. They drive your actions.

So for you, as we're going through this episode where I'm talking about picturing yourself with the desire to drink, I want you to picture yourself without the desire to overeat, or the desire to overspend, or you might even think about picturing yourself without the desire for another person.

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I remember this very clearly at different points in my own life. Liking a guy when I was already in a relationship and wanting to not want him, wanting to not desire him. No matter what your situation is, you can use these tools and this is why thought work is so incredible, because it really is the metaskill of learning how to manage your mind.

So the good news is this; all of the things out there, all of the things that we desire, alcohol, food, shopping, people, it's just the emotion of wanting, which means it is created by a thought in your mind. It does not matter what you are desiring. What matters really is how you respond to that desire.

The more you say yes to your object of desire, and that can be a glass of wine or a bag of chips or going shopping on Amazon, or your crush, the more you say yes to the object of your desire, the more you will want it. Responding, saying yes to desire perpetuates more desire. It causes your desire to grow and to continue on.

The very best tool that you have at your disposal is learning how to picture yourself as someone without that desire. Now, I know a lot of you are like, really? Shouldn't I just be gritting my teeth? Shouldn't I just be using willpower? And anyway, how do you do that? How do you picture yourself as someone who you're not? I don't want to lie to myself.

That's what a lot of you are probably thinking. But thankfully, your brain, the human brain, everybody's brain has this amazing superpower at its disposal. The ability to imagine. Imagination is not just a domain of kids or creative types. Imagination is your brain's ability to think about things and think about situations that aren't in your present environment. It's a way for you to experience the future.

You use imagination all the time. It is essential for problem solving. If you're trying to search for a better way of doing things, but you don't yet know what that better way is. You use your imagination. It is essential for you to see the full picture, to consider all sides of a situation and if you are learning and practicing the think-feel-act cycle, if you are learning how to

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manage your mind, this is a key skill. Stepping outside of the current box that you are in and seeing different perspectives.

So imagination is a superpower that every human brain can access, and here's the thing. You use it all of the time. You are using your imagination every single day, but I guarantee you're not labeling it that way. The problem is that most of you are putting your imagination to use for negative things.

You are not sitting around considering and thinking about things that aren't in your present environment in a positive way. You're thinking about things that aren't in your present environment in a negative way. So you're not imagining how things can go right. You're imagining how everything will go wrong.

This is catastrophizing. This is worrying. When nothing yet has actually happened but the brain is imagining all the terrible outcomes. Everything bad that could happen. And that is using imagination against yourself because what happens when you catastrophize and worry in the present moment about something that has not yet happened, it does not yet exist, you are creating negative emotion, negative feelings in the present moment and then trying to figure out how to cope with those negative emotions.

You are feeling negative about something that only exists in your mind. It only exists in your imagination. So then you feel a lot of those negative emotions, the doubt, the anxiety, the fear, whatever it is, and then you start trying to cope with them. And how do a lot of us like to cope with negative emotions? Well, we turn to things in our external environment to temporarily dull and numb how we feel. We pour a drink.

We eat some food, we turn on the TV, we look at our phone, we go order something off Amazon. I want you to think about this; I think this is such an incredibly powerful mindset switch. What if you dedicated as much mental energy imagining how things could go right as you do right now imagining how things will go wrong?

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Because that is where so much of your mental energy is focused on how things will go wrong. Just consider that. What if you didn't even have to drop all the negative imaginings of your brain, you didn't have to stop worrying or catastrophizing. You just committed to giving equal space and equal energy to imagining positive outcomes.

That would transform everything. And imagine how it would transform your drinking. Imagine how it would transform any of the habits in your life that are creating negative results for you. So many of you are getting stuck because you're so focused on all the over-desire that you have right now.

You're so focused on how you're never going to lose that desire and how taking a break from drinking can only mean suffering in the future, when of course, that is only one possible scenario. So what you're doing, you're thinking about the object of your desire, alcohol, and then you're catastrophizing what life will be like without it.

But here's the thing; if you were someone without the desire to drink, if you really didn't desire alcohol, life wouldn't be bad at all if you weren't drinking because you wouldn't be wanting it. Now, that's not what your brain thinks right now. What your brain is envisioning is okay, I'm getting all these negative results from my drinking, so what if I take alcohol out of my life?

So your brain starts to imagine that. And then you imagine being around alcohol and watching other people drink and going out to restaurants and going out to bars and coming home from work. And then imagining all this deprivation and all this restriction because of course your thoughts are, "I want that. I want to have some too."

But of course, if you were actually someone who didn't desire alcohol, that is not at all what it would look like because there is a second possibility. If you take a break from drinking, you can be around alcohol, you can go to the restaurants and you can come home from work and you can hang out with friends, whatever it is, and you can not desire it. You can not want it. You can be in that place. You can be around it without deprivation because the desire itself is absent.

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If this seems like a stretch right now for your brain, that's okay. It should. Because that is not where your mental energy has been focused. I spent years all throughout college, all throughout my 20s with so much desire and thinking all about the desire I had and thinking all about how I would be suffering if alcohol wasn't in my life.

And now I have zero desire. I don't desire alcohol at all, and I'm not resisting it, I'm not suffering because the desire is totally gone. So how is this possible? You can't just lose your desire, can you? You can. You can lose your desire because of the think-feel-act cycle, because it is not hardwired into you. It is an emotion created by your thoughts.

If you right now have a lot of desire to drink, it's because you have a lot of desirous thoughts about alcohol that you're not even noticing as optional thoughts. You just think they are the reality. And when you think these thoughts, you feel the desire and you answer that desire with a drink. That is your action. That's how the think-feel-act cycle is unfolding for you, and then you are perpetuating desire in your own brain.

The more you act on it, the more you say yes to a drink, the more you say yes to the thoughts that you are thinking, the more your brain wants alcohol, the more your brain desires it. And when you embark on taking a break from drinking, it is so hard in that moment to see anything but how this is just going to be miserable, how this is going to be an exercise in gritting your teeth and white-knuckling it because of all the desire you have right now and all the mental energy and time you spend focusing on the desire.

But wherever you are right now, whatever your desire level is right now for drinking, that is not your destiny. Your desire is not static. You can learn how to change it. The problem is that unless you know how to change it, unless you know how to apply the think-feel-act cycle, you will always feel stuck.

And this is why so many of you have said in your life before, "Well sure, I don't always drink. Sometimes I go to the party and I don't drink, but I

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always feel deprived, or maybe I've even gone a month without drinking. I did dry January. But I still wanted to drink just as much at the end as I did when I started."

Because when you were saying no, you weren't changing your desire. You were just resisting it. And this is where imagination comes in. This is where you can use your brain's ability to think about something that does not presently exist in your current environment.

Now, a lot of you have a head start because you were not born desiring alcohol. There's a point in your life that you can think back to where you didn't want it. You didn't come out of the womb desiring a glass of wine. You trained your brain to expect the reward from alcohol at certain times and in certain situations, which is why you feel cravings, why you feel urges when it's five o'clock, when you're cooking dinner, when you're at a restaurant or a party, when you're sitting out in your patio enjoying the sunset.

You trained your brain that it would be rewarded at these times. I trained my brain back in the day to want it when I was socializing, when I was meeting new people, when I was going out on dates. And then in my 20s, it started to be something that I trained my brain to desire after work.

And now I don't want it in any of these situations. How is that possible? Just because you can learn how to teach your brain something new. If you can find the think-feel-act cycle fueling the desire to drink, then you can decide on purpose to change it, and it is as simple as identifying thoughts like, "I want a drink. That sounds good. That looks good. I need a break. I need to unwind."

So how do you shift those thoughts? How do you shift the thoughts that are creating your desire? Well, I'll tell you one way. You have to imagine what the version of you would think if they truly had zero desire to drink. You have to start to consider that future self. You have to start picturing yourself without that wanting, that longing, that love for alcohol, and consider what would she be thinking about.

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What would she be thinking about after work or at the restaurant or on date night? What would that future version of yourself who doesn't desire alcohol, what would be running through her mind? Now, I'll tell you she would not be thinking, "I want it, I want it, I want it," but she also wouldn't be thinking, "Don't drink, don't drink, don't drink."

And that's where so many of you spend so much of your energy, flip-flopping back and forth between those two thoughts. I want it, I want it, I want it, and don't drink, don't drink, don't drink. I want you to really spend some time with this idea. Picture yourself without the desire. Even though it feels strange right now, even though it feels challenging, this is such an amazing tool for you that you can always access.

You're in the grocery store, you go by the wine section. Would the future version of you without the desire to drink, would she put the wine in her grocery cart? No, of course not. She doesn't have the desire. If not, then what would she be thinking and what would she be feeling?

Would that future version of yourself who doesn't have any desire, when she got the invite from the drinking buddy, would she say yes? Probably not. Well, why not? What would she be thinking instead?

When you walk through the door, when you come home from work, would that future version of you with no desire, would she head straight to the kitchen and crack open a bottle of wine? If not, what would she be thinking about instead? What would she be feeling instead?

I know a lot of you, when I'm pushing you to start to use your imagination that you're so used to using, you have really exercised your imagination muscle, but you've exercised it for catastrophizing and worrying, I know a lot of you are thinking, "I have no idea. I have no idea what that future version of myself who doesn't desire alcohol would be thinking."

This is a thought that is killer. When you tell yourself I have no idea, it creates confusion. When you're confused, your mind is just blank. It's like there's nothing there. Do not let it get in the way of accessing your

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imagination. What if you just took a guess? What if you couldn't be wrong? What if you did know?

I'll tell you, I really like asking myself this question and I do it all the time. What if I did know the answer? What would it be? All it sometimes takes is a small shift in your thinking to start to access all your wisdom and all your knowledge. Using your imagination to picture yourself without the desire to drink is so powerful because it allows you to tap into a part of yourself that right now you can't even conceive, you don't even think is there.

But as soon as you turn on your imagination, all of a sudden, you see it's not as far away as you might think. Because whatever current thoughts you are having about alcohol, we know this; they aren't serving you. They're just creating more and more desire.

People who don't desire alcohol don't think about alcohol. They don't think about how not to drink. They don't think about what to tell people if someone offers them a drink. They aren't even worried about being offered a drink. And they're certainly not worried about being around it. They are most definitely not negotiating how much am I going to drink tonight or at this party or on this date or at this restaurant.

If you want to learn how not to desire alcohol, if you want to retrain your brain, you have to start practicing the way someone who doesn't desire alcohol thinks. Instead of thinking about it all the time and thinking about okay, what am I going to need to do in order not to drink, what am I going to need to do in order to answer people's questions, you have to start thinking about how you would be as a person who it just doesn't even cross your mind.

When you tap into that person, and you can, you will have so much knowledge at your fingertips. I'll tell you, I was working with someone recently who was going to an event and was really worried about what to say if someone offered her a drink, and she was coming up with ideas about excuses or justifications she could make to try to have a good reason.

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But here's the thing; the person who doesn't desire alcohol doesn't need an excuse and doesn't need to justify the decision to say no. She just says no thanks and moves on with the night. It barely registers on her radar. And if someone asks her why, there's not some big convoluted story. She's not coming up with excuses. "Oh, I have to wake up early tomorrow morning. I'm on antibiotics."

She's not thinking about that. She just simply says I don't want to. The end. This is the power of picturing yourself with the desire to drink, or frankly, without the desire for anything that right now is creating negative results in your life because suddenly everything gets super clear.

You can use your imagination, which you by the way are using all the time, you're just using it to create more negative thoughts. You can use that imagination, you can redirect it to help you come up with new thoughts that you can start practicing, even if they don't come naturally. It doesn't matter.

It's like working out. Going to the gym the very first time I went, doing a push up did not come naturally. If I had thought that was the problem, guess what I would have done? I just would have stopped. So you can use your imagination to come up with new thoughts, you can start practicing them, and then you can start taking action based on those thoughts.

Start saying no, and guess what will happen. Not only will your thinking start to change, but your desire will start to change. You will be well on your way to training your brain something new. And it starts with picturing yourself as someone without the desire to drink.

So that is what I am challenging you to do. I am challenging you to take what I have told you on the podcast today and not just think about it as an interesting concept. Get a piece of paper, get a pen, and start using your imagination as your own superpower.

Use it to picture yourself without the desire to drink and write about what you would be thinking about, how you would be feeling, what you would be doing, what would happen when someone would offer you a drink when

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you were around alcohol, when you came home from work, when you met new people, whatever it is, really use your imagination to start to step into the shoes of that future version of yourself because I will promise, she is out there.

There is a future version of you where this is not an issue. You don't even worry about it. It's not even something that really crosses your mind. It's like a blip on the radar, but you have to first access that knowledge.

Alright, that's it for today. I will see you guys 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 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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