

Ep #283: Once I Start, I Can't Stop



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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 283.

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.

Alright, let's talk about urges, today. We talk about urges all the time on this podcast. I have many, many episodes specifically dedicated to urges. But I was doing a kickoff call... We do a kickoff call on the beginning of every month welcoming everyone who's brand new into the *Take a Break* membership. Everyone who is just getting started, we welcome all of them onto a call. And, everyone, also, who has been in the membership for a while, they all come to this call called Mastering Your Break.

The beauty of this call, and why I love it so much, is because it is so essential for everyone who's on Day One. And, it is so essential for everyone who is in month 14. It really doesn't matter where you are, we're always coming back to these foundational skills and these foundational tools.

That's what I think makes this so powerful is understanding that change is not about learning a million new things. It's about a couple of foundational tools, that you just need to keep practicing over, and over, and over again.

So, when you join *Take a Break*, and you go through that 30-Day Challenge, one of the things that you do is you start working on what I call the Four Pillars.

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A lot of times what people will say is they go through the Four Pillars in their first 30 days. They really start to learn a new way and a new process for dealing with urges, and a process for understanding how their mind works, and making commitments, and what happens when they don't keep them. Then, also applying, understanding how to recognize your own think-feel-act cycle, get it out on paper, and start to change it in a really believable way.

These Four Pillars are the same Four Pillars that you're going to come back to over and over again. And so, I love these calls because people can really see, "Oh, this is not one and done. I'm not supposed to have this mastered in the first 30 days, and then never returned to this. These are the basics of change."

And by the way, here's the thing that I think is so exciting, and what most people don't realize, is that these are the basics for changing anything in your life. I always talk about this, when you do the work inside *Take a Break*, yeah, it's like you're going to the gym. When you go to the gym for your brain, you're making your brain stronger.

But guess what? That strength is not just something that you can utilize to say, "No, thank you, I'm good." Or, "One glass is enough for me." It's not just a strength you can utilize there, it's a strength you can utilize with everything in life. Because, of course, everything that we dream, everything that we have goals about, all of the kinds of plans that we have for ourselves, it all requires making commitments and then knowing how to follow through.

That's one of the things we teach you. It all requires having urges; urges not to do it, urges to procrastinate, urges to put it off, urges to grab your phone. I love thinking about, "An urge is an urge is an urge." We don't need to separate them into, "This is my Chardonnay urge. This is my chocolate urge. This is my Facebook urge. No. They're just urges.

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So, you need to learn the process of: How do I make them powerless? How do I make it so that my brain truly understands they have absolutely zero power over me? It's the skill of understanding how your habits work, how your brain works, because I don't care what goal you have in life. It doesn't have to be related to alcohol, you are always going to have that push and pull between: I want it and I kind of want to sit on the couch. I want it and I kind of want to just not do anything right now.

That push and pull is normal. The problem is we make that push and pull mean, something is wrong, that we're not totally committed enough. You have to really do the work and understand how your brain functions. You don't have to become a brain scientist. That's not what I'm asking for. You just have to understand, listen, you have different parts of your brain and they care about different things. And that's a good thing. That's not a bad thing.

But if you want to understand how the lower brain works, in compared to how the higher brain works. That they have a different set of goals, and there is always going to be this tug of war. The tug of war is not the problem. It's understanding why the tug of war is there and putting it into context. And, knowing how to decide which path do I want to head down.

And then frankly, the think-feel-act cycle; this is the fourth pillar. How do I get all of the thoughts that are in my head, where all that story is... That brain of yours that loves to make meaning, but unfortunately, the meaning is not so good sometimes. How do we get that story out of your head and separate it out?

Here are the facts of what's happening, and here's the story that my brain just automatically came up with. And, guess what? The story probably doesn't sound very good, it might not be very helpful. Here's how, then, I'm feeling in relation to that story. Here's how I show up. This is what it's creating for me in my life; you've got to be able to see that.

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And then, you have to learn how to change it. Changing it, my friends, does not mean positive thinking and it does not mean affirmations. Your brain will just reject that. Your brain will be like, "This sounds like a load of crap. I don't buy any of it." You have to learn how to do this in a believable way.

That's what we are constantly teaching. How do you start to shift your thoughts in a believable way? There's a process for doing that. We take people through these different steps of, here's like five or six different ways that you can start to slightly change your thoughts, slightly shift into something more believable.

And it's funny, because a lot of times people will say, "No, no, no. I just want to get to the place where I believe that urges are harmless and they have no power over me." And I'm like, "Listen, you're gonna get there."

But we can't rush the brain. Because if you don't actually believe it, then guess what will happen? You'll be trying to convince yourself of something, and your brain will be like, "Yeah, I don't buy it, right. I don't buy this for a second. You're just lying to yourself." You know what happens when you think you're just lying to yourself? You don't change. So, you have to learn how to do it in small increments. And, when you do it in small increments, you'll be amazed at how you're able to change.

Anyway, we were on this Mastering Your Break call, that we do at the beginning of the month, and someone had a question, that I think is a question a lot of people have. They said, "You know, okay. This makes a lot of sense. It makes a lot of sense about how you can start to observe your urges and learn how to respond to them in a different way. And, it makes so much sense *before* I've started drinking. Well, what about once I said, 'Yes?' What about once I have consumed this addictive substance, in my body, that intoxicates me and impairs my judgment? What about then?"

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The thing that I was sharing with them, and I wanted to share with you today, is that I think that that is one of the biggest misconceptions; that we think that the urge before we start drinking is totally different to the urge once we have started. And in fact, they really aren't that different at all.

Now, this will be contrary to everything that you have heard. You have heard a lot of things like, "One sip will set you back." And, you have also told yourself a lot of crap about what happens once you have that first sip. It's like, "Well, I already started, so I might as well finish. Well, I ordered this. Well, they brought it over to the table." Right? "I'm already here. I already had that first sip. I already blew it, so might as well just keep going."

So, you have treated urges, the urges that you've had to continue to drink, you have treated them as if they are completely different than the urges that you have before you start. But the fact of the matter is, that they really aren't. The think-feel-act cycle doesn't just stop working because you had a sip of wine.

I really want you to think about that. You have your first sip of wine, yes, you have consumed some alcohol, like a quarter of a teaspoon when you have a sip. Does your brain stop working? Are you immediately intoxicated? Is your judgment impaired? No.

You know, what is working? The think-feel-act cycle. You know what is working? All of the thoughts that are like, "Oh, I started, might as well finish. I ordered it, might as well not waste it." That's what people are so blind to. We're so convinced of this, "Well, it's intoxicating and it's addictive. And, some people just can't have any. And, if you have one sip, it's gonna set you back." We've so bought into that narrative, that we don't even realize that we are buying into a narrative that says, "Yeah, I'm powerless. I can't control myself."

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But of course, that's not the case. I really want you to start to consider that. I really want you to start to consider that the urge that you have before, is really not all that different from the urge that you have once you start. And, the urge that you have on your first sip, is really not that different from your second sip, or third sip, or your fourth sip.

Or like, when we do the mindful drink... When people get through the 30-Day Challenge, I think we have something like... When people are going through that mindful drink course, it's something like 15 or 20 sips to get through an entire glass. It's so many sips. It's like, yeah, the think-feel-act cycle is still working.

But what's happening is, this story that you have and what you're making it mean, "Oh, I've taken that first sip. So, now I might as well finish. All bets are off because I know that I'm just someone who, once I start, I can't stop."

Now here's the thing, I think a lot of people are really concerned about me offering this message out there. They're really concerned about this idea of telling people, "No. Yeah, your brain doesn't shut off. That's not actually true, that once you have a sip you can't stop."

Because telling people and having people believe that alcohol is the enemy, and alcohol has the power, and alcohol is the thing that must be feared is the way, for the longest time, that we have believed this is how you get people to say no; you have to instill fear in them, you have to make them believe that they are powerless. So, I understand why this message can be unsettling for people.

The problem is, I see the flip side of what happens. I see the flip side of a lot of people believing, "Once I start, I can't stop," when it's not even true. When they look at their own drinking, and they say, "Oh yeah, it does actually look different sometimes. It doesn't always look exactly the same. I don't always drink the exact same amount." Well, how is that possible? If

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alcohol is in charge, wouldn't we always be drinking the exact same amount?

So, I see that and then I also see the negative consequences in terms of how people feel, and believing that they don't have control, believing that they are truly powerless. Listen, if it feels amazing for you to tell yourself that, keep it. But there are a lot of you out there listening, who that does not feel amazing, it feels terrible, it feels demoralizing. I want you to consider, you don't have to believe that about yourself just because someone says so. You just get to decide.

Here's the thing, you can just also start collecting data and see what's happening. What's actually going on in my mind? What am I actually thinking after that first sip?

This is why I work with so many people who will say, they do the 30-Day Challenge, they start doing the advanced work in the membership, all of the work that we're teaching... Everything that we know will derail people on the process, that's what the advanced work is. It is everything that I know will get in the way of long-term success.

For some people, they decide, "Yeah, I do want to reintroduce alcohol." And, they do, and it really, kind of, blows their mind when they're actually paying attention to what is happening. They're actually paying attention to what's happening in their mind, and also, what's happening in their body, and their experience.

They're like, "It's so weird. I didn't even want to keep going. And. that was never a thought that I used to have. It's so weird. I have all this story about how this is my absolute favorite drink. But when I was really paying attention, and I was really conscious, it didn't actually taste the same way that I remembered. Like, how is that possible?" Or, people will say, "Yeah, I had a glass of wine, and I didn't finish it. I've never done that before."

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But what they hadn't realized is they were always using the glass as a signal when to stop, as opposed to paying attention to their thoughts and their feelings, paying attention to their body. This is what I want you to consider; that the urge that you have before you start, is really not all that different from the urge that you have once you start drinking. Your body doesn't make a move towards the drink without a thought and a feeling. That doesn't go away the moment that you have a quarter teaspoon of alcohol in your system. It's really powerful to understand that.

Now, the reason why we start people out with the 30-Day Challenge, and we start people out by taking a break is because when you're starting to learn this for the first time, it is so much easier to learn on the urge where you don't have alcohol in your system. It is so much easier to learn on the urge that you have before you start drinking rather than the urge after.

Not because one urge is more difficult than the other. Because you have so many thoughts, so many beliefs about what your ability is to say no, once you get started. And, those are often so intense, and so practiced, so much more so, than your beliefs that you have about your ability to say no before you've gotten started.

So, it's not that the urges are different, or the urges are harder, it's that your thoughts are so different. If we can show you how to really utilize that think-feel-act cycle, and really unearth how that habit is working, and understand the thoughts and feelings connected to the desire to say yes, and the thoughts and feelings connected when you say no.

If you can learn that, if you can start to practice that when you're not drinking, it will be so much easier to put into place. If you decide you want to start again, if you decide that you want to just have a more mindful relationship, or you want to just drink less in a sitting, or you want to reserve it for special occasions... So much easier.

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But I do want you to consider that. I want you to consider that these urges really aren't all that different. What's different is the story. Urges aren't harder or easier. Our stories are harder or easier about the urge. And, for so many of you out there, who say, "I really just don't connect with that idea of being powerless. And, it doesn't make sense and it doesn't feel good. And, I don't like it," you then also have to look and see: "Am I telling my story that I am? Am I telling myself a story that, 'Yeah, once I started, I can't stop,?'"

That was the kind of cognitive dissonance that I was in for the longest time. I did that. It all connected with the idea of being powerless. It didn't feel right to me, it didn't make sense for me. But I had all this story telling me that I was. It was mind boggling when I really saw that for the first time.

That's because, even though I didn't like the idea, and I didn't connect with it, I had been indoctrinated for my entire life to believe that there are some people out there that just have a sip, and then off to the races. They can't stop. There are some people out there that just can't be normal drinkers. There are some people out there that once they start, all hell breaks loose.

I had all of that social conditioning. And, I had to discover that it was there, and discover how that was actually impacting my drinking. Even though it was totally contradictory to my belief system. That like, "Yeah, it doesn't make sense. I'm not powerless in any other area of my life. Why would I be powerless here? My drinking also doesn't always look exactly the same. Sometimes I can rein it in. How does that work? Am I sometimes powerless? Am I sometimes not?"

I just want you to consider that "an urge is an urge is an urge." It doesn't matter if you have an urge before or an urge after. And honestly, it really doesn't make that big of a difference if your urges are connected to Chardonnay, or they're connected to chocolate, or they're connected to picking up your phone. It's just that automatic and habitual desire. And,

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understanding what's behind that, what's connected to it. That will change everything.

Alright. Think about your urges, people. If you want to learn the process for how to do this, come and join us and *Take a Break*.

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 www.RachelHart.com/join and start your transformation today.