

Ep #129: How to Reduce Drama in Your Life



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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 129.

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 everybody. Welcome back. This is a two-part podcast on drama. Part one, episode 128 was all about what drama is, why the human brain is predisposed to create it, and how it affects your drinking. And today on part two, what I want to show you is how to decrease it.

Because here's the thing; if you feel like you are constantly putting out fires, if you're constantly running around crazed, and I know a lot of you out there can relate to this, I definitely could relate to this for a really long time, then there is a lot of drama in your life. Now, most of you think yeah, I know, tell me about it. There's a lot going on. But that drama is being created from your mind. It is being created by the think-feel-act cycle and not by what is happening in your life.

So that's what we're going to talk about today. How do you start to decrease the drama in your life while your life stays the same? It's not about changing things outside of you. It's about changing the thoughts that are running through your mind because I guarantee that the drama you are feeling during the day is connected to the need to feel better and the need to feel better is often what is fueling the habit of drinking.

When you don't understand how the think-feel-act cycle works, when you don't understand how your thoughts are actually creating your feelings and driving all of your actions, including the decision to say yes to a drink, what ends up happening is you get caught in this cycle where you're constantly looking to feel better by consuming something, and then you start consuming things like alcohol or food that are creating negative

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consequences, and then you don't know how to change it because you're not understanding the bigger picture.

You're not understanding how your thoughts are actually the root of everything here. The more drama you have, the more relief you will need, and then the more you will consume in order to feel better. But if that becomes your way, your coping mechanism of feeling better, guess what, you're going to need to consume more and more, and you'll create steeper and steeper consequences that guess what, leave you wanting to feel better.

You know, for a long time this issue of creating drama in my own life was really a sticky topic for me. I talked about this in the last episode because no one wants to be seen as dramatic, and in fact, if someone had said hey Rachel, I think that you're being really dramatic, I probably would have been pretty annoyed at them and maybe given them a piece of my mind.

Nobody wants to hear that their suffering is of their own making. I didn't want to hear that. But really allowing myself to recognize how I was the source of the drama in my life is what allowed me to figure out my drinking. That really was the key.

So you have to be really honest with yourself. Even if this is an area where you just really resist the idea of thinking of yourself as dramatic or thinking of yourself as adding drama or creating your own suffering, you really have to be honest with yourself. Because the more honest that you can be, the more quickly you will be able to figure out why it is it's so hard to say no to a drink.

So there are a couple areas where I see drama appear most frequently in my own life and also for my clients, and they are time, to-dos, appearance, work, and family. And it's really simple how you go about really reducing and turning down the volume on the drama you're experiencing in these areas.

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First and foremost, you just have to spot it. You have to notice your thoughts. And that seems pretty simple, but for a lot of you who are new to this work, just tuning into what you are thinking will be a change. So you have to spot the thoughts creating the drama, and then you have to start to shift your thinking so that you can turn down the volume on it.

Now again, this is not about positive thinking. This is not about telling yourself that everything is sunshine and roses and just beautiful days. A lot of times, all you need to do is start noticing the opinion and the judgment that you have created with your mind and added to what is happening with your mind and just start making it a little bit more neutral.

So what I'm going to do is give you lots of real-life examples today in all of these areas so you can start to think about how you would apply this in your own life. And I'm going to tell you first that a lot of times, people will say oh, it's not like that big of a deal. Sure, I say this but you're kind of blowing this out of proportion.

They think that I'm being dramatic when I point out their dramatic thinking. But here's what I want you to know; all of those - what you believe right now are seemingly insignificant thoughts, not a big deal, it's not a big deal that how you're thinking about time or your to-do list or your appearance, it adds up quite a bit over the course of a day, over a week, over a month, over a year, over your life.

I love thinking about an experiment that I did when I was a little girl in Girl Scouts. So I was very interested in getting as many badges as possible, which I have talked about on this podcast. That was a whole separate issue going on there. I was kind of obsessed with getting gold stars, but I still to this day remember that I was working on a badge that was all about environmentalism.

I was probably, I don't know, eight years old at the time. And one of the experiments that they had us do was go into your bathroom, bring a bowl into the bathroom and put it in the sink, and then turn on the faucet so it's

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just, just dripping. So not a stream of water. Just a couple drips that would fall out every couple seconds.

And then leave that bowl in the sink to collect the water that was dripping from the faucet. Now, you may not be surprised what I discovered, but remember I was eight years old and this made a big impression on me. I remember I set it all up and I left the bathroom, and I came back an hour later and there was all this water in the bowl.

All those seemingly insignificant drips, they actually created quite a bit of water. And I think that this is the perfect analogy for what you are doing right now with the areas in your life where your thoughts are creating a lot of drama. It doesn't seem like a big deal. It seems like a pretty insignificant thought. But as you add it up over the course of a day, or a week, or a month, over the course of your life, you'll start to really understand this is why I'm constantly in search of relief. This is why I'm constantly looking for a way to take the edge off of how I feel.

So what I'm going to walk you through right now, it's going to seem like it might be really simple, but you are going to be surprised how effective these changes can be and how they can actually make a tremendous shift because it's not just one drop. It's all those drops all throughout the day that really add up.

So let's go through each of these areas. The first one is time drama. Time drama is something that I notice most everyone experiences, and it often sounds a lot like I'm late, hurry up, let's go. I want you to really be honest with yourself and think about when was the last time that being late was truly a problem.

Now, be honest with yourself. When was the last time that being late truly interfered with your life? I have such a perfect example that happened recently to my husband. He had to go to Estonia for work. Now, for those of you who don't know, Estonia is in the Baltics in northern Europe. It's just south of Finland and west of Russia.

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And we live in San Francisco so he was traveling a pretty far distance to get to Estonia and this was not a long trip. He was going to Estonia for one day, which is just silly. He was going one day for a meeting and as crazy as this sounds, this totally used to be my life. That was like, Rachel, sure, go to Estonia for a day. That seemed very normal to me so it didn't seem crazy to me that my husband was doing this.

But his flight from San Francisco was late so he missed his connection in Munich and he was supposed to fly via Frankfurt - from Munich to Frankfurt and then Frankfurt to Tallinn, but because he missed his connection, he got rerouted to Copenhagen. But then that flight to Copenhagen was late and if he missed that one, if he missed his connection in Copenhagen, he was going to miss the meeting in Tallinn.

And he called me from the airport in Munich asking me what I thought he should do. So we were talking about this, about alright, let's just strategize. How can we actually get you to this meeting? Weirdly, I have a lot of experience trying to get to one-day meetings in uncommon locals.

So this is an example where being late could have truly interfered with what he was trying to do. And I want you to think about that because so often, we treat all moments of time and feeling like we're behind or we're late or we're not moving fast enough as if we are about to miss a flight that is the last flight out for a while.

But that is not what is actually happening for most of you most of the time. You're not about to miss that last flight out. You're showing up a couple minutes late for the dentist. You're a couple minutes late to meet your friend. You're a couple minutes late for work. Whatever it is.

Now listen, that doesn't mean that even if you were to miss something that was the only time it could happen, like my husband, if he had missed this meeting, it doesn't mean that that's reason for a lot of drama. In fact, I would actually argue that that is a great time for you to not have a lot of drama about it because it's certainly not going to help matters.

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But it is important for you to really think about how your brain is treating kind of the everyday moments of your life, how often you are telling yourself you're late, you need to hurry up, let's go, throughout the day and acting like it is really, really important and you have to question, well, is it? And I will tell you to be really honest, when I started doing my own thought work around this, my brain was really determined to hold on to the thought you must never be late.

I really remember that when I was challenged on this, I was thinking okay fine, yes, nobody's going to die. It's not a huge deal. I'm not missing the last flight out. But I don't ever want to be late. I was really, really attached to this thought and the question that I had to really answer for myself was why. And the answer that I came up with, it might be different for you, but the answer that I came up with was well, it's rude. I don't want to be late because it's rude.

And so for me, I started to really understand that trying to never be late, a lot of times had everything to do not with punctuality, it had everything to do with trying to manage other people's perceptions of me, which is kind of funny because when you're obsessed with not being late and so you're frazzled and frantic, you tend to show up kind of stressed out and out of breath and a little bit disheveled.

You're not actually showing up in the best way for someone to have a great perception of you. I had to really do the work to realize that all of my stress about being late, especially when it had to do with other people was really my attempt to manage other people's perceptions of me and you know what, people are going to have their opinions of me regardless of what time I show up.

If I am never late again in my life, someone is still going to think that I'm rude. As much as I don't want to believe that, that's just the way it is. And so you have to start to notice your dramatic thoughts about time and you have to start to be willing to shift them. I like shifting them by just reading the time to myself.

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So when I notice myself going down that loop of like, oh my god, it's late, what am I going to do, hurry up, let's go, I can just say hey Rachel, it's 10:31 or it's 6:07 or it's 2:17. Just like, remind yourself, just talking about time here. It's not a huge deal. Because here's the thing; sometimes I'm going to be late, sometimes I'm going to be early, something I'm going to be right on time, and the same is true of you.

What is more important than all of those things is how you feel while you're doing it. And just getting really specific on the time without any judgment, oh my god, it's 7:05, just it's 7:05. That has helped me feel so much better. And so I would challenge you to think about where time drama is showing up in your life and why it is showing up for you.

It may not be the same reason for me but it's important for you to pay attention to it, and it's important for you to really ask is the drama that you're having about time right now, is it truly going to interfere with your life or are your thoughts just making you feel like it has that kind of importance?

Now, to-do list drama is another big area. You may hear yourself having to-do list drama that sounds like this. Oh my god, I've got so much to do, I'm swamped, I'm totally inundated, I have a million things to get done. This is what I sounded like for so much of my life. I had a lot of to-do list drama. I in particular loved to tell myself that I had a million things to do. It was always a million. There's just a million. So much on my plate.

And it was important for me to start to reframe it and say, you know what Rachel, no, you have 12 things to do. There are 12 things on your to-do list right now. Not one million. There's not too much. There are just 12 things. I always encourage my clients to get really specific when they are getting so inundated by that to-do list and getting inundated by their thoughts about the to-do list.

I really encourage them like well, what's the number? What's the number that we're talking about here? You have to notice your language when you're telling yourself you're swamped or you're overwhelmed because to-

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do lists don't swamp or overwhelm or inundate you. They are neutral. Isn't that crazy to think about that a to-do list is neutral? It definitely never felt neutral to me.

It felt like the source of so much anxiety and on the flipside, the source of so much joy. I mean, I really loved checking off those to-dos. It felt so good because I always had such a positive thought when I was accomplishing something. So it really was this push and pull for me for a long time. But truly, they are neutral and the best way to get really neutral about your to-do list is to get really specific on how many things are on there and then if you want to get even more specific, when is something actually due?

I'm going to tell you this; there are a lot of things on my to-do list that I will see, I'm like yeah, that has no due date. It's just a hope or a dream or a wish for something that I would like to get done but it's not actually ever due. You can look at that list of 12 that you were so sure was a million and it felt like a million and see, yeah, you know what, it's just 12.

And not only is it 12, but six of them are just things that I kind of want to do that have no deadline and three of them are technically due next week. One of them is due in two days and only two things are actually due today. My to-do list was such a source of drama for me because my thinking about to-dos was so negative, and also my thinking about what it meant if I didn't get something done.

Now, here's the problem. I for the longest time was totally sure that I was going to feel better once it was all done. Just let me get through my to-do list and then I'll feel better. But the problem is as long as you are alive, you are going to have tasks. You are going to have things that you want to accomplish or that you need to accomplish. There is no all done with your list until you die.

So this race to finish everything up so you can feel better, it is a false race because things are going to come onto your list and you're going to take care of them and then new things are going to come onto your list and you'll take care of those, and it will be a constant flow. The only time you're

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done with a to-do list is when you're dead and when you're dead, you're not feeling better.

But this sounds so crazy but this is something I actually really had to understand for myself because I really had this belief that I was only going to feel better when everything was done, but of course your to-do list, even when you check things off, more things come on. So think about where to-do list drama is appearing in your life. And it might be your to-dos at work, your to-dos at home, your to-dos with your kids, whatever it is. But you have to really pay attention to this area because it's one where so much anxiety and stress is created.

We're running around like chickens with our heads cut off trying to get it all done. We don't get it done, more things appear, we're telling ourselves we have a million things to do, and then guess what we want to do at the end of the day? Take the edge off, feel better, have a drink.

Appearance drama, that is another area where you can create a lot of drama for yourself. This started for me at a very young age. I remember for the longest time just my default when I looked in the mirror was ew or ugh. That was my default thought. I remember so many times especially when I was younger being really obsessed with a zit on my face and it would just ruin my whole day.

And a friend would ask me like hey Rachel, what's wrong? And my response was always have you seen my face? Have you seen this zit? And so many times my friend would say where? Which I always found so annoying because to me, it was like it was the center of the universe. How could you not notice it? But that's what was going on with me for so long with appearance drama.

Every time I looked in the mirror or I stepped on the scale or I put on clothes, or maybe I wasn't even looking in a mirror, I was just catching my reflection in a storefront. I remember this in particular living in New York City and commuting to work and there's a lot of buildings that reflect, and

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just walking to work I'd catch a glimpse of myself and think god, I hate the way I look.

My hair looks weird today, I look really fat in that shirt, or I look horrible. Now, all of this appearance drama might feel challenging in terms of well, how do we start to turn the volume down on this? How do we go neutral? But there are really just simple ways to do it. Just looking in the mirror and noticing where your brain goes, noticing if you have that knee-jerk to ugh, why do I look like that? I look terrible. I look tired. I look fat.

And just thinking to yourself this is my today. This is my hair on Tuesday. This is how the curve of my stomach shows up in this shirt. Today I am 157 pounds. Whatever it is. Just getting really neutral. Notice we're not trying to go positive. We're not trying to tell you something that your brain isn't going to believe, but your brain can believe this is what I look like today, this is what the curve of my body looks like in this shirt or in these pants.

You have to start to practice, you have to make an effort to take the drama out of your assessments of yourself. All the hate, all the telling yourself that you look horrible and fat and weird, you have to start practicing just going to a more neutral place. I just think about how often I would catch a reflection of myself and grimace.

I wasn't even purposely looking in the mirror. I was just kind of seeing myself from the side. And you better believe that all that grimacing on my commute was adding up. Think about from the time you wake up until the time you get home, how many times you have something negative to say about how you look. You better believe that by the end of the day, you're going to want to feel better. This is like the little drips that add up, add up, and then you look into the bowl and you can't believe how much water is in there.

Now, the last areas I've combined, it's work drama and family drama because really it should just be called people drama. It usually centers around the same thing. Wanting people to be different from who they are, wanting them to show up differently. She shouldn't have said that, she

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shouldn't ask me to do this, why does he always do this? Why does he never do that? That's what people drama sounds like a lot.

Any time you catch yourself using shoulds or shouldn'ts, any time you catch yourself using this kind of all or nothing language of always or never, you know that you are deep in drama with people. Because people show up how people show up. Their actions, what they are doing is a result of their thoughts and their feelings.

They have their own think-feel-act cycles going on and so often we are all up in their business, we are all up in how they should be thinking and feeling and showing up differently, and we totally neglect our own business, which is our own think-feel-act cycles. Why are we showing up the way we are showing up? Why are we feeling the way that we are feeling? That's where you need to bring your focus back to.

Because here's the thing; no one is always doing something or never doing something. As soon as you notice that language, you know that it's not a correct reflection of reality. You're not looking at the big picture because what does the brain want to do? It wants to dismiss any evidence that isn't in line with our thought about someone else.

But people drama is always about wanting someone to be different because you believe if they are different, then you will feel better. But the way for you to feel better is not for you to change them. The way for you to feel better is for you to change the thoughts that you are having about them. And a lot of those thoughts are very dramatic. They're adding a lot of unnecessary or extreme emotion that doesn't need to be there.

I really do want you to think about what seems like small areas of your life, whether it's time or to-do lists or people or your appearance, it seems like well, how does this actually affect the habit of drinking? Seems kind of silly, do I really need to pay attention to how I talk to myself about time? Do I really need to pay attention to how I talk to myself about my to-do list?

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Yes, you do because those drips add up. You look down after a while and there is a ton of water in the bowl. We're drenching ourselves with negative thinking and dramatic thoughts all day long and then we're surprised when we need relief at the end of the day. And I think we're surprised because that kind of drama just feels like normal because we're so used to doing it.

But the more drama you are creating for yourself, the more you will need relief. I promise you this; you can take a break from drinking. You can say okay, I'm not drinking anymore or I'm not drinking for a week, I'm not drinking for a month, but if you aren't working on this part of the equation, if you aren't working on the drama in your mind, the drama that you're creating that is creating negative emotions for you, you will just transfer the habit to something else.

So sure, maybe you'll say no to a drink but then you'll just be turning the habit into a habit of overeating or overspending or over-watching. If you don't do this work, you can't create a sustainable solution. So I hope all of you will really use this episode to pay attention to the little ways that right now you may be ignoring, you might be telling yourself why does that matter? I just want to know how not to feel my desire. I just want to know how not to feel the urge.

This is why it matters because how you feel is everything and the little drips really do add up. Alright, that's it for today, my friends. 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

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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.