

## Ep #133: Redefining Failures



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With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #133: Redefining Failures

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 133.

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. Listen, I've got a couple big milestones that happened very recently. The first is that we hit one million downloads for this podcast, which blows my mind. I cannot believe it. And I love thinking about this number, not because I'm like, oh my god, one million people are listening to me, but I love thinking about it because I felt so alone with my drinking. I felt so like no one else could get this, could understand me, that I was the only one. I felt so isolated.

And to think about the fact that a million times, somebody was like hey, I want to hear what this lady has to say, I'm struggling, it just makes me so happy because I love that I can be an inspiration to you guys and a voice for you guys, but more than that, I just love that we're connecting. Even if we're not meeting each other, I just love that a million times, people out there were saying hey, I need to figure this out. I need to get to the bottom of my drinking, and that's to me, what that number reflects.

So that is super exciting. I love that. But also, this weekend was my baby's first birthday, which is just incredible. I cannot believe that he is one year old. He is getting so close to walking and that terrifies me because of course, everything is going to change as soon as he can start walking around.

But I will tell you this; about 13 months ago before I had the baby, I was getting coached about being a mom and having a business. And my thought back then was something along the lines of, well that was a good run. Like well I tried, but I'm about to have a baby and that's going to ruin everything. And I remember my coach coaching me on this, and I

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remember her saying you know, you get to choose what you're going to make this mean. You get to choose what you're going to do and how you're going to show up as a mom, and as a businesswoman.

And I was so sure, I was so committed that all of the dreams that I had, they just weren't going to work anymore because now I was going to have a baby and so you know, life was going to be impossible. And it's amazing now to be on the other side, be a year in to having a baby in my life and realizing oh no, you can still do the things you want to do.

Yeah, they look different. My life is different. My schedule is different. So many things are different, but it doesn't mean that all my dreams and ideas and everything that I want to do and create in this world had to get shelved. And so I just wanted to shout-out both of those things. I always ask my clients to claim victories, and I feel like these are two really great victories for me and also all of you out there that have kids. You guys are killing it.

Really, I had no idea. Not one iota of what it was like to really be a parent, so hats off to all of you guys. Alright listen, we are going to talk about failure today. Failure is something that I am always, always, always, always working with my clients to start to understand differently. It's so important.

In fact, one of the things I'm going to be doing throughout the entire month of August, I'm doing a free webinar series where I'm going to be teaching you about these skills, and failure is one of the things that I'm going to be teaching. So if you're interested in signing up, all you have to do is go to [rachelhart.com/askrachel](http://rachelhart.com/askrachel). You can reserve a seat if you're not able to attend live for one of the four webinars.

I will make sure you send you a replay. But learning how to change your understanding of failure really is everything, and I will tell you that this past year, it would not have been possible had I not done the work already to start thinking about and understanding and embracing failure in a very, very different way.

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Last week was all about how to be someone who shows up for herself. It is really one of the very favorite things that I learned from the habit of drinking that I had because the habit was all about showing up for the urge. It was all about showing up for my lower brain and immediate gratification. And practicing saying no, understanding what was creating my desire, and ultimately changing my desire, it taught me how to be someone who could start to show up for my goals and my dreams and for my higher brain. Not just my lower brain.

But part of that was really starting to do work around failure because if you're going to start showing up for yourself differently, you better believe that you need to have a drastically different relationship with failure than the one you have right now. And I can pretty much tell you the one that you have right now because I see it again and again and again in my clients, and you know what, I spent the majority of my life with this same kind of relationship.

I hated to fail. I hated it. I desperately tried to avoid it. Failure freaked me out. I thought it was embarrassing and shameful and I tried so much to avoid it that I would design my life to just not try. I wouldn't put myself out there because that meant potentially failing, and failure was just not acceptable for me.

What I didn't understand back then is that failure is neutral. Failure is a circumstance. I want you to think about the think-feel-act cycle. Your thoughts create your feelings and then your feelings drive your actions. It is not the fail-feel-act cycle. Failing doesn't create how you feel. You have a thought about your failure. Failure doesn't cause you to feel any emotion until you think something about it. Until you think what does that failure mean about me? What does it mean about my progress, or all my hard work, or my future?

That's what creates the negative emotion. And understanding this difference really is everything because so many of you are exactly how I was and you are operating under the idea that failure is the thing that you have to avoid at all costs, and you're doing everything in your life trying to

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avoid it. But worst of all, you're not even trying sometimes. You're not even putting yourself out there.

And what happens - here's the kicker, and it's not very fun. What happens is that you're still failing. When you don't try, when you don't put yourself out there, then you're just not going after the life that you want, so you end up stagnating and feeling unfulfilled, and wondering and dreaming and imagining about what your life could be like, but not actually taking the steps necessary to create that life for yourself.

And so you end up in this place where you feel like god, this sucks. I don't like where I am, I don't like feeling stuck. But then you don't want to dwell in this place, so what do you do? Well, you have a drink. Isn't that such an easy solution? When we think about those big questions like why am I here, what am I doing with my life, is this all there really is, we're kind of like, oh god, do I even want to think about these questions? No, I'd rather just consume something. I'd rather just drink something or eat something for entertainment.

Now, I know some of you out there are hearing me say this and you're thinking, Rachel listen, I'm not pouring a glass of wine because I'm sad or I'm lonely or I'm depressed or I'm having some existential crisis. I'm pouring a glass of wine because I love it and it's fun and it tastes good.

But I really want you to consider this; if you believe right now in your life that you have potential that is untapped that you're not going after, that you kind of feel sometimes like sort of just sitting on the sidelines of my life and what I think it could be and all that I think that I have to offer, then trust me, you better believe that everything that you are consuming, and I'm not just talking about alcohol but everything that you're eating and all the things that you're purchasing, and all the things you're consuming as you're scrolling through your phone and scrolling through Facebook, all of these things are ultimately connected.

They are connected to this bigger issue of how you feel about your life. That doesn't mean that you feel sad every time you have a drink, but it

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does mean that there is a part of you that is going after entertainment, going after these kind of short-term temporary false pleasures so that you can feel better for a little moment. Except the more that you go back to them, what happens? The more dependent you become on them to feel better and the worse that you feel because the negative consequences start to mount.

Now listen, there might be a part of you that doesn't want to hear this, but I bet deep down you know that there is a little bit of truth to what I'm saying. And it doesn't mean that anything is wrong with you because listen, if I were to walk outside and stop people on the street, I'm telling you, most of them would say the same thing.

They would say yeah, I don't think I'm living my life to my full potential. I feel like I'm meant for more. I don't always feel like I'm going after what I want. I keep pushing my dreams and my goals off to the side. I keep saying I'll deal with it later.

Now, how you cope with that, how you disconnect from the negative feelings that are a result of doing all these things, well that looks different from person to person. I don't want you to judge yourself if you can recognize yourself in what I'm saying. What I want you to do is understand how to think about why you are doing this, why you are failing, why you are failing by not even trying sometimes. I want you to learn how to think about it differently.

Because when it comes to failure, the problem is not the fail. It's what you make the fail mean. When you fail and you think, ugh, I'm never going to figure this out, this is impossible, I don't have enough discipline, I'm such an embarrassment, something is really wrong with me, that is what I told myself over and over again.

When you are avoiding failure because you think that failure makes you feel something, well that's when you really start failing because now you're failing ahead of time. You're failing without even trying. How you feel has nothing to do with the failure itself. I want you to hear this again. How you

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feel has nothing to do with the failure itself. It has everything to do with your thoughts about it.

Your thoughts, what you are making it mean, that's what causes the guilt and the embarrassment and the defeat and the hopelessness and the shame. Not the failure itself. And I will tell you this; it is the exact reason why I see so many people just avoid taking a break from drinking. And I'm not talking about a six-month break. I'm talking about a short little break, a tiny little break.

When you go out to dinner with your best friend or your husband, when it's Friday night, when you plan a little getaway. I'm talking about one night or 48 hours or 72 hours and you're just like, no thank you. And the reason why people avoid the little tiny breaks, the reason why you're resisting that is because so many times deep down you're wrestling with oh god, but what if I fail? What if all it is is don't drink at dinner tonight and I can't even do that? Oh god, that would mean something really terrible.

No, it wouldn't. Not unless you make it mean something terrible. I'll tell you, on the surface, all the excuses not to take a break, not to try sound really plausible. I feel really awkward and it won't be any fun and I don't want to feel deprived, but below the surface, there is often that deeper dread of oh god, what if I say that I'm not going to drink and then I do drink and I fail again? I just cannot have that happen. I'm going to feel terrible and I want to do everything to avoid that.

That's what's happening below the surface. \*And so then you don't even end up trying. The problem is the more you don't try, the more the brain starts to believe incorrectly that alcohol is a necessary component for fun or connection or enjoyment, or just having a good time. And the more you believe that, the more entrenched the habit becomes.

And I'm able to tell you all of this because this was me. I didn't understand what failure was. I think it's so important to just define it. You hear me on the podcast all the time defining words. I think that alone can often be really

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transformative. I love this definition of failure that I got from my coach. Failure is the omission of expected or required action.

Just sounds so neutral, right? It's not failure means something is really wrong with you. No, just failure is the omission of expected or required action. And when it comes to drinking and when it comes to changing the habit of just feeling the urge and drinking, and feeling the urge and drinking, failure becomes really, really clear in this setting, what it means. You planned not to drink and you drank, or you planned to have one drink and you had four. That's it.

It's the action of saying yes to a drink. It's the action of not turning it down when your commitment was to do the opposite. It was to say no. Now, what you're making saying yes mean, that's where things get ugly inside of your brain because of course, you make it mean something really terrible about you.

I've talked about this before on the podcast but the very first time that I took a break from drinking was just after my 22nd birthday and it lasted for almost an entire year. I didn't like that I felt like I needed alcohol to be fun and to have a good time and I didn't always like who I was when I was drinking. And I definitely didn't like that sometimes I drank a lot more than I wanted to and it was so unpredictable. I couldn't understand why.

So I took this break and I felt healthier not drinking, but I was so unhappy. I hated being different. I hated answering people's questions. I hated feeling like I was always missing out. And I remember the night so clearly when I decided that I wasn't going to be on a break anymore.

So I had almost gone an entire year and I was feeling healthier, but emotionally, I was not feeling better. And I remember I had a really good friend of mine in from town and we were about to head out for the night and I remember just thinking, screw it. And I went into the kitchen, I went to the fridge and I grabbed one of my roommate's beers. In that split second decision, I just told myself I can't take it.

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But you know what I couldn't take? It wasn't the urge. It was all the shame that I had felt for that entire year. And over the next decade, all I did was flip-flop back and forth over and over again between drinking and not drinking. And I just kept failing over and over and over again.

I remember one time I was actually doing an elimination diet. I was taking all these foods out of my diet because I was trying to get to the bottom of why I had so much stomach upset and so many digestive problems, and of course, part of the elimination diet was not drinking alcohol. So it gave me a really - what I thought was an easy excuse not to drink.

And on the very last day of that cleanse, my boyfriend at the time showed up at the apartment and he had a bottle of gin for cocktails because we always had cocktails together. He had a scotch and I had a gin and tonic. And we spent a lot of money on the alcohol that we drank. So we always were telling ourselves that we were kind of justified because we weren't drinking swill. We were drinking fancy stuff.

But he showed up with this bottle on the last day and I was so pissed off. But what did I do? I said yes because even though I was angry because I was telling myself oh, he's not being supportive, I didn't want to disappoint him. And this would happen over and over and over again in my life. I would be at a friend's bachelorette party or I'd be traveling with colleagues, or the night of my 30th birthday.

I went into all of these situations not drinking and then sure enough, I didn't honor my commitment. I failed. I said yes to a drink. I can't even count really, I cannot even count the number of times that I would just say I'm not drinking tonight. I'm going to be good, and then I wasn't.

But here's the thing; every time I failed, I made that decision to drink mean something terrible about me. I was such a bully to myself. I told myself god, you're such an idiot Rachel, what's wrong with you? Such a loser. Why can't you figure this out? And I would just berate myself over and over.

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But if we understand how the think-feel-act cycle works, what happens? When I told myself all those negative thoughts, they created a lot of negative emotion, and the more negative emotion I felt, guess what happened? The more I wanted to hide from what was going on. I didn't want to look and when I couldn't take it anymore, I would search for relief. I would search for something temporary to make me feel a little bit better.

And so for me, the more I failed, the more I became afraid to try. What I didn't understand was that it wasn't because of the failure. It was because of what I was making the failure mean. I had all this evidence that I couldn't succeed. So I started to tell myself well, why bother? And the only reason that I kept trying to change my drinking is because every six months or so of burying my head in the sand, I would look around at my life and I would think, guys, I don't think this is how it's supposed to be.

I think I'm supposed to be more than just a girl who's embarrassed that she can't figure out her drinking. I don't think that's what I'm here to do. But that entire time for more than a decade, I kept telling myself I couldn't find the pathway to success. I kept looking like where the heck is it? Somebody show me the path. I just need you to point it out to me. And the problem was I didn't realize I was already on it.

I was already walking the path to figuring out my drinking because every time I tried something and it failed, there was something that I could learn. There was something that that failure could teach me. I believed it was teaching me that I was a screw up, and so I was filled with shame, and then I would hide and then I would look for relief, and I would just repeat that cycle over and over again.

I couldn't see that each and every time I told myself you're not going to drink and then I drank, there was something so valuable for me to learn in that moment. But I wouldn't look. I was so insistent that failure was this terrible thing instead of failure being the thing. The thing that was going to show me how to figure all of this out.

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I think about that time in my life now when I was kind of desperately searching for the path and I didn't know that I was on it. I imagine my higher brain being like, listen lady, you're going to learn from this whether you like it or not. One day, you're going to get it. One day, you're going to understand what is happening here. If we have to repeat it a million times, I swear to god, we will.

That's what I imagine my higher brain doing over and over again because here's the thing; I was saying yes to a drink not for all the reasons that I thought. I told myself oh, I just love it, it's just so much fun, it tastes good, I'm a more enjoyable person. That's what I told myself but I was saying yes to a drink because I hated feeling different. And the truth was I felt different all the time. It wasn't just when I wasn't drinking. I always felt like I didn't fit in or something was wrong with me.

Not drinking just gave my brain more evidence for this thought that something was wrong with me. I carried it around with me all the time as if it was true. I was saying yes to a drink because I hated disappointing people. The thought of letting someone down was torture for me and again, this didn't just show up in the realm of drinking in my life.

I was a people-pleaser through and through. I was constantly saying yes to my boyfriend and my boss and my family and my friends, everybody when I really wanted to say no because I kept telling myself that I was responsible for their feelings. I was saying yes to a drink because I always felt like I was missing out. When I took breaks, they were just exercises in willpower. They were exercises in crossing days off a calendar. I wasn't learning anything.

I didn't understand about the think-feel-act cycle, I didn't understand that my desire wasn't changing because I wasn't actively trying to change it. I was just isolating and gritting my teeth, and then wondering hey, why does this feel miserable? But here's the thing; I often felt like I was missing out on life not just when everybody was sharing a bottle of champagne and I was having sparkling water. I thought I was missing out all the time because I kept telling myself, well, she's got a better body and this person

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has a better job and a better apartment and a better relationship and more money and they're further along in life.

I thought that I was missing out all the time. It was an all-encompassing experience for me. But here's the thing; every time I made the commitment not to drink and every time I said yes, every time I failed, they were all pointing me in the direction of success. But I couldn't see it because I was so sure that the failure was the problem. I was so sure that failing meant something had gone terribly wrong, when in fact, failing was the gift.

It was the opportunity stop and say hey, what happened? And understand the habit in a neutral way, just watch how my brain was unfolding in real time so that I could change it. But for - I mean, more than a decade, I was totally blind to all of these gifts of failure because I was so sure that they were evidence that I was a failure, and that's what you guys have been doing too.

You have turned the act of failing into a state of being. You have turned I failed into I'm a failure. And they are not the same thing. You have got to separate them out. You missed the opportunity to use what happened to help you. You're seeing failure, you're seeing the decision to drink when you committed to saying no as an obstacle to successfully changing the habit, and an obstacle to no longer being at the mercy of your urges, when in reality, it's a stepping stone.

I will tell you, so many people write into the podcast and they are so confused about what exactly do you mean when you say taking a break? Do you drink sometimes? Will you ever drink again? Are you sober? Are you in recovery? It breaks people's brains and listen, I get it. It would have broken my brain too because the way that we talk about alcohol and drinking and not drinking in society is so black and white.

But it doesn't reflect the reality. It doesn't reflect all the different ways that people can be taking a break and what that can look like. Not drinking for most people is just this exercise in counting days, and then if they fail, what

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do they have to do? Go back to zero, start all over again. It's just counting. That's crazy to me. I really want you to think there is no starting over.

And I don't care if your goal is to take a break from drinking or to lose weight or to save money or to write a book. Whatever it is, you're not either on the path or not on the path. You don't need to start over. You're never not on it. You are always on the path to where you want to go. You just haven't realized it yet.

I want you to look around. This is the path. Wherever you are right now in your journey, this is the path. Stop telling yourself you're not on it. Everything you do, all your actions, including the ones that don't work, including the action of failing, they're always leading you to the thing that will work for you. That's what I've found. And that's why I want people to take a break the right way, to use it as an opportunity to learn about your brain, learn how it works, learn about the think-feel-act cycle, learn about what you're making everything mean in your life and how to start to shift and change that.

Because when you teach yourself how to allow the urge to drink to just be there, it appears, it's okay, you can allow it to be there and not act on it, you will have taught yourself the most important skill for everything and anything that you want to do in life. Because the urge to overeat, the urge to spend frivolously, the urge to sit on the couch, the urge to scroll through Facebook, it's all the same mechanism at work as the urge to drink.

It's just the urge for instant gratification so that you can avoid how you're feeling in the moment. You can avoid how you feel if you say no to the urge. That's all that it is. And so I say use a break as an opportunity to really get to know your mind. Get to understand how it works. The thing that is the most powerful thing at your disposal that no one ever teaches you anything about.

But listen, I can't tell you what's right for you. I can't say hey, this break is going to last this long. I can't give you that information. I can't decide what you want. But what I can give you is all of the skills and the tools and the

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information that you need so that if you decide that you do want to drink, you can make a considered choice that you feel good about instead of this knee-jerk reaction, this reflex to an urge.

That might happen for you. It might also happen that you discover that life is way bigger and way better when you're not drinking, which is what I discovered. And once you have that understanding, you start to think well, why would I want to? When you realize how much better life can be, it shifts your desire to constantly be in search of false pleasures.

So here's the thing guys, if you want to dive deeper into this, if you really want to understand your failure blocks, if you have questions about any of this, I really hope that you will reserve a spot for the Ask Rachel webinar. They're totally free. All you have to do is go to [rachelhart.com/askrachel](http://rachelhart.com/askrachel). Alright everybody, that's it for today. I will see you next week.

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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