

Ep#270: Worrying What People Will Think



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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 270.

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 are talking today about how to handle other people's responses to your decision not to drink. Maybe that decision is just for tonight, maybe it's for a 30-day break, maybe it's a decision to stop drinking entirely. It doesn't really matter on the timeframe. This can be such a stumbling block for so many people, really worrying what people are going to think and what they might say, and what questions you might get asked.

I want to acknowledge that I know there are some of you out there listening who are thinking, yeah, that's not a problem for me. But, for others of you, this is something that your brain spends a lot of time kind of spinning on, and there's no right or wrong response here, and in fact, even if you're one of those people that says, oh, I don't care. It's not a big deal for me. This episode is still really powerful because, of course, we're not just worried about what people will think when it comes to our decisions around alcohol.

This is really a common human condition that we worry about other people's opinions. I will say in the realm of drinking and not drinking, this was a huge deal for me. This was a really big stumbling block, but as I started to really understand how this all worked inside of my mind, I started to see, oh, yeah, it's not just that this is the only area that I tend to fixate on about what people think. It really revealed how much I so often had my attention focused on other people's opinions of me, my choices, and what I was doing.

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I think that's if we're honest with ourselves, that's the case for a lot of people. It's not just about drinking. We often think, "Is this person going to like me? Do they think I'm smart? Will my family think I've made a good decision? Will my boss or my peers like what I've created?" The brain spends a lot of time asking these questions. And when you look at the decisions that you make around alcohol and the decision to say no tonight or no for a month or no forever, whatever it is, you might get responses that can sound like this.

These are the responses that people are fearful of. "Oh, I bet you won't make it until Friday" or "don't make me drink alone," or "ugh, I think you're being too strict with yourself, I don't think you have a problem," or "it sucks you have to quit, don't be such a buzzkill." "Are you pregnant?" "Since when do you think you drink too much?" "You're not going to give it up forever, are you? How long is this going to last?"

I mean, like the whole gambit of responses are there. Now, here's the thing I was fixated on these negative responses for so long, and I just wish that people had nothing to say. They had no opinions or I knew the right thing to say to make it so they wouldn't ask any follow-up questions or they would leave me alone. Like, I was very fixated on everything that I perceived as negative, but the truth is you may also hear the opposite.

You may hear people say, "Oh, yeah, you know I've been wanting to cut back or to take a break." Or, "good for you! I could never do that." I find people have a lot of questions, right? And so, when I talk to people about the work that I do, I'll get a lot of like, "oh, tell me what kind of difference?" "How do you feel differently?" "Has it made a difference for you?" I also have had this experience which I've talked about on the podcast before, which was very mind-bending for me at first when people would say to me, "you know, I don't really like drinking. I just have a drink in my hand so people won't bother me."

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So, you can get all of those responses as well, but for most people, the place that you will focus, not on the positive responses, not even on the curious responses. We'll focus squarely on the negative ones. It's really important to understand why, and I think too often this just gets simplified as well. I just don't like being judged. That actually isn't true. I want you to understand that what you really don't like is being judged negatively because, of course, positive judgments are out there too.

It is important to ask yourself why. Why don't you like being judged negatively? This is one of those questions that, outside of the realm of coaching and the work that we do here, no one really thinks about it because we're all just kind of in an agreement; yeah, I just don't like being judged negatively. It seems almost preposterous to even consider why we would question why we don't like people to have negative judgments about us. But, when you start to understand the think, feel, and act cycle, you start to understand that what's creating how you feel is not what's happening outside of you.

It's not the alcohol. It's not the job. It's not your family members. It's not what other people are saying or the comments that they make about your drinking. We start to really understand this work and see, oh, it's what I'm making it mean. It's the thoughts that I have that's what is creating my feelings. You start to understand why it's so important to step back and ask yourself why.

Why it is that you don't like being judged negatively because of the negative judgment that someone has? Those are just words. Those words don't make you feel anything until your brain attaches meaning to them, and it's so important and so empowering to understand that. So, what happens really, what happens when we tell ourselves it's like, yeah, nobody likes to be judged negatively? What we end up trying to do is avoid negative judgment by finding the right answer, by finding the right response to why aren't you drinking tonight or why are you taking a break?

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I was so fixated on this. I remember thinking, god, if people would just stop giving me a hard time. If they didn't have so many questions, it would be so much easier to say no. In times, it actually felt like people's judgment was a bigger obstacle than my urges, than my cravings, which is kind of wild. And so, what I did for a very long time was I went on a very fruitless search for the perfect response, just the perfect thing that I could say that I hoped would prevent any follow-up questions or any negative judgment from other people.

I tried out a lot of them. This is just a small sampling, but I would try out, you know I'm not feeling good tonight, or I'm taking antibiotics, or you know, I'm the designated driver or I'm doing a cleanse, I'm on a diet. I need to get up early. I have a really big day tomorrow. I've got an important meeting in the morning. I tried so many things, but as you can imagine, that did not always stop the questions or the insistence from other people of like, oh, okay, just have one. One won't hurt.

I want you to consider for a moment that feeling anxious about how people will respond to the decisions you make around drinking and trying to figure out the right thing to say is actually blocking you from a really important piece of the puzzle. Our fear isn't that other people will judge us. The real fear that we have is that their judgment will confirm our negative judgments of ourselves. And I really want you to hear me out on this because this piece really matters when you're trying to change your relationship with alcohol. When you're trying to change your drinking habits, you cannot skip over this piece.

It's not the fear that other people are going to judge us negatively. It's the fear that their judgment will confirm what we already believe about ourselves. I really want you to just be totally honest with yourself, and ask yourself, what do I think about the fact that sometimes I find it kind of hard to say no? What do I think about the fact that sometimes I go overboard, even though I promised, I swore up and down that I'd only have one. Or, I

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promised that I wouldn't have anything to drink, and then I gave into my urges? What do I think about how fast I drink?

Or that when I've tried to pace myself with someone else or nurse a drink, invariably, I get kind of impatient and frustrated and give up. What are my thoughts about the fact that I have so many good reasons to want to change my drinking and change my relationship with alcohol. However, I'm still struggling to follow through? Or that no matter how many times I make the same mistake and drink too much or wake up regretting what I did or what I said, I still can't seem to learn my lesson?

Now, here's the thing, you may not like answering these questions, you may not really want to spend a lot of time there, but trust me, your brain is already doing it. If you feel yourself resisting if you feel yourself not even wanting to answer those questions, I promise you they're already being unconsciously answered in your brain whether you like it or not. So, it's worth it for you to spend the time and just stop for a moment instead of just considering what other people think, what other people make it mean, how much you drink, what other people make it mean about your decision to say no. What do you think?

Most people don't answer questions about giving in to their urges or drinking too much, or making a commitment and then not following through. Most people don't answer these questions by looking at the think, feel, and act cycle that was unfolding in the moment. Most people don't stop and pause and say, hmm, let me understand. What was the sentence that led to the feeling that had me reaching for a drink? I certainly didn't do that. I didn't even know you could do that.

Most people don't consider that their drinking is a learned behavior that is actually serving a purpose. We talk about this a lot. There wasn't an upside. If there wasn't a benefit, you wouldn't be reaching for a drink. It's not all negatives. So, most people just don't spend the time to consider

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hey, this is helping me in some way. How is it helping me? So, when you don't answer questions about why you gave in, why you broke your promise, or why you overdrank. When you don't answer these questions by looking at the think, feel, and act cycle or thinking about how your brain works or how habits are formed in your brain. What do you do?

Well, if you're like me, most people answer these questions by believing, yeah, I don't know. I think something is wrong with me. I think something is wrong with my brain. I'm just someone who doesn't know when to say when. I'm just someone who can't learn their lesson. Most people answer these kinds of questions about why they drink the way they do and why they have a hard time saying no, and why they find themselves breaking their commitment. They answer these questions in a moral way.

They answer these questions as a reflection of who they are as a person, as their character rather than, yeah, I had a sentence in my mind that happened unconsciously, and that led to a feeling, and that feeling led to an action. I've been practicing that over and over again until it's become a habit. I will tell you this when you make your drinking mean. When you make your struggle to follow through or your struggle to say no to an urge when you make it mean something negative about you as a person.

When you make it a moral issue, when you see it as some sort of internal flaw, then you know what happens? You get very concerned about what other people think and trying to control other people's opinions about your decision to say yes or no. If you didn't make your drinking habits mean something negative about you as a person, you wouldn't be so concerned about controlling other people and what other people thought.

And really, what I came to believe and what has been so empowering for me, not just in the realm of the decisions I make around alcohol, but really when it comes to everything in life is that out in the world, there is the whole spectrum of beliefs about me. All of them are out there. Some people love

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me. Some people hate me. Some people could not even be bothered to think about me. Some people listen to this podcast and think I'm really smart, and some people listen to it and think it's garbage.

All of the opinions are out there, the full spectrum. That's true of me. That's true of you. It's true of everyone. We exist in a world with 7 billion people. There is never going to be any shortage of opinions about us, and they are never all going to line up. Trying to control other people's opinions is futile. What is the point? You can't do it.

What matters, where you should spend time, energy, and effort working on is what's your opinion of you? Because that's the only opinion that you can ever hope to change. Try as you might, you don't and will not ever have control over what other people think about you. You just can't, but you can; you can start to shift your opinion of you, and what you make your drinking mean about you, and what you make breaking your commitment or giving in to an urge or waking up regretful about what you did the night before.

You can start to shift those opinions, and those opinions are the ones that really matter. Then, if you start to think, okay, the whole spectrum of opinions are out there when it comes to me, right, the good and the bad and the neutral. It's all out there. So, what then? What if people think you're a buzzkill when you aren't drinking? Do you agree? Are you sitting there being no fun, or are you thinking like, no, they're totally confused? I'm still super fun to be around.

Your opinion is really what matters there. If someone doubts that you can take a break for a week or a month or six months or however long, okay. What do you think? Are you doubting yourself too? Because at the end of the day, that's what really matters. If you tell someone that you don't drink anymore and they ask if you had a problem with alcohol, what do you think? Do you think that you have a problem? What do you make it mean?

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How much you drink or found yourself drinking or your ability to say no to urges, or your ability to follow through on the commitment. Do you believe that overdrinking is a product of a cycle unfolding in your mind that no one has ever shown you? Or do you secretly think it's kind of a character flaw? Or a sign that some part of you is broken or that something is wrong with you? We spend so much time wanting to avoid people's judgment about our choice to say no.

In the process, we ignore the only judgment that actually matters. We ignore our own judgment. Worrying about what other people will think when you tell them that you're not drinking tonight it's not the time to figure out what's the perfect response or how can I avoid them asking follow-up questions. It's a chance. It's an invitation for you to redirect your mind and say, hey, wait a minute. What do I think? What are my thoughts about this decision?

What are my beliefs about my drinking, and what does it mean about me? And to really be honest with yourself and not to b.s. yourself, but to truly say what do I think? What do I believe? Then, see how those thoughts impact how you feel and behave around alcohol. That's the power of this work. So many people that come to Take A Break they come in feeling so much guilt and so much shame and really believing that something fundamentally is wrong with them, and what they are able to see is that thinking and shifting their thoughts about what they make the habit mean and what they make their drinking mean.

It's not just about being nicer to yourself. They start to understand how these negative thoughts that they're having about themselves, the guilt, shame, and embarrassment that they feel actually fuel the habit. They start to understand how those thoughts actually impact how they feel and behave around alcohol, and that's the power of this work. Using the moment when you find yourself really worried about what other people

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think is such a powerful opportunity to change your perspective and focus on the one place that actually matters.

Focus on the sentences that you have about yourself and your drinking and what it means, and then understand how that impacts how you're showing up. This is really the deeper level work that you do. It's the work of changing the habit sustainably and permanently rather than just believing you can become a really good rule follower, and that's going to be the solution. You actually have to look and see what you make it mean and see how that's impacting how you show up.

So, that's what I offer to all of you. For all of you out there, whether it's about drinking or really anything in life, when you find yourself worrying about other people's opinions or being afraid of them judging you, it is always an opportunity to turn and redirect your mind and look inward, and that will reveal so much. 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 powered to take it or leave it. Head on over to RachelHart.com/join and start your transformation today.

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