

Ep #273: Drink Manipulation



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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 273.

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.

Welcome back my friends. We're talking about a topic that I think is really interesting, and I've never actually discussed on the podcast before. It's about drink manipulation. I will tell you this. Once you start paying attention, you will notice it everywhere.

What I mean by drink manipulation is when someone tries to make you feel better by offering you a drink. It can happen in relationships. It can also happen in customer service. We're going to talk about both today. We're going to talk about what it looks like, why it happens, and the steps you need to take.

Because when you're trying to change your own relationship with alcohol, this is a place where a lot of people can get very frustrated and very annoyed and very stuck. It's something that happened to me as well. I want to show you how to actually use these moments to get more insight about how the habit's working for you rather than feeling really irritated that someone is like, "Oh, have a drink. Here you go. It's free. On the house."

So it came up recently because someone inside of Take a Break was sharing on a coaching call that she had a dinner reservation at a fancy restaurant with her boyfriend. When they showed up, their table wasn't ready, right? This has happened to all of us before. So what happened? The host offered them a free drink at the bar while they waited.

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It got me thinking about how many times people in my life have tried to solve customer service problems by offering me a drink. I will tell you I really remember very vividly the first time it happened. I was barely 21. My sister who's older was taking me out to a super fancy restaurant in New York City. It's no longer open anymore, but it was called Danube. It was a restaurant in Tribeca that specialized in Austrian cuisine. I had just come back from living in Vienna.

I will tell you, you know, this restaurant was magical. It was like you stepped inside, and it was like being inside a Klimt painting. It just was so beautiful. It was—Definitely at that point in my life, it was the fanciest restaurant I had ever been to. I felt very out of my element. My sister, who's a couple years older than me, she was really stretching her budget to take me there.

I remember, I will tell you this. I remember that they started the meal by giving us an amuse-bouche, which we had no idea what that was. My sister said to the waiter, she was like, “We did not order this.” Because she was so worried about the bill. She was so worried about like this is really kind of stretching what is possible for us right now. The waiter had to explain like, “No, no. It's compliments of the chef. Don't worry.”

But anyway, we got there. They were so behind on their seatings, which, you know, in New York City, pretty common. We probably wait around for like, I don't know, maybe even an hour. At some point, the host offered us a complimentary cocktail while we waited. I remember being like oh what? Like, yes, please. This is a fancy restaurant, and the people are fancy. Now I'm being given this fancy free drink. By the way, we probably couldn't have even afforded the drink. Right? So it was like yes. This is a total win-win in my mind.

This experience of people using alcohol to resolve customer service problems is not uncommon. It really goes to show you that businesses

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know that alcohol is not just about like yeah, it tastes good. It is sometimes about trying to solve people's emotions. So, you know, you have an annoyed customer, an impatient customer, or someone who's unhappy. It's like hey, here's a drink. Have a drink. Would you like a free drink on the house?

It happens, by the way, at restaurants. I've had it happen to me when I'm shopping for clothes. My husband had it happen when he was at the tailor. We've had it happen at hotels, when you're on airplanes, in salons. It happens quite a bit. Now, I will tell you this having been on the side of, you know, the first time it happened for me being like ooh yes, please. This is amazing and fancy, and I will definitely take that cocktail. I've also had it happen to me where I wasn't drinking. Then being so annoyed that the customer service problem was trying to be solved with a drink.

So I remember shortly before I got married, I went to the jeweler to pick up our wedding rings that we had gotten specially engraved. The jeweler had messed up the engraving. I was frustrated. I was not happy. The manager, in an attempt to make me happy, offered me a glass of champagne.

I will tell you then I was doubly annoyed. Because I was like no, I don't drink. So like what do you got? Like, what do you got for me? He pulled out this kind of like, one of those like itsy bitsy plastic containers of bottled water. I was like really? Like that? Okay, no. I was not thrilled by being like okay, you were gonna offer me champagne. Now I'm getting some like Poland spring here? Like no thanks.

So listen, before I go any further, I just want to say for everyone out there listening, I know that customer service jobs are incredibly hard. I know that people are often instructed by management to offer a drink to an unhappy customer. So this podcast and this episode is not about like pillorying everything in the service industry that is wrong. It's about really getting you

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curious about how and why alcohol is used to try to appease us when we're unhappy and also your response.

Because you can see in those two situations like, you know, the very first time I was like oh my god yeah. Amazing, right. Then this other time picking up the wedding rings, I was so annoyed. I was like ugh, no. Now I'm even more annoyed that you screwed up the engraving because you have nothing to even try to "fix it" for me.

So what I want you to think about today is really understanding your response is actually going to help you understand how the habit works inside of you. I will say, you know, the other thing to just keep in mind is, when in, especially in customer service situations, when we're offered a free drink, and we kind of understand what's behind it, right.

Sometimes what's behind it is like, "Oh, they're unhappy. Like, let me try to fix their feelings. Give them something free. Maybe a little buzz will take the edge of. Or it's like let me give you something fancy and special. Like it feels like you're getting something that you wouldn't normally get. You know there's a reason why people offer complimentary champagne and not complimentary Miller Lite, right? So they're trying to tap in not only to the effects that alcohol has on us, but also our belief systems about oh, I'm like getting something fancy here, right?"

Now, the thing is this kind of drink manipulation, it doesn't just happen in customer service interactions. You might have it happen in your relationships or your friendships. So maybe your significant other or your best friend sees that you're stressed out and they're like, "Oh, honey, let me get you a drink." Right? Or like, "Let's go out for drinks. Let's grab a bottle of wine."

Now, what are they doing? They're trying to make you feel better. They're hoping that the drink is going to help alter your mood. It's not because

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they're a bad person. It's because most people move through the world having no idea how to fix our feelings. Like no idea how to feel better other than like oh, like maybe a drink will make me feel better, or maybe eating something will make me feel better. Maybe I can distract myself and feel better. Like most people have no idea what to do.

So of course, we apply this same logic to the people in our lives. So you know, they're maybe helping you try to feel better. Maybe they also want to be perceived as like, "Hey, I'm thinking of you, and I'm trying to do something nice." You know, it might be some combination of these two things.

I will tell you I had a relationship where this dynamic was really present. Every time that I would get riled up, which, by the way, used to be a lot. Because I had no understanding of my emotions, or how to manage them, or really how not to just go into like a knee jerk response when I felt a lot of negative emotions. So I would get really riled up. My boyfriend would be like, "Rachel, I'm gonna make you a cocktail." It was basically like, "I don't know what to do with her right now. Maybe this will help."

In his defense, you know, I didn't know what to do with my emotions either because I was so often feeling like I was at the mercy of my emotions. That I just like had so much stress and had so much anxiety, and I didn't know how to manage them. I unconsciously was often trying to, you know, eat or drink as a way to feel better. So it's not surprising that, you know, he noticed that pattern in me and was like, "Oh, okay. Maybe this will help."

So, you know, that's what drink manipulation looks like. It's really about offering a drink to try to appease or fix someone else's negative emotional experience. It's clear why it happens. It's an attempt to make us feel better, or it's an attempt to kind of see more thoughtful, or an attempt to demonstrate that like, "Hey, I'm like giving you something for free."

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But the question for all of you out there when you're in this place of wanting to change the habit and wanting to change your relationship with alcohol. It's like well, what do you do when you run into this? What happens when it's a customer service situation or it's your partner or your best friend that's like, "Have a drink. You'll feel better. Here, this is on the house." Right?

Because what a lot of people run into is they can get very annoyed in these moments. A lot of that annoyance, just like I explained in my own experience with the engravings, it will be directed at the person doing the offering instead of really understanding hey, this is shedding some light into how that habit works inside of me, right?

So instead of feeling like oh what? I mean you know I'm trying to change my drinking, right? If it's like a partner or a best friend. Like, you know I'm trying to drink less or you know I'm trying to say no. Why are you offering me this? This isn't being very supportive. We can go down that route. Or we can go down the route of like, "Okay well, first, I was an unhappy customer. Now I'm a really unhappy customer because you're offering me something that I like can't even have, right. So now I feel like doubly annoyed or doubly like I'm not being taken care of or my needs aren't being met."

But what I always missed in these moments was what a powerful time this was to really step back and look at how my response to someone offering me a drink was actually reinforcing the underlying habit. So someone offering me a drink in any situation, good or bad, customer service or my significant other, it was actually part of how the habit worked inside of me.

So sometimes I had the experience of like oh yes, please. That sounds amazing. Then other times I was like ugh, no. Like what else you got for me? You're gonna give me this like stupid bottle of eight ounces of water? Like, no. Now I'm even more annoyed.

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But you have to notice. Like regardless of what your reaction is, whether you feel taken care of or you're excited or you're annoyed, both of these responses actually have very similar thoughts in common. They both hold as a premise that what is being offered to you isn't neutral at all. That what is being offered to you has the power to make you feel differently.

So on the one hand, I'm excited. Like, yes, please. This is fancy and free. Like yeah, I'll take it. Or on the other hand I'm like so annoyed, right? It's like ugh I don't even—Like I can't even have that. Now you're offering me this thing that I can't have. It doesn't really matter. The emotional response, the underlying thought that both of these responses have in common is like oh the thing being offered to me is not neutral at all.

I want you to see how connected that is to the habit. Because so often what we are doing when you listen to this podcast is really trying to see that alcohol truly is neutral. But it doesn't feel neutral because we have all of these beliefs about what it means and what it does for us. That can happen, those beliefs can be there. If on the one hand, you're excited and you feel taken care of or you're annoyed and you feel unsupported.

It doesn't matter if it's a customer service situation or situation with your significant other. The point is in these moments to step back and examine, hey, wait. What's unfolding inside of me? How am I feeling when I'm being offered that drink, and why?

Now, of course, that why. We often want to look to other people's behaviors and what they're doing. But what I want you to consider is when you're asking yourself okay, why do I feel this way? You're asking yourself to pay attention to what are the thoughts unfolding inside of me? What am I making it mean? That's where most people don't look. That's where I didn't know I could look for a long time.

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So I was so caught up in like oh, yeah. This is like amazing. Yes, please. Or, instead of being excited, I was indignant that they had no kind of equal alternative options for me. It's so funny, right, when you see the connection between those two responses. Either way, I was outsourcing my feelings to what I was or wasn't being offered. Instead of understanding oh no, what you really need to pay attention to is what's happening inside of your mind. What are those sentences? What are you making it mean?

So the whole purpose of looking at this idea of drink manipulation is not a way to kind of like blame and shame other people. It's a chance to see what happens inside of you, how you have responded differently in different moments. It's a chance to watch all of the thoughts connected to the habit unfold. That can happen regardless of your emotional response. It can happen if you're excited. It can happen if you feel taken care of. It can happen if you're annoyed or indignant and feel unsupported.

What you're really asking yourself to do is to start understanding and observing how we have all conditioned our brain to believe that a drink is a solution to a problem. When really, a drink just is. The only problem that we're experiencing is the emotion that we feel in the moment. That doesn't actually have anything to do with what's being offered to us.

So think about that the next time whether your partner or in a customer service situation. Think about, step back and think about, hey what's happening inside of me right now? What am I making this mean? How am I potentially connecting this drink? How am I connecting it to the premise that it's really not neutral at all, and it actually is in charge of how I feel?

That is going to give you so much insight to really start to understand all these unconscious beliefs that are supporting the habit. Until you see them, you can't change them. Changing them is how you transform your relationship with alcohol. All right, that's it for today. I will see you next week.

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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.