

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 130.

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 my friends. We are doing another listener Q&A. I love it when you guys send me your questions. If you have any questions that you would like me to answer on the podcast, just send them into podcast@rachelhart.com.

Alright, let's dive into this week's question. "Can you do an episode about what it is really like on the other side of not drinking so that we can be really motivated to want that for ourselves too? I know in my head that I want it, but I need something more to really motivate me. I think of it like a trip one might take to an exotic island. You come back and you tell your friends what a wonderful time you had, you tell them all about how it's nothing like you've ever experienced or could have imagined. This is what I'm looking for. I know that you experience something in your life that I don't.

For me, I simply drink because I like it. I already like myself, we're financially in a good place, I have a great family, but I need something to motivate me to quit drinking out of boredom or just because I like the way it feels. I know it's bad for me, I've gotten embarrassed by overdrinking in front of others, but I don't get hangovers so I don't have negative feedback telling me that I would be better off if I quit. I pretty much already feel good and I just like to drink, but at the same time I want to be this person who doesn't behave like this. I am so tired of it."

Oh my god, I love this question so much. I was so excited when I saw it come in. And the best part about it is it seems like this listener is asking about two separate things. So what is it like on the other side and how am I supposed to be motivated because I just really like to drink. But of course,

[Take a Break From Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

it's so interconnected, and I want to explain how that is because essentially, this question is saying there's nothing motivating me to take a break from drinking because I like to drink.

And I know that so many of you out there can connect to that and relate to that, and you know what? People do this in all areas of their life. Not just drinking. I just really like to eat. I just really like to spend money. I just really like to sit on the couch and watch Netflix. That's not really hurting me, so why should I stop? There's nothing really motivating me to stop and I really enjoy it.

So you end up feeling stuck. And I'm going to tell you that so much of this mindset is really wrapped up in this misconception that we have as a society that if you want to really change something in your life, you should really hit rock bottom. I've talked about this on the podcast before, how I think that this idea is so harmful. It is so harmful to tell yourself that the way to change your life, the way to be motivated to change is for your life to fall apart.

And I actually think that this idea of needing to hit rock bottom is why so many people don't end up changing their drinking. They just continue with the status quo but what do we know about the status quo when it comes to drinking? You will always, always, always start to desire it more and need it more the more you give it to your brain.

But this excuse, this excuse that I'm just not really motivated, it is why so many people keep drinking when deep down, deep inside, those moments when you're just really kind of quiet with yourself, you know it's not serving you. And I can tell you all of this because I have 100% been in your shoes, telling myself I just really like it, it's really fun, I really enjoy it, and you know, it's not that bad. Yeah, sometimes I don't like how I feel the next day but my life is not in tatters.

Sometimes, I would actually think to myself - I remember this, it's so crazy to think back on this now, but I remember thinking to myself, maybe the reason I haven't figured out my drinking is because it hasn't gotten bad

[Take a Break From Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

enough. Isn't that insane? It really is when you think about this, this idea like, I'm not successful yet because my life isn't in ruins.

This idea that we need to hit rock bottom in order to truly change is so poisonous because I want you guys to know something, and this is so important; it will change everything in your life if you really understand this. Motivation is a feeling. It's not created by what's happening in your life. It's not created by your circumstances.

It's not created by losing your job or losing custody of your kids or getting a DUI, or finding out that your liver is shot to hell. That's what we think. That's what we're taught to believe. That is what is all wrapped up in this idea of you just need to hit rock bottom. But motivation is always and only created by your mind. It's created by your thinking, and that means something amazing.

If it's created by your mind and your thoughts and not what is happening, not the circumstances of your life, then you can choose to create motivation any time you want to. Any time you want to. Now, I do believe that the reason why this myth of rock bottom continues on is because it is true that in certain circumstances, it can happen to be easier to think some thoughts, but you have to be really, really careful when you're understanding this because just because it's easier to think a thought does not mean that you will think it, and does not mean that the circumstance creates the thought.

So I want to explain this to you so you really truly understand it. When your house is on fire, it is easier to think the thought I got to run, but the fire does not make you think this. It's still a thought that you are choosing to think and you are choosing to listen to.

Now, when your alarm goes off at five in the morning, it can be a little harder to think the thought I got to run. Same thought, different circumstances. But this thought, this same thought is available to you at any time no matter what is happening in your life.

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

The thing is that when your house is on fire, you can just more clearly see the consequence of not listening to the thought. The consequence then of not running is potential death. But when your alarm clock goes off at five in the morning, what's the consequence of not listening to the thought I got to run, or not even having that thought?

Well, maybe your pants are too tight, maybe you beat yourself up a little bit later on in the day for not sticking with your commitment, but you also get to hit the snooze button. There is no upside of not listening to the thought I got to run when the house is on fire. And the same thing is true with the negative results from your drinking.

Yeah, you can lose your license because you get a DUI, and you can think oh my god, I've got to figure out my drinking because I need to be able to drive, I need to be able to get to and from work. But of course, losing your license doesn't make you think that thought or make you follow through on that thought. It doesn't make you listen to it. It's still a choice. You still have free will.

That's what so many of us are constantly ignoring. That it is a choice. What we think and what we listen to and what we decide to act on when it comes to our thoughts. Because here's the thing; there are lots and lots and lots of people out there who are getting a ton of negative consequences from their drinking, or for really anything that they are doing in their life, and they're not changing.

And so often, we can sit back and look at them and think, oh my god, how much worse does your life need to get? But that's because we misunderstand how motivation works. It's not about circumstances in someone's life changing. It's about the need for someone's thoughts to change so that they can feel motivated to take action.

I just think let's not wait and see if the circumstances of your life eventually motivate you to change. Let's not wait and see if your drinking can get bad enough for you to finally feel motivated because what will happen if you play this wait and see game is that you will unconsciously make the

[Take a Break From Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

consequences of your drinking more and more negative in the hopes that it will propel change, and then you may discover that even as your results are getting worse, you're not changing.

I did this. I was sitting around telling myself it's not that bad, maybe that's why I haven't changed yet, maybe I need to hit rock bottom, and yet it was getting worse for me. My consequences were not the same. They were getting slightly and slightly, a little bit more negative each time. Then I still wasn't changing.

You have to stop telling yourself that motivation is this thing that you find outside of you, that it is a result or produced by what is happening in your life or your circumstances. Motivation is created by your mind. It is created by what you choose to think, and that is the very first piece that I want all of you to understand.

That will change everything because when you understand that, you understand that you can choose to motivate yourself at any time. You don't have to be at the effect of your circumstances. You don't have to be waiting around for life to happen to you and hope that that inspires change.

But I want to also talk about this thought, I just like to drink. I told this to myself forever and I want you guys to know this; the truth is that you like to drink and you don't like to drink. You have both thoughts. I like to drink and I don't like to drink. They are both there. And the question is which one are you giving more time and more energy to.

Which one are you giving more preference to? Which one are you spending more time thinking about? I will tell you this; I spent a lot of time thinking about how much I liked to drink and how my life would be worse without alcohol and how it would be weird if I didn't drink and how I wouldn't have as much fun, and I would be so socially awkward. All the things. I spent a lot of time directing my brain to think about that, about how much I liked drinking and how life would be worse without alcohol.

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

But the other thought was also there and also available to me, that the truth was I didn't like the results of my drinking. I didn't really like drinking. And you can choose to spend your mental energy thinking about that, but don't lie to yourself. Don't lie to yourself and say I just really like to drink as if you don't also really dislike drinking because you do.

Otherwise, you wouldn't want to change it. If it was all upside, there would be no reason to worry about it. There would be no reason to listen to this podcast. There would be no reason to contemplate your life without it. And this is really important for a lot of you guys listening. When you only kind of feel the effects of drinking too much, you have got to be really onto yourself.

Because if you are waking up every day and you feel like death, it is easier to feel the effects of your actions, to feel the effects of your drinking and decide hey, maybe I should do something about this. But when the effects of your drinking, when the effects of your actions are more subtle or - and this is true for a lot of you - you're just more used to them as your new norm, you're used to always waking up and feeling groggy, you're used to never being able to drop those last 10 pounds, you're used to having a bad stomach, you're used to this kind of low level anxiety, when you just think that is a part of your life or who you are, or explained by how old you are and you don't even think to attribute it to drinking, then you really have to be onto yourself.

Because then the effects of your drinking are kind of flying under the radar, and so if you aren't paying attention, you will stay stuck for so long. I actually did a whole episode on this, episode 49. It's all about settling when it comes to your health and the reason why I did it was because I have so many clients that come to me and say, "Rachel, I feel fine. I don't have hangovers, it's not a big deal. It's not how I feel. I just don't like x, y, and z part of drinking."

And then they take a break or they just even significantly reduce how much they're drinking and they come back to me and they're like oh my god, I felt

[Take a Break From Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

awful before and I had no idea. So if you think this might be you, go back and listen to episode 49. It is really powerful.

Because here's the thing; the negative effects of anything in your life, but especially your drinking can be the thing that prod you to heal. They're not going to make you but they can be kind of the little alarm going off or the flag saying hey, pay attention to me. They can say hey, pay attention and maybe you need to learn how to manage your mind. Maybe you need to figure out how to overcome your urges and overcome your lower brain.

But all the prodding in the world is really meaningless unless you decide to take action, unless you decide on purpose to motivate yourself. And this is why taking a break from drinking is so powerful. The listener said in her question, I already like myself. We're financially in a good place, I have a great family, but I'm not motivated to change. I'm not motivated to say no to a drink when I feel kind of bored.

I want all of you to really think about what would it be like to live in a world where you come home every night and you are still you, you still have the money that you have in the bank, you still have your great family, and you're not drinking. Think about that. If that freaks you out at all, then you really need to answer the question, okay so, what parts of your life would be so kind of glaringly awful that you would be desperate to have a glass of wine to cover it up?

When you take a break from drinking, it shows in crystal clear relief what is not working in your life. And the problem is when you take a break and you don't have this work, you don't understand anything about the think-feel-act cycle or how to coach yourself or how to manage your mind or how to feel your emotions, when you don't have this work, you see what isn't working in your life when you stop drinking and then you freak out because I did this over and over again, all the times in my life that I would flip-flop.

I would stop drinking because I wasn't happy with the results that I was getting, but then that would really show me what was happening and what was not working in my life. Then I would think great, I was unhappy about

[Take a Break From Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

my drinking and now I'm unhappy about my life, so what did I do? I always started again.

I didn't know anything about thought work. I didn't know anything about managing my mind. But this is a place that so many women that I work with are in. They're in this place of feeling like everything's good. All the things are good, Rachel, I just can't figure out this piece around my drinking. But I'll tell you, if that's what you're saying, then everything is not good and that's okay.

I will tell you, what always isn't good is just your thinking. And this really is the thing that trips up so many of my clients. When they tell me about their amazing husband and their beautiful home and their wonderful family and the fact that they have their dream job and that they have enough money, they have almost everything that they've ever wanted, and then they come to me and they say I don't get it, I still feel like I'm missing something.

And that missing, that emptiness, it feels terrible, so of course we're always looking to try to fill it. We're always looking to try to patch up the hole. And that's where alcohol and food and spending money become these kind of false substitutes for what is truly missing, because when you have all the things that you thought that you wanted and you still feel terrible, you still feel kind of empty, you still feel like something isn't right, then what happens is that your brain starts to mistakenly believe hey, maybe something's wrong with you. Maybe if you have all these things and you're still unhappy, maybe it's you.

But I want you to know this; nothing is wrong with you. The reason that you have all the things and you feel kind of empty, and you're trying to fill that emptiness with a glass of wine or a piece of cake, or buying a new shiny thing is because all of us have been sold a lie. We have all been sold the lie that things are going to make us feel fulfilled in the world. So what do we do?

We start getting to work trying to accumulate the things. Let's get the gold stars and the husband and the job and the kids and the house and the

[Take a Break From Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

résumé and the car because we're so desperate to feel better. But that's not how the think-feel-act cycle works. Things don't make you feel like anything. Things are neutral. Things are circumstances. You don't feel anything from a thing, from your stuff, from whatever you've achieved until you have a thought about it.

If you want to be happy, you have to take a look at the thoughts that are running through your mind on the regular. For most people, unless you do the work of thinking on purpose, and I mean choosing what to think about and how you want to think and how you want to think about life and how you want to think about yourself and how you want to think about this world, unless you choose that on purpose, your thoughts are going to be dictated by your lower brain, and I have bad news for you.

That lower brain of yours, it really thinks it is being helpful. It truly does. It wants you to survive. And in order to help you do that, it is always looking for the negative. It is always trying to spot the danger. That's what the lower brain thinks is being helpful. I love to think about the lower brain like it's calling in a story over the wires, and no matter what is happening, it is always reporting bad news.

That's what I think of when it comes to my lower brain. Not bad, it just thinks it's being helpful. It hasn't caught up. It hasn't evolved to where we are in this modern world. So the thing is we've all got it backward. The point of life is not to have and acquire stuff and things so we can be happy. The point of life is to create and contribute and accomplish your dreams and your goals.

How often are you creating or contributing or just even spending time thinking about your dreams and your goals? Or have your dreams and your goals, have those all been on the back burner and you're just going through the motions of life? And this really does bring me back to the original question about okay, so what's different about my life now?

What is different on the other side of not drinking? I think the easiest way to think about this is just imagine your favorite drink or the best drink you've

[Take a Break From Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

ever had, and imagine how you felt after you consumed it. And then think about your biggest accomplishment and think about how you felt after you achieved it.

They don't even compare. They're not even in the same ballpark. We're not even playing the same game here. My favorite drink in the world could not hold a candle to how it feels to create something meaningful, to put something meaningful out into the world, to achieve a dream of mine. They are just not even in the running, these two things.

And that is really what I have traded in. The decision for me to take a break from drinking, I have no idea but what I traded in was a life of pleasure, false pleasure from manmade concentrated rewards. The false pleasure from alcohol and from highly processed food and on demand entertainment and one click shopping. That pleasure was intense. It did feel very intense, but it was also very fleeting and it always left me wanting more.

My desire for it always grew. I never seemed satisfied, and the more I wanted it, the more my consequences from it grew as well, and now without alcohol, my life is about true pleasures. The pleasure that you get from accomplishing and creating and contributing. It's so much better than anything you can eat or drink or buy or watch. It's so much better than anything you consume because it's steady and it's long lasting.

It's not fleeting. It doesn't leave me feeling empty. And have seen how this path of a different type of pleasure, not the pleasures that most people in this world go after, not the pleasure of drink or food or spending money or just screen time, not that pleasure, but these kind of sustained pleasures, it's really bled into all parts of my life.

Because now I experience so much more pleasure in so many more areas. Pleasure and fun for me was really limited for much of my life until the evening when I got to come home and eat something and drink something, and now pleasure is throughout all of my day because there are so many moments that in the past I would have blown right by because it didn't measure up to the false pleasure that I got from food and alcohol.

[Take a Break From Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

So one example, I really love going on early morning walks. Not something that I have always enjoyed doing in my life, certainly not something I enjoyed when I was drinking. But I really try to do this as much as I can, and so I go for walks in the morning before my husband and my baby wake up, right around sunrise, which is one of my favorite times in San Francisco.

And we live near a park and they have this lagoon area with this kind of small island in the middle of the lagoon, and one morning a couple months ago, I was at the park, I was there by myself and I heard this really loud rustle in the bushes on the little island. And there was no one around but me, and I was looking at where this rustle was coming from, and right next to it I saw two swans nearby that were not creating the noise, but they also weren't moving away from it, and I could not figure it out.

I was watching what was happening and it didn't make any sense. Like, there's this crazy rustling happening in the bushes and these two swans won't budge. It was so perplexing. And so I was just standing there watching everything unfold and then all of a sudden, one of the swans stood up and from underneath her, out came a bevy of six newly hatched swan babies.

And I will tell you, I was so giddy and so happy in that moment. I really was. I was so excited. There was nobody else around and it was like the universe had just given me the best gift. Seeing these six little baby swans. By the way, that rustling in the bush turned out to be raccoons, which is why those swans were not leaving and they were holding their ground.

But I tell you this story because this is what my life feels like. It feels like so much of my life went from black and white to being in Technicolor. And I think that there's a really good explanation for why this happens because back when I was drinking, first, there's no way that I was taking walks at sunrise. I was not doing that. But second, I could have seen the exact same thing unfold and I know that my brain would have been like, okay, that's cute, baby swans. Okay, swans have babies, what's the big deal?

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

And if I saw someone having the kind of emotional excitement and reaction that I was having on that morning; it just not would have made any sense to me. Like, get a grip lady, it's just some swans. Like yeah, great, major. Woo-hoo. That's the place where I would have been coming from. So how did I go from not really caring to caring so much?

Because taking a break from alcohol reset my internal measurements for pleasure and wonder and joy because when my life was previously all about false pleasures, it was all about the most exciting thing, every day was really hey, what are you going to get to eat? What are you going to drink? Are we going to smoke?

It was all about false pleasure. And so I relied on things that created a flood of dopamine in my brain. That is what I understood felt really good. So all of these smaller pleasures in life, they couldn't compare. They didn't measure up. My brain was like uh-huh, yeah, cute, nice, moving on. What are we going to have to eat later? When are we going to the wine bar?

That's where my brain was very focused on. Those are the pleasures that matter because it was so used to those kind of big floods of dopamine.

But, by taking a break from drinking, I recalibrated my brain. And so now, it's not that the world has so much more pleasure available. It's that I am more available to the pleasures of the world. I have so much more joy and wonder and amazement because I have recalibrated my brain not to expect, "Hey, Rachel, the way you enjoy yourself is to have a false pleasure and give yourself a flood of dopamine."

That's a huge difference. But also, I like myself more, I like my body way more and I treat it so much better. I like humans more. I just like people more than I used to. People used to really annoy me. That is not so much the case. I enjoy time with my family more. I actually make time and create time for the hobbies that I didn't do for a very long time, especially once I started drinking. I take more risks. I put myself out there more.

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

I do things now that, 10 years ago, if you had told me, I would have been like, “No way. No way am I ever going to dream of doing this.” I’m more open to change. I trust myself more. But you know what – I think I’m also more fun and I’m more silly and I am more likely to have fun in the middle of the day.

I am more likely to get up, as I did today, make myself lunch and put on some music and dance around the kitchen. I didn’t do that back then because I always had this kind of low-level anxiety that I was dealing with. I was like, “I don’t have time for fun. Fun is when we drink. Fun is when I eat something. Fun is when I go shopping.”

But now, it’s like fun is woven throughout my day. And not to mention all of these things changing, but my mental energy – I’ve talked about this time and time again on the podcast – my mental energy has been so freed up. I can’t tell you how much time and energy I used to spend fretting and worrying about drinking too much and eating too much and spending too much money.

And I was worried and then beating myself up for my actions and then, you know, I would try to fix things and it would fail and I would beat myself up some more. It sucked up so much brain power, all of this, so much of my brain power. And now that I don’t have to worry about these things, it’s like I have rocket fuel in my brain.

And I don’t think there’s anything unique with me. I think we all have rocket fuel in our brain, it’s just very hard to tap into when you’re constantly dealing with the negative effects of your drinking or your eating or your spending or whatever you’re using to numb yourself.

I love the idea that human only use a small portion of their brain, and I will tell you, the small portion of my brain that was being used, a large part of that portion was dedicated to figuring out what the hell was wrong with me and how was I going to fix myself?

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

And now, I know, “Nothing’s wrong with you, Rachel. You don’t need fixing. And you know what, you didn’t need fixing back then either. There was nothing wrong with you back then.” I wasn’t drinking too much because something was wrong with me. I was drinking too much because I didn’t understand how alcohol had become a solution in my life. I didn’t understand that it was solving a lot of feelings for me.

It was solving boredom and anxiety and awkwardness. I didn’t understand that it was helping me socialize and deal with stress and it made me, I thought, feel normal and like I could fit in because so often I was telling myself the very opposite.

All of this though, all of the ways in which alcohol had become a solution in my life, I, for a very long time, would just tell myself, “I just really like it. I’m just drinking because I really enjoy it. I enjoy the taste and it’s really fun.” And I was drinking more than I wanted because I was a perfectly normal woman who did not know that she had taught her brain to use alcohol to solve how she felt, and she didn’t know any other way forward.

And that’s what you are doing too. You are not broken. You don’t need fixing. You are lovely exactly the way you are. But here’s the thing; if you don’t like the results you’re getting from your drinking or eating or your spending, or anything that feels kind of compulsive or you feel like you do too much of it, then all that means is that we need to figure out why. And that’s what the think-feel-act cycle is here for.

What you are doing right now, how you are showing up in your life right now with any of these habits can be what you use to beat yourself up, or it can be the steppingstone to figure out your brain and learn how to be your own best coach and learn how to feel and process any emotion and learn how to go after your goals and your dreams even though it’s scary and even though it requires a lot of discomfort.

You know, every so often, in the news, there is a story about how science is working on a hangover cure. And I can tell you that, for a long time, I thought this is what I wanted. I just wanted to be able to drink as much as I

[Take a Break From Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

want and not have any negative side effects. I don't want to feel the negative effects of drinking as much as I want.

Please, please, please, do not want that for yourself. Be someone who wants and expects and asks your brain to evolve past the point of a life of consumption, because that's what that magic pill is all about. Oh, we can just keep having our life of consumption.

Even if they create the magic pill where you can drink whatever you want and not feel hung over and eat whatever you want and not gain the weight and you get to have as much money as you dream of so you can buy whatever you want and you'll never go into debt, you know what will happen? You will still keep consuming. You will still always feel unsatisfied and that will just create more and more discomfort that you will need relief from because consuming never makes you happy.

So don't want that. Want a life that is about evolving to your next level, where you say, like, "Let's go see what I can do. Let's see what I can create." I want that for you. I want that for myself. I know that you were put here for more than just wake up, go to your job, make money, cross things off your t-do list, go to bed.

You have a divine purpose. We all do. I truly believe that. And alcohol and food and spending money and screen time and all the things we use to numb will always cloud you from finding what that purpose is. Sure, you like it. You like doing those things because the brain was prioritized to focus on things that give us pleasure. Pleasure is what encouraged humans to crawl out of the cave and go into a dangerous world to survive.

But now we live in a modern world where pleasure is so abundant and so concentrated that it is dulling us to death. So here's the thing; you like to drink, but you also don't like to drink. Just acknowledge that that thought is there as well. Don't pretend as if it's only a one-way street. Direct your brain to spend more time and energy thinking about what you don't like about it rather than what you do like about it. And then decide, "Okay, if it

[Take a Break From Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

seems like I don't like it more than I do like it, how am I going to motivate myself to change?" because motivation is a choice.

Yeah, you can wait and see if it happens. You can wait and see if life gets bad enough and if that makes a thought appear that you just decide to listen to, or you can just go out and create motivation. I want to be someone who creates motivation in my life and I want that to be the case for you as well. Please don't sit back and wait for life to happen. Don't sit back and wait for change to happen with your drinking because you're not going to wake up one day and magically just be different with alcohol.

If you want that for yourself, you have to go get it. Such a good question today. Thank you so much for sending it in. I hope it has helped you. I know it has helped so many people listening. Send in your questions to podcast@rachelhart.com. 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.

[Take a Break From Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #130: Listener Q&A: I Really Like to Drink

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.