

Ep #268: When People Doubt You Can Change Your Drinking



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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 268.

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 everyone. We're going to talk today about what to do when people doubt that you can change your drinking. When people doubt that you can actually change your relationship with alcohol, this might come in the form of someone you know saying, like, oh, another plan. Here we go again. Do you really think you can do this? Do you really think that this time is going to be different, or yeah, okay, let's just wait and see what happens?

I have this come up a lot, especially when people join Take A Break and they're starting the 30-day challenge, and they're excited. They're ready to embark on having this different relationship and stopping worrying about their drinking. Then, they have people in their life who they love, and they care about doubt their ability to change. It can be kind of infuriating and heartbreaking at the same time to have this person that you really care about and love and trust, whether it's a partner or a sibling or your best friend, it really doesn't matter who it is.

That doubt can feel like such a blow. I experienced this a lot in my own journey because if you listen to this podcast, you know I had a good decade-plus of trying to change my drinking, trying to change my relationship with alcohol. I had so many failed attempts that the people in my life witnessed, whether friends, partners, or people I was dating. So, it

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wasn't surprising when I would announce a new plan, and sometimes it was met with a little skepticism or disbelief or even an eye roll. It was a little bit like, okay, what's the new diet that you're on?

So, I think that this is something that if it comes up for you, it's so important that you address and you know how to address it the right way because I see people get stuck here quite a bit, and you don't need to get stuck in this place. And we're going to talk about it today in a totally different way. I do want to say from the outside because I think this is really important. I want to say that, you know, one of the things that I think happens is we have so many beliefs kind of built into our culture that talks about the inability of people to change.

So, maybe you've heard someone say, oh, you know when people show you who they are, believe them the first time, or old dogs can't learn new tricks. Now, I think that most people miss the point of these sayings. I miss the point of these expressions for a long time because I do think it's really important when it comes to other people. I think it's actually very important to really reinforce the idea that our happiness can't depend on other people changing. And I think if you were to understand those expressions in that way to see, okay, I can't rely my happiness in life on someone else doing something differently; then I think they can be powerful.

The problem is most people don't do that. Most people kind of have those beliefs in the back of their mind, and they apply it to their own ability to change, their own capabilities. So, they start to say like, I don't know this is just who I am. Right? Like, I'm too old to learn something new, and what happens is that then fuels our disbelief in ourselves because we start saying I've tried so many things. Nothing has worked in the past, and I started drinking when I was really young, or I've been doing this for too long, and now I'm too old to change, or addiction runs in my family.

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We can get really mired in these beliefs about our inability to change, but I will tell you this. I work with people in their 20s. I work with people in their 70s; it does not matter. You can change the habit. You can change your response to urges. You can change your desire. You can change your relationship with alcohol. It's just that no one has actually shown you how to do it other than you should just be able to or just say no. You've just been missing the playbook to use.

Now, I will tell you, all of those doubts, right, nothing has worked in the past. I've been at this for too long. I'm too old now. I started drinking when I was too young; addiction runs in my family. This is all what, for a very long time, I believed about myself. I see how universal many of these thoughts are for people who feel very stuck in the habit of drinking and very confused about why it seems more difficult for them and easier for other people.

Then, on top of it, when a loved one seems to be unsupportive, it really can be devastating. In many ways, what's happening is we're using other people's doubts to confirm our own fears. I think it's really important for you to understand that. When our friends or loved ones don't support us, doubt us, or doubt our ability to change or bring up, hey, what about this other thing, all of those other times you've tried and failed? What happens is the kind of standard conventional advice for how to handle it sounds something like this. Either it's just ignore them, don't listen to the doubters, or have a heart to heart and explain to them how important it is they back you up.

Then, finally, if all else fails, we just need to find new people who support you and are like-minded. Now, all of this sounds so logical, but I'm going to tell you I really do believe that these approaches do more harm than good. All of this advice to tune people out or get them on board or find people who are in lockstep with you in your journey, all of those things can actually

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backfire because all of them set you up to believe that your success hinges on other people.

When, in fact, the opposite is true. The only person who can change your drinking and your relationship with alcohol is you, and by the way, that's a good thing. When you realize you don't need to get other people on board, you don't need to find people who are in lockstep with what you want to do. That's actually really a good thing. That's a very empowering place to be because all of a sudden, you can stop investing all of this time and energy on others. All of that time and energy that is diverting you from the real work of habit change which is always an internal process.

So, what I want to help you understand today are three steps that you can take if you're in this situation. If you have a loved one or a friend or a family member, someone who you feel like isn't supporting your efforts, I want to show you three steps that you can take, and then we're going to also talk about some of the common pitfalls that I see when people start to shift how they respond in these moments. Step number one is using someone else's words as a mirror, to really look inside and see what do you believe?

Now, this and I will tell you I know from experience can be really challenging because I was like, no. I want to be angry. I want to be hurt. Why aren't they supporting me? This is a pain point for me. I really feel like I'm suffering here, and I want to change, and I have these people who say they care about me and they don't have my back. I'm not telling you not to be angry, not to be hurt, not to be disappointed. What I'm asking you to do is to then redirect your mind and bring it back to you to bring your focus back to you.

Stop thinking about what other people think and get honest with yourself. What do you think about your ability to change your relationship with

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alcohol? What do you think about your ability to succeed because that's so important, and when we're angry and hurt, we don't focus on our own beliefs? We spend all of our time and energy in a place that's not going to help us create change. You really have to be brave enough to ask yourself these questions do you think you can permanently change your relationship with alcohol? Do you think that you can actually change the habit? Really be honest with yourself.

Most people don't want to be honest with themselves because they're afraid of their answers. They have doubts. When they think about whether or not they can change. I watch people do this all of the time. They say, well, I believe you can change. I believe other people can change, and I can see all of these other people in Take A Break who are here on the coaching calls. I'm listening to the fact that they're changing, but I don't really believe that I can do it.

Listen, it's okay if you have doubts. It doesn't mean that you're doing anything wrong. Don't make the mistake of thinking that if you have doubts, it means you're going to fail. So often, when we are actually brave enough to confront our own doubts that we have, what we want to do, our kneejerk is kind of push them away or just like, oh, ignore that little voice inside of you that says you can't do it. The problem then is that there's no chance for you to learn a new way to engage with your fears.

So, I'm not asking you to stop doubting yourself. I'm not even asking you to change your doubts. What I'm asking you to do is to see if you can learn how to engage with them differently. What happens when you stop listening to them as the truth, or you stop trying to make them go away? You stop trying to, you know, doubt yourself? What happens instead when you stop believing that your doubts are a problem?

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You don't need to erase them in order for you to succeed. In fact, you can start to see your doubts as part of how your brain works. This was a really powerful shift for me, and not just with my own personal work to change my relationship with alcohol, but I've used this with kind of every area that I have in my life because, listen, it wasn't just there. It was in so many areas in my life. Can I change my relationship with food? Can I actually get into a healthy relationship with a partner? Am I going to be able to reach this goal? I mean, I just had all sorts of doubts in all areas of my life.

So, the work you do here can really be a powerful application for you to take to all areas of your life. So, every time you tell yourself I don't know I am too old or I've failed too many times or I just don't think I have it in me or maybe it's because of my family tree, every time you have these thoughts that come up that make you feel defeated, hopeless, or simply in a place of disbelief that change is possible for you, then what? How do you show up when you feel the urge to drink? What do you do?

Really understanding how the think, feel, and act cycle works here, how what you do, the decisions you make around alcohol, they don't just happen. They don't just appear out of the blue, but they're connected to your beliefs. They're connected to how you feel. That is so important because most people slip into, like, oh, doubts are bad. I shouldn't have doubts. I should just believe in myself. I should push all these doubts out of my mind, but what I want you to do instead is to start to see doubts as part of how your brain works.

I talk about this a lot here, the idea that you have a higher brain and a lower brain, and they have very different cares. The higher brain, that prefrontal cortex, that part of you that can do higher reasoning and logic, think about the future, and weigh pros and cons that's the part of you that we want to start to really utilize. We want to start to put online, but of course, most of us fall into the default, into the lower brain. That lower brain is that more

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primitive part of our brain that cares about survival. It cares about saving energy, and guess what? It really likes habits because habits are all about saving energy.

Now, changing a habit, it doesn't matter what the habit is. It doesn't matter if it's your drinking, eating, or procrastinating. Changing a habit always requires energy at first for you to create a new neural pathway. So, I want you to see that those things are always going to be the tension. You're always going to have this desire to evolve to a new version of yourself, evolve to a place where you're not just operating on instinct, and you're always going to have this desire to save energy and to just do what you know because you have different parts of your brain.

There's always going to be a tension, and that's not a problem because your doubts aren't the truth. I like to look at it as your doubts being your lower brain's way of saving energy because when you believe a doubt when you think it's the truth, then what happens? You don't take action. This perspective really changed things for me. Instead of seeing myself as like, oh god, I've got too many doubts and I shouldn't doubt myself, and I need to make all these doubts go away. I started to be able to refrain them and see them as a very normal process unfolding inside of my brain. And it was like, oh, of course, I have doubts because I have a lower brain.

Doubts are what keeps me from trying new things. Doubts are what keep me from creating new neuro-pathways. They are about saving energy and doing what you know. So, when you start to understand your doubts that way, it's like, oh right, I have this part of me. This part of my brain that just really cares about survival. It's like find pleasure, avoid pain, and do it as efficiently as possible. We can very quickly see how alcohol very easily gets slotted into that paradigm of finding pleasure and avoiding pain and having it be easy.

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Then, you start to see, oh, these doubts kind of make a whole lot of sense because there is this normal tension that everyone has to keep things the same even though I also have this other part of me that wants to change. For me, suddenly, the doubts were no longer a problem. It was like, oh, of course, they're here. And there's so much freedom having that kind of attitude and that kind of mindset around your doubts when you start to see them as normal; you start to see them as like, yeah, normal part of the tension of my higher brain and lower brain.

Then, suddenly, they're not a problem. Suddenly, you don't have to delete them. You don't have to ignore them. You don't have to make them go away. You can just change what you're making the doubts mean instead of believing they're the truth about your ability to change. You can start to be like, oh, it's more like traffic cones that my lower brain is putting up to slow me down simply for the purpose of saving energy. That really is a powerful shift, but it can only happen when you use other people's words.

Whatever someone in your life says to you when you announce, hey, listen, I want to change my relationship with alcohol. I'm going to take a 30-day break. I'm really starting to get excited about the think, feel, act cycle, and applying it to habit change. However they respond, if they respond with doubts or disbelief, you can then use it as a means to understand, hey, what do I believe about my own abilities to succeed? What am I telling myself and then start to reframe it?

Suddenly, you don't need to delete your doubts. You don't need to get rid of them. You don't need to ignore them. You need to start to see them as a mechanism that your lower brain uses to preserve the habit. They're not the truth. They're just these traffic cones trying to slow you down. So, that really is step number one; to bring your attention always back to you. We want to focus on other people, but I want you to bring it back to what you

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think and what you believe because here's the thing, step number two, you can actually use the doubts that you have to create a plan for success.

Now, when your underlying belief is that you can't do something, that's the truth. You're not going to create a plan, much less a plan for success, but when you start to understand your doubts in a new way, you can start to use them to help actually make an effective plan. So, think about it. What are your doubts? What do you think for you is the hardest time to say no? Is it when you're out socializing or when you're home alone? Is it when you've had a crazy stressful day, or you're with people, and you're celebrating?

You have to really start to dig into that because all of us have an understanding of the times that are more challenging and the times that are less challenging. And when you really use your doubts to start to excavate and get that information, then and only then can you create a specific plan for how to handle these moments. What are you going to do? What are you going to say? How are you going to show up? What are you going to practice?

You have to get specific, and this is what most people neglect. They don't get specific. They just kind of focus on, like, I just have to be good. I just have to say no. You can actually use your doubts to see where you need the most preparation. Most people don't even get this far because we think they're problems. So, we just want to push them away. We don't make a specific plan.

We just focus on saying no or just focus on avoiding situations, which of course, isn't realistic. When your underlying belief is that you can't do something and you think that's the truth rather than, oh, these are just traffic cones put up by my lower brain, then you won't create a plan for

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success. You'll just hide from your doubts. Instead, you can start to see, oh, maybe my doubts have a purpose? Maybe they can actually help me. Maybe I can use them to pinpoint where I need a specific plan.

The truth is, you already know what situations are easier for you, and which situations are harder for you. Maybe it's certain times of the day; maybe it's being around certain people, maybe it's certain activities, maybe it's certain places, maybe it's when you feel certain emotions? You actually have all of this information already inside of you. It's just that you're not accessing it; you're not actually leveraging this information to create a plan that's going to work for you.

You're just kind of sitting back and feeling, you know, annoyed that people don't believe in you or wishing that you didn't doubt yourself. So, what then happens is we don't actually create plans that are going to lead us to success. We're just kind of cross our fingers and hope that we're going to be good. So, step two is really to see that you can leverage your doubts to create a plan for where you specifically need to prepare and what you're going to do.

This is what is so important. This is what we really focus on the inside of Take A Break when people start doing the 30-day challenge. They start doing the work because what I see and what is so frustrating is that we're so kind of quick to just separate the world into, like, normal drinkers or alcoholics, or normal drinkers and problem drinkers. When we do that, when we just make this very black and white distinction, and we lump everyone together who struggles with saying no, what we ignore is that the foundation and the fuel for everyone's habit are different.

You need a plan that is specific to you, and just say no is not a plan that is specific to anyone. So, that's step number two; it's really leveraging the

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doubts. Step number three is to stop telling yourself it would be easier if people in your life were more supportive or if they were on board with your plans. You have to stop believing that change would be easier if people believed in you. You may not want to hear this, but the truth is it wouldn't.

Now, I really struggled with this piece the most because I had a lot of anger and a lot of hurt that people in my life who I cared about and who said they cared about me then doubted me or rolled their eyes every time I announced hey guys, this time is going to be different. I want you to consider for a second that every time you tell yourself that it would be easier if someone in your life were more supportive, that's actually making it more difficult for you because what you're reinforcing inside is this belief that other people create your success, other people make it possible for you.

When the truth is, that's never the case because I don't care how supportive someone is. They are never going to be the one that can do the work of learning how to allow your urges and make them not a problem. They're never going to be the one that can actually understand and change your desire. They can't pinpoint your excuses and justifications and figure out believable responses. They'll never be able to understand that specific think, feel, act cycle for you that is fueling the habit.

They can't pinpoint the area that you need to practice and then do the work; only you can do all of this. The truth really is that no one can make it easier for you. When push comes to shove only, you can do the work of changing a habit and what I want you to know is that it's an amazing thing when you really step into that belief. You don't need to depend on others. You don't need for them to have your back. You don't need for them to even understand this approach.

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This really is the problem so many people waste so much mental energy on the lie if only my husband, if only my girlfriend, if only my best friend were on board, then it would be easier. If only they believed in me. If only they were more supportive. If only they would look at their own alcohol consumption, it would all be easier for me. You have to stop with that lie because their belief or disbelief in you doesn't matter. I want you to hear that.

It's not just their disbelief in you that doesn't matter. Their belief in you doesn't matter. The only thing that really does is your belief in yourself. Your ability to have your back. When you had too much to drink, when you didn't follow your plan, when you told yourself you were going to be good, and that went out the window. That's the only thing that really matters. I mean, you can kind of flip it on its head and think about like, all the times that someone in your life really has believed in you or really has seen that you were capable of something that you didn't think you were.

Now, their words of encouragement might have felt good in the moment, but at the end, the only person who could do it was you. They can't do the heavy lifting for you. No one ever can. What matters is are you using your doubts to create a plan that will actually help you when things are challenging, or are you trying to ignore them and make them go away and make sure that no one doubts you either.

These three steps, they really are so important. So, really changing the focus. If other people don't believe in you, if they roll their eyes, if they're like, well, we'll wait and see, instead of focusing on them, that is your sign to turn your attention inward. What do you think? What are your beliefs about your ability to change? You have to see that first. You can't ignore it. You can't pretend it's not there because the fact of the matter is you can actually use that. You can leverage these doubts to create actionable, specific plans.

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Plans that will help you when things get challenging, and I'm talking about going beyond this kind of mindset of like fingers crossed. Hope it works. Just say no. You actually need a specific plan. Then, the final thing is really, and this is for everything in life to let go of the idea that we are sold that it would be easier for us to be successful if other people believed in us. All that does is reinforce a very harmful belief that other people create your success. That's not true.

So, there are a couple of pieces of caution that I just want to highlight for you because all of this will be a really big shift. The first thing that I want you to be careful about is sometimes you'll really just kind of want to dig in like, ugh, she doesn't get it. She doesn't actually know how painful it is, how difficult it is, how unsupportive the people in my life are. Sometimes we want to really just dig our heels in and believe even harder that their lack of support truly is the problem.

I get it because I would do the same thing myself, but here's the thing. Not only is there no upside, but I think it ignores a deeper fear. The deeper fear is if I stop believing that it would be easier if other people had my back, if I stopped blaming my partner, best friend, or loved one for not supporting me, then the deeper fear is, okay so then when I don't follow through—if I stop blaming them then I'm going to start blaming myself.

What I talk about all the time, and I really want you to start to embrace, is that it's not about shifting who you blame. It's about removing blame entirely from the equation because blame has no place in habit change. That is really something we work on so much inside Take A Break. And I will tell you that I really see this sometimes; it's like this truly is the deeper habit that needs to change even deeper than how you respond to a drink and your thoughts about alcohol and what it means to drink and what it means to say no, even deeper than working on that desire piece. It is so

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much more powerful to really work on the habit of blaming yourself when you don't show up the way you wanted to.

Blame is a habit as well. So, I want you to be on the lookout for that. I also want you to be on the lookout when I start talking about creating specific plans. People can get really excited about this, and they start to create these plans, and then 9/10 when I look at them, I see that the plan is only about them being perfect. When you're creating plans that are going to help you get the practice you need and help you change the habit, you have to include in your plan what you're going to do if it doesn't work because, remember, perfection doesn't change habits.

The only way to change a habit is through continual learning, continual progress. So, this piece is so important. It's progress that matters, not perfection, and that's a very hard thing for people to drop again because we're so used to going into that kind of blame and shame spiral. Right? We want to be perfect because when we're not perfect when we screw up, when we make the mistake, what do we do? We start to go straight into shame and blame.

Then, so often, people don't use that as something they can leverage. They look at a setback and see, like, okay, I just can't screw up next time. I just have to be smarter next time. That's not what's going to help you make progress. What's going to help you make progress is actually being able to use the moments where you didn't follow through. When you said, I'm not going to drink, and then you did. Or, I'm just going to be good and have one, and then you finished the whole bottle.

You have to use those moments and switch them from setbacks into stepping stones, things that can actually reveal to you how the habit works on the deepest level. So, inside Take A Break, we actually use a practice

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called learn and move on, and it is something that you have to practice because we're so used to like, oh, that was stupid I just have to promise never to do that again. You have to be able to learn how to look at what happened objectively.

Then, see how you can use that information to practice something new next time, see what didn't work, so you can plan for okay, what am I going to try now? Most people don't ever do this. We just want change to be smooth sailing from day one. We just want to do it perfectly and not screw up, but that's not how it works, and it's not supposed to work that way because that's not how we learn things.

So, I just want you to remember if people are doubting you, you don't need to ignore them. You don't need to get them on board. You don't need to find new friends. You can actually use these doubts to help you change, but only if you remember that the only person who ultimately determines your success is you, and that's a good thing. Alright, 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 empowered to take it or leave it. Head on over to rachelhart.com/join and start your transformation today.

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