

# Ep #281: How To Know If You Can Change Your Drinking



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #281: How To Know If You Can Change Your Drinking

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, Episode 281.

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, my friends, welcome back. We are talking about something that I know plagues so many of you. It plagued me too, for the longest time. And, that is the question: How do I know if I'm going to be able to change my drinking? How do I know if I'm going to be able to change my relationship with alcohol?

This is a question that so many of you have. You will look and see and believe that it's possible for other people, but you will have this recurring question, "But can I do it?" And why do you have this recurring question? Because for a lot of you, you have tried so many things to change, and nothing has worked.

I talk about this all the time. I tried more things than I can count, to try and rein in my drinking. I tried setting rules. I tried limiting it to certain days, or certain kinds of alcohol. I tried rules about who I would drink with, and who I wouldn't. I tried rules around making sure that I would only drink with a meal, and never on an empty stomach. I mean, so many things.

And, of course, I tried a lot of times just saying no. The problem with that, when I would go into these periods of nothing works, I just have to say, "No," my desire wasn't changing. Number one, so I yeah, I felt like physically better. But I often felt emotionally like, "I feel like I'm kind of

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missing out,” or, “I don't feel as connected,” or, “I notice that I'm isolating myself.” So that didn't really help.

Also, I was saying no through willpower. I was saying no through distraction, and avoidance. And, guess what that meant? It meant that I wasn't actually teaching my brain: The urges were no big deal. That urges were not a problem. That urges had no power, that they were totally harmless.

So, even though I could go periods of saying, “No, I wasn't actually changing the underlying habit,” and then, what would happen, I would use all that willpower, and I would have all that inner turmoil because I felt like, “Yeah, I'm not having as much fun,” or, “I'm not connecting as much,” or, “I'm not seeing people as much,” or, “I just need to relax.” And so eventually, I would give in, and I hadn't actually learned any skills during the time that I was saying no, other than the skill of gritting my teeth.

And guess what? That skill really didn't come in handy when it comes to changing the habit. So, I was stuck, and I really fixated on this question for the longest time. “Maybe I'm just someone who will never figure this out. Maybe it's not possible for me.” And that's what I want to talk to you about today if that is a place where you are. If that's something that you're worried about.

Because, what we will do, is we will look at the past, and we will make it mean... We will make those failed attempts mean that we can't succeed, and we can't figure this out. And guess what happens? Guess what happens with the think-feel-act cycle?

When you make it mean that you can't figure it out, you feel defeated. You end up staying stuck. You end up not even wanting to try things because

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you think to yourself, “I just can't bear to fail again.” I remember thinking that so many times. “I just can't bear to have another attempt not work.” It is so demoralizing.

But here's the thing, attempts that don't work aren't demoralizing. It was demoralizing, because what I was making it mean about my future. You have to decide to choose what you want to believe about your success. We don't do this. I didn't know you could do this. I didn't know that I could choose what I wanted to believe about my success. I thought that I just had to look into the past, and see what had happened before, and that that was going to tell me whether or not success was possible.

That is the worst way to decide, and determine, whether or not you're going to be able to succeed. Because, when you look at the past, and you look at your failed attempts, and you have not learned the process that I teach, inside the *Take a Break* membership, you haven't learned the process of how to actually evaluate what didn't work, learn from it, grow from it, and apply it moving forward, then you're always going to look at your past attempts and think, “Well, see? It's just like the evidence mounting, that I can't figure this out.”

The problem is that we don't know how to fail. We don't know how to fail in a way that serves us, no one teaches us how to do this. In fact, I thought that failure was a problem, not just when it came to my attempts to change my drinking. I thought that failure was a problem... Just in general, I didn't want to fail in life.

My whole goal was, I just want to do things, right. I just don't want to make mistakes; it would be better if I could just do it perfectly. That's what I believed. I truly believed that failure was a problem because no one had

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ever taught me the way to fail, and fail on purpose, in a way that serves me.

That is what is so important about the 30-Day Break. The 30-Day Break is what everyone does, when they join the membership. It doesn't matter what your goal is, it doesn't matter if your goal is to drink less in a sitting, or less often during the week, or you want to get to a point where having a drink is just saved and reserved for special occasions, or you want to be in the place where you're like, "You know what? I'm done. I feel like it's just not serving me."

It doesn't matter what your goal is, everybody starts with the process of that 30-Day Break, because what you are learning there is the process of how to show up for yourself, when you make mistakes. Most people... Here's the thing that I want you to know, most people who go through the 30 days do not do it perfectly. Now a lot of other programs would hold that out, or they wouldn't want to hold it out, actually. They wouldn't even want to put that forward; it would be like, "Look at our members. Look at how long people have gone with saying no."

But the problem there, is it puts all the focus, all the attention on doing something perfectly. And P.S., that's not everybody's goal in the long run; is to just say no. You have to actually learn the process of how to fail, how to have a setback, and not let that be something that turns into an obstacle, not let that be written into your narrative; that you can't do this, and you're never going to be able to figure this out, and other people can figure this out, but you can't.

It really is a specific skill. And, I did not understand that for the longest time. I didn't understand that failing the right way was a skill. And, I didn't

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understand that it was actually up to me to decide what I wanted to believe about my success.

I want you to think about this. How many times have you tried to change your drinking? A lot of people don't even want to think about that number because they think that number means something. I don't know, my number was probably over 50, I'm sure it was. From the time that I started drinking when I was 17, until the time that I figured it out, I'm sure it was well over 50. I just tried things over, and over, and over again.

Most people don't even want to look at that number. But what is your number? Notice if you don't want to look at it. Notice if you're like, "No thanks. I don't want to think about how many times that I've tried to change my drinking, because then I have to think about how many times I failed. And, when I think about how many times I failed, then I feel awful."

Again, failure doesn't make you feel awful until you make it mean that you can't figure this out, instead of making it mean, which is totally available to you, that this is all part of the journey. "This is me figuring out. Failing, is me figuring out what does and doesn't work." You have to really be willing to think about: What do you think that number is? How many times have you tried? And then, what have you made those attempts mean about your future success?

I only knew how to make failure mean, "Obviously, I'm doing something wrong. Obviously, something is wrong with me. Obviously, I'm never going to figure this out." I wasn't making it mean, "Oh, this is part of how I'm figuring it out." Notice the difference between those two sentences, "I'm never going to figure it out," versus, "This is part of the process of figuring it out." So different. Because, you start to understand how you have been using your failure, really, as a weapon against yourself.

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I know that sounds kind of extreme, but I really... We often kind of weaponize failure against ourselves. We make it mean something terrible, which makes us feel terrible. And then, guess what happens? We don't take the steps that we need to change. We hide. What would I do a lot? I would say to myself, "Oh, God, Rachel, if you're this screwed up, you might as well just drink. If there's, you know... If this is what your brain is, and your brain," back then, what I believed... I didn't think my brain was like, the most valuable tool at my disposal.

I really believed that I had lost the brain lottery, that I had just gotten a janky brain. My brain was missing an off-switch. My brain was different from other people. I had the brain of someone who couldn't drink normally. When I believed all of that, guess what happened? It was like, "Okay, who cares? You're this screwed up, let's just enjoy yourself." That is a pattern that I would fall into, that is a pattern that so many of you fall into when you feel defeated, it's like, "Okay, well, I might as well just, you know, enjoy the moment; feel terrible the next day."

So, you have to understand that. You have to understand how many times you've tried to change your drinking. Notice if you have resistance to even acknowledging that number. That resistance doesn't come from the number itself; it comes from what you're making those attempts mean about your ability to succeed in the future. You have to really understand how the story, the unconscious story, that your brain has attached to those attempts, all those failed attempts, that is actually getting in the way.

I want you to understand this, your brain is always going to attach a narrative to everything, it's always trying to make meaning. That is one of the things the brain does. It is constantly trying to interpret the world around us. It is constantly trying to make meaning. And if you aren't paying attention, if you aren't taking charge, and managing your mind, managing

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the meaning that your brain is making, not just of your drinking and your failed attempts, but everything.

If you are not understanding the process for how to do that, guess what's going to happen? Your brain is likely going to make a lot of negative meaning, because it thinks it's helping you, it thinks it's keeping you safe. That negativity bias, which is built into every human brain, that negativity bias served an evolutionary purpose.

But here's the thing, we're not in the place, anymore, where it is necessary for our survival to have this negativity bias in full effect all the time. In fact, it is actually hindering your survival. I want you to think about that. It is getting in the way of you living your best life. It is getting in the way of you figuring out why you developed this habit, and why it's hard to say no, and why it can feel like a struggle, and why you feel like you're missing out, or things aren't as fun or celebratory, or you don't feel as connected when you don't have a drink.

So, you have to understand your brain is always going to make meaning. It's going to do that about everything, including failed attempts, and you can decide to tell your brain what you want that meaning to be. This is where I think so many of you get stuck. And I want you to hear me say this, as you think, "Okay, so I'm listening to these concepts and listening to these ideas." And, that's enough. "I just need to absorb this information and absorb these ideas. And then, I'm just going to be able to, you know, put these ideas into action in my own life."

This is what I also believed for the longest time, because when something intellectually makes sense, what I would tell myself is, "Okay, so like, that's really logical, I should just be able to do this." But that belief, "I should just be able to do this," is part of the problem.

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It is one thing to make a plan. It is one thing to hear me talk about your ability to change the meaning that your brain makes. It is another thing to actually know how to implement the plan. It's another thing to actually figure out. "Okay, so I made the plan. And now I'm not following through. I made the plan, and I'm not following the plan." Or, "I made the plan, and I'm quitting on myself the first time I run into a stumbling block."

That's why I have the *Take a Break* membership, so that people can figure out, "Hey, how do I keep going? How do I keep going when I just want to tell myself, 'I should be able to understand this?' How do I keep going, when I promised myself that I wouldn't drink, and then I drink last night." Or, "I promised myself that I would have one and I polished off the bottle."

That's the problem, right? We don't understand that it's not enough to make the plan. We have to learn how to implement the plan, and stick with the plan, and follow through with the plan, and pick ourselves up when it doesn't work, and keep going until we get to the place where we want to go.

And by the way, sticking to a plan, what I'm talking about, is not the same as "just say no." "Just say no," isn't teaching you any skill, other than doubling down, gritting your teeth, avoiding distracting, in order to say no. As if, no is the goal. No is not the goal, I want you to know this. The goal is for you to understand that your urges are harmless. They have no power over you.

That's not where you are right now if you're struggling with the habit of drinking. If you're struggling with the habit, it's because you're believing that your urges have power over you, that they're not harmless. That's a real goal. Notice how that has nothing to do with saying no, that has everything to do with stripping urges of their power. That has nothing to do with hiding

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out or avoiding people or isolating. It has to do with knowing, “Hey, that urge, no big deal. Not a problem.”

That is the skill that I want all of you to learn. That's the skill that's possible for all of you to learn, but not when you look at your failure in the past, and make it mean that you can't succeed.

So, here's what I want you to know, when it comes to whether or not you can change your relationship with alcohol, whether or not you can change the habit of drinking. I know that, of course, the answer is yes. Of course, you can do it. Of course, because you have a human brain. You have the most powerful tool in the world between your two ears, it's just no one has shown you how to use it. No one has taught you about the think-feel-act cycle, and not just how it works, but how to harness it for change.

I know that you can do it, but it's not enough for me to know that you can do it, *you* have to know that you can do it. And, it starts with looking at all the times you've tried to change, and it hasn't worked, and deciding, “What am I going to make this mean?” Noticing where your brain wants to go, noticing how your brain wants to tell you it's a sign that you're doomed. And deciding instead, “I get to choose the meaning.” That's available for you.

But it really is a skill. It really is something that you have to practice. It's one thing to hear me talk about it on the podcast, it's another thing to work with me. It's another thing to work inside *Take a Break* and say, “Okay, I get this. I understand these concepts, but I'm really struggling implementing them. I'm really struggling trying to figure out how to do this. My brain wants to fight back and say, ‘No, these past attempts are a problem. Look at how many times you failed.’” It really is the difference...

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I was joking about this with my team the other day. I was talking about the difference between going to the gym, you know I use the gym analogy a lot, but it's like going to the gym and watching a YouTube video of someone using a weight machine. Can you imagine doing this? Like that's what you're doing while you're at the gym, you're just watching the YouTube videos of how to use the weight machine, or getting on the weight machine and trying to figure it out, and lifting the weight that you probably have a lot of judgment about. I know I did.

And I'm going to tell you something... Because for so long, I was so afraid of doing things incorrectly, that I kind of would be one of those people that was like, "Okay, but like, let me just see the video first. Like, let me just see someone demonstrate it before I get on the machine." Because I didn't want to get on the machine and do it wrong. I didn't want to get on the machine and make a mistake because I would be so embarrassed. Because, of course, I would make it mean something terrible.

So, that's what I want you to think about, right? Are you actually in the gym, doing the workout, working with trainers? Or, are you at the gym watching videos of how the weight machines work? Listen, it can be very informative, but it's not actually going to change your brain.

Listen, you really have got to believe that is possible for you to decide what you want to believe about your ability to succeed. Doesn't matter how many failed attempts you've had, you can either make them mean, "I'll never figure it out," or, "This is me, figuring it out. Another thing I tried; didn't work, moving on. What's the next thing?" That's what's available for you.

Alright, everyone. Thank you for listening 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 [www.RachelHart.com/join](http://www.RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.