

## Ep #128: Is Drama Behind Your Drinking?



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 128.

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. We are talking about drama today, and this is actually going to be a two-part podcast because I have a lot to say on this topic and I also want to make sure that you guys really learn a tool that you can use to help start to dial down any drama that you're having in your life, and that's what the second podcast is going to focus on.

But for today, we're going to spend some time really understanding drama and what it is because I will tell you this; for a long time, this was a really sticky topic for me. The thing is no one wants to be seen as dramatic. I certainly didn't want to be seen as dramatic and I had to do a lot of internal work in order to understand that yes indeed, I was creating a lot of drama in my life, and that drama was actually contributing to the habit of drinking.

So I had to come to terms with my role in the drama that I was creating. Drama that I was creating without even knowing it. I will tell you this; for a very long time, when I talked about what was happening in my life, when I talked about what was happening in my day or I talked about my past, I thought I was just relaying the news. But really, my brain had made a habit of blowing things out of proportion.

So I want to go into this today so that you can identify where this is showing up for you and trust me, if you are right now listening thinking, oh, I don't ever do that, I don't ever add any drama or insert any drama, I really challenge you to listen to today's episode and see where it applies because I have never ever worked with a client who is not doing this in some way, shape, or form.

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So today we're going to be talking about what exactly does it mean to be dramatic and I'm going to tell you right now, it's not what you expect. Why do we engage in this behavior? Why do we engage in drama? How do you know if you're doing it, how do you know if you're injecting a lot of drama into your life, and how creating drama actually connected to the habit of drinking. This piece is really important and it's why it's not enough just to decide oh, I'm not going to drink.

If you're having a lot of drama in your life and you don't resolve that, you are never going to find a sustainable solution for you when it comes to alcohol. And then in the next episode, what I'm going to share with you is just a really simple tool that you can start using to turn down the volume of drama in your life, and I'm going to share that with you next week.

Okay, so first, let's talk about the idea of drama and being dramatic. Now, for a lot of you out there when you hear me talk about drama, the first thing that probably comes to mind is the idea of a drama queen. So you may have called someone a drama queen, you may have been called a drama queen. You probably bristled if this was the case, if you were called a drama queen.

I know any time that term was thrown my way, I definitely bristled. So before we go any further, I just want to back up a little bit because you're not going to be surprised if you listen to this podcast to know I don't like that term. I don't like the term drama queen. And not just because there isn't a male equivalent, which by the way, there isn't. I don't like it because a lot of women can relate to being told that they are being dramatic.

This happens quite a bit, especially during arguments or disagreements. I actually found that this would happen a lot for me when I was just trying to make a point. So I wasn't necessarily in an argument, I wasn't disagreeing with someone, but I was very firmly stating my opinion, and I would have people tell me, "You're being kind of dramatic, don't you think?" because that word, dramatic is a way to shut down conversation.

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It's a way of saying I don't think that you should have the reaction that you have. I don't think that you should be reacting the way that you are. I think that you're making something out of nothing, or a mountain out of a molehill. So if you have bristled at this idea or if you have bristled at being called dramatic and so you might be thinking yeah, I don't even want to consider that I am, listen, I get you. I'm right there with you, but it is a really important concept for you to understand.

So if we dig into it a little bit deeper, you can just think about a drama is just a performance where people are acting out a story and it may be happening live, it may be happening on something that you're watching on a screen, but that's what drama is. So when you call someone dramatic, not only are you saying that the response is out of proportion with what is happening, they shouldn't be reacting the way that they are, they're being melodramatic, what you're really saying is that they're kind of performing a more intense version of whatever is happening, of the situation.

And sometimes people also mean that that performance is part of garnering a particular reaction or trying to attract attention. So like I said, I discovered that I injected a lot of drama into my life, but I didn't know that I was doing it. I thought that I was reacting according to what was happening. But the truth is that I was unknowingly blowing a lot of things out of proportion and having a lot of drama. Not because I was a dramatic person, but because I was having a lot of dramatic thoughts, and therein lies the difference.

Because everyone and I mean everyone, every single person will sometimes respond to a situation in a way that is not in keeping with what is really happening. You know that this has happened to you. You certainly can spot it with other people. Maybe you're waiting in line and the cashier has to keep scanning something. You watch them scan it over and over and over again and it won't scan, and you notice yourself kind of standing there waiting, and you're internally kind of losing your mind.

You're creating a lot of drama about what is happening or not happening as the case may be. Or maybe you find yourself freaking out when someone

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cuts you off in traffic. It's not really a big deal, but you have a level of emotion that is not in keeping with what is going on. Or I know that this has certainly happened, that I have let out a string of expletives that just come out of my mouth and my husband will rush into room worried about what has happened, and it's like I misplaced something. Nothing really happened.

But from what he heard, he thought there was a real problem, a real emergency happening. I will say as an aside, I think that culturally, we are socialized to see drama and being dramatic as a female trait. I don't think that that is true. I will tell you that when I was in high school, I happened to have the misfortune, maybe the fortune, I don't know, if having my locker next to a boy who was a year older than me and this guy was - he just was always getting into trouble.

And I cannot even tell you the number of times that I was minding my business at my locker in between classes trying to get my next set of books for my next class, and I would turn around to a ruckus and see that oh, I was actually in the middle of a fight. The guy next to me had gotten in a fight with someone and there I was, kind of oblivious to it all, but suddenly in the center of it.

He was always getting into fights and I somehow was just always in the way of his fights. And I will tell you this; if you or someone that you know or someone that you see is hitting someone because you are angry or offended, that is dramatic. That is really blowing something out of proportion. But listen, no one in my high school was calling this guy a drama queen.

When in fact, we could have applied that label. He was very dramatic except that his drama often expressed itself with his fists. So when you create drama, you're just simply adding unnecessary or extreme emotion to a situation, and the only one, the only one who can be the judge of whether or not this is happening is you. You are the only person that can identify it.

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If you find yourself thinking I don't ever do that, I really want you to challenge yourself to be honest. And if you ever hear someone who says oh, I don't ever do that, just really consider whether or not they are being honest. Because we are all humans and we all do this sometimes. If you are in the habit of adding unnecessary emotion to your life, you better believe that that is going to impact looking for relief later on, looking for relief from the drama, and that's where alcohol comes in, and that's where so many habits that we use to numb ourselves come in.

So it can be things like eating and spending money, and spending a lot of time on the couch, whatever it is, you will be looking for relief if you are also creating a lot of drama with your thoughts. So that's what drama is. But let's understand why people do this. Why do we engage in creating drama in our own lives? It doesn't seem like it would make very much sense because of course, whenever you ask someone well, how do you want to feel? I want to feel better, I want to feel calm, I want to feel at peace, I want to feel relaxed. So then why are we injecting a lot of drama into our lives?

Now, if you ask people out in the world well, why is someone a drama queen? And they'll say oh, so and so just wants attention or they want everyone to feel sorry for her, or they're just trying to make me feel bad, or they're insecure and they need to be the center of attention. Or it's all about manipulating people. This is what you'll hear. These are the explanations for why people can be dramatic.

But the real reason has nothing to do with any of these explanations. In fact, they all miss the point because the real reason is that humans create drama because that is how the brain was wired. Seeing danger in your environment, including danger that was not there helped humans stay alive. It's part of evolution.

So imagine - put yourself back in time. Maybe you're out on the savannah and you hear a rustling in the bush. From an evolutionary perspective, let's consider what's more helpful when you hear that rustling in the bush. Is it a mouse or is it a tiger? What is more helpful from an evolutionary perspective?

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Well of course, from the point of evolution it makes more sense to think it's a tiger because if it's a mouse, you're not going to take any precautions. You're not going to think hey, I might be vulnerable to attack. You're just going to go about your merry way. You're not going to think that an attack is coming.

But if you consider I don't know, that rustling might be something that can eat me, it might be something that can hurt me, then you can at least be prepared for a fight, you can be prepared to defend yourself if it turns out that your brain is right, that there is something rustling in the bushes that's going to attack you.

I really cannot say this enough. Your brain is predisposed to favor negative interpretations. Interpretations that favor seeing danger, that favor seeing worst case scenario. And this is so important because if you don't understand that your brain was wired to spot the negative, then you can't understand why it is that you are finding the negative in your everyday life.

Now, understanding that your brain may have this predisposition doesn't mean that you can't challenge it, it doesn't mean that you can't change it, it doesn't mean that you can't retrain your brain to start creating new habits, but you have to be aware that it's happening in the first place, and most people have no idea. We think that we're just relaying the news. The bush rustled, so there's probably a tiger.

We think we're just giving the headlines of the day, when in fact it is that brain of ours, that lower brain that is so concerned about survival that is constantly trying to spot the negative. Now remember, I talk about this all the time on the podcast how the brain likes to create habits. It likes to be efficient. It likes to save energy because surviving hundreds of thousands of years ago required a ton of energy.

It required a ton of energy to find food and to find shelter and to find a partner and to stay safe, and so if you're expending all this energy just to stay alive, then of course your brain is going to want to do anything and

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everything that it can to try to save energy, and this is what habits do for our brain. It helps us be more efficient.

Now, the problem is the lower brain doesn't care if the habit is good or bad. It just cares that it's saving energy, and your brain will just be on autopilot, it will just be running the habit unless you intervene. So if you have - and I think all humans do - habits built on spotting the negative in your environment, your brain is going to continue down this path. It will stay on autopilot of finding the negative unless you redirect it to consider what is happening differently.

And you can do this if you choose to. So much of thought work is really just about getting off autopilot, getting out of just doing things rote and instead, really bringing awareness to everything that not only you're doing but that you're thinking and you're feeling. So that's why it is that we engage in this behavior. It's not because people just want attention or we want everyone to feel sorry for us, or we're just super insecure. It's because the brain is really good at spotting the negative.

Any time you spot the negative, it is going to potentially add unnecessary or extreme emotion to a situation. It's going to create a little drama for you. So how do you know if you're doing this? If you're not sure, the first thing that you can think about is how much calm is there in your life. Most people will say not a lot. There is not an equal balance between calm and stress. There is a ton of stress, a ton of anxiety.

The balance is totally skewed because that's what happens when everything is an emergency, even though nothing has really yet gone wrong. And that's the question that I really love using with myself when I notice drama starting to creep in, when I notice my anxiety levels starting to climb, just asking myself has anything actually gone wrong yet?

That question is so powerful because if I let my brain go on autopilot, it will just paint a story of doom and gloom that is waiting for me in the future. I'm definitely going to miss that flight. We're totally going to get in an argument tonight when my husband gets home. We're not going to have enough

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money. People are going to laugh at me. My brain can just really go on autopilot because it's done it for so many years with the doom and gloom story.

But when I ask myself when I notice that anxiety starting to creep in, has anything actually gone wrong yet, so often my brain is able to see no, no it hasn't. I'm anticipating that things are about to go wrong but nothing has actually gone wrong yet. Now, you may be thinking to yourself yeah, but Rachel, what if something has happened? What if something has gone wrong like I lost my job or someone got a diagnosis or my brother was just arrested? What then?

And I think then, you can ask yourself another really effective, powerful question. Are you safe right now and is someone else safe right now? Either of those questions can again, help to redirect your brain away from the drama because almost always, I find the answer is yes. Yes, right now I am safe. Yes, right now he is safe. Your brain may be screaming about a future that is not safe, but you can return to this very moment and see that you are.

So that's all that you really need to do to determine whether or not you're having a lot of drama in your life is how often do you feel like you're at DEFCON 1? That used to me all the time. I was not operating as if it was peace time. I was operating at DEFCON 1. Maximum readiness, ready for combat, nuclear war is imminent all the time. My brain was constantly creating all this drama about myself, my family, my job, my relationships, money, you name it, I was there ready for the very worst thing that could happen.

And now, the problem is when you feel this way, when you're at DEFCON 1 all the time, when you're in it, you're in it, but you don't even know that you're in it. You don't even know that you're adding the unnecessary or extreme emotion because you're actually in the midst of feeling that emotion. And that emotion that you are feeling, the fear and the anxiety, whatever it is, it is telling you oh my god, we got to baton down the hatches, make a plan, get ready, run for cover. It's all about reacting.

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And this happens because so many of us are so used to just responding to emotions. This is what I did for years and years, and it can be responding to our anxiety or responding to our desire to drink, which by the way are so interconnected. We are so used to responding and reacting to how we feel instead of watching and observing how we feel, and this really is the key shift, especially if you notice your brain wanting to generate a lot of drama. You've got to slow down.

This is what I talk about all the time here on the podcast. Really using the think-feel-act cycle is not just a matter of understanding that your thoughts create your feelings and your feelings drive your actions, it is a matter of learning how to watch and observe yourself and your mind and your emotions from a distance. You can witness an emotion in your body, whether it is anxiety or desire and not be at the mercy of it.

It's like hearing a fire alarm going off. We don't just run screaming from the building when a fire alarm goes off. We pause. We wonder to ourselves, hey, what's happening? Is that really a fire? Do I see smoke anywhere else? What should I do? That is the way that you can start thinking about how you can respond not only to the thoughts that you're having in your mind but also the emotions that you are feeling in your body.

And this really brings us to how drama connects to the habit of drinking because if you are describing your life as I'm just putting out fires all the time, which is what I felt like for a very long time, just putting out fires. If you are doing this day in and day out, then you better believe that by the end of every day, you're going to need relief from all the fires. You will go in search of feeling better.

And this is why if you want to create sustainable change, you have to have a focus that is bigger than just do I say yes to a drink or do I say no to a drink. This is where I was for years. My focus was purely on should I drink or not drink, do I say yes or do I say no. I was so fixated on the drink itself. I didn't understand that the reason I couldn't create a sustainable long-lasting solution to the habit was because I wasn't doing anything to combat all the drama, all the fires that I felt like I had to put out during the day.

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As long as that didn't change, I couldn't actually change the root problem of the habit, which was my search to feel better. This is the problem that most people get caught in. They have no idea that they are making their own drama with their mind.

I didn't know this. I would just tell you, listen, I've got a really stressful job, guys. There are work emergencies all day long and I'm not all-powerful. I just can't change work. I just can't change my job. But that was because I didn't understand that all of the negative emotion that was connected to what was happening at work was not a product of my job, it was not a product of what was happening. It wasn't my boss. It wasn't my boss's boss.

It was the product of my thinking. It was me that was creating it. My mind, my thoughts, my brain. You know, I remember this so clearly because before I became a life coach, I was working at a human rights foundation. I was in the communications department and we were just constantly on top of the headlines.

We worked around the world and so we were paying attention to the headlines around the world and we were constantly thinking about how can we take advantage of what's happening in the news cycle and get our experts on TV, get them quoted in articles, how can we make sure that our particular lens on an issue made it into what the news is talking about.

So we were paying attention to news all around the world and we had a pretty big department. And I remember so clearly, there was one guy in the department and no matter what was going on, he was just a joy to be around, always. He was so calm, he was never phased, he never seemed stressed, and it was so perplexing to me because I always felt like I was in the middle of a tornado at work.

And it was like he was peacefully standing outside of it, and I just remember thinking all the time like, how can I get what he has? I'll have what he's having, but I didn't even know what he was having. I just knew that I wanted it. And the problem was is that I didn't realize that yes, things

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were happening in the headlines, yes, things were happening in our department, yes, the boss was making requests of projects for us to be working on and yes, we had the same deadlines.

But my thinking and his thinking was dramatically different. My thoughts were why I felt like I was constantly in the middle of a tornado. I was constantly thinking I'm behind, I don't have enough time, I'm never going to get this done, she's going to be upset with me, this has to be done now. All the time, these kinds of thoughts were running through my brain all the time.

And so it was creating all this unnecessary and extreme emotion to my workday. Now, had I known about this work back then, had I been able to ask myself you know, has anything actually gone wrong, Rachel? The answer would have been no. Had I been able to question myself, are you safe right now? I would have been able to say yes. But my emotional state at work did not match those answers because unbeknownst to me, I was operating with a brain that was predisposed to find the tornado.

It was finding the tornado as a habit. And so when the day would come to a close and a colleague would say like, hey, do you want to head to the bar and get drinks tonight after work? I was always like oh my god, yes, yes, yes, when can we go? When are we leaving? And I would do this over and over again and if I wasn't heading to the bar, I couldn't wait to get home and relax with a bottle of wine. I couldn't wait to go home and have dinner.

Food was another thing for me. It was a way for me to try to take the edge off of all the drama that I was creating during the day. The more I created drama during the day with my thoughts, the more relief I needed at night. And the more relief I needed, the more I turned to alcohol and food to feel better. And guess what? The more I turned to external things to try to cope with how I felt, the less able I was to cope with how I felt on my own.

So my drama was growing, the need for relief was growing, and my ability to cope with how I felt was decreasing. So you put that all together and guess what's going to happen? I was creating more and more

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consequences in my life with my consumption. Not just with alcohol but with food as well. And the more consequences I created, the more I woke up the next day and felt like oh god, why did I do that? Or I stepped on the scale and I thought jeez, there goes two weeks of hard work with last night's binge.

The more drama I was creating for myself, which was just adding to the relief that I needed. And you know what, it wasn't just drama about what was happening in my day-to-day life from my relationships, it was drama that I had about the habit of drinking because my thoughts sounded a lot like this; I'm never going to figure this out, I'm going to spend my entire life struggling with this, no one else can relate, something is wrong with me, I'm sure a disaster.

I did not yet know enough; I didn't understand about the think-feel-act cycle. I didn't understand about how we can learn to manage our mind. I didn't yet know enough to be able to say listen Rachel, sometimes you drink too much because you don't yet know how to allow an urge and you don't have a ton of practice at allowing discomfort to be there without trying to cover it up. That's it. It doesn't have anything to do with what the rest of your life is going to look like. It's just some skills that you need to start practicing.

What I had to come to terms with was that I was injecting a lot of drama into my life without even knowing it, but not because I was a dramatic person. Because I had a lot of dramatic thoughts. I believed I was just relaying the news when in actuality, my brain had this kind of knee-jerk habit of really blowing things out of proportion.

Not because I wanted to feel bad. Of course, I wanted to feel better, but because my brain was doing what it thought it needed to do to help keep me safe. So I want you to consider where this shows up for you in your life. It's so important. Because next week, I'm going to share a tool with you to show you how you can really start decreasing the drama that you experience, which in turn is going to make it so you need less relief at the end of the day.

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And if you need less relief, then guess what. When the desire appears, it will be easier to say no to it. If you feel like you need a ton of relief, then when your desire appears, it is going to be much more difficult to say no. So this is what I'm going to show you how to do next week, but for now, think about how it appears in your life.

If you're noticing yeah, I think I do create a lot of drama, don't beat yourself up. It doesn't mean anything negative about you. It just means that you have a piece of information that we can now use to start to change the habit. 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 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](http://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](http://RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.

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