

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, Episode 284.

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, we are going to be talking about what derails change.

I talk a lot about the skills that you need to master. The skills that people start learning, and practicing, and working with me, when they join the take a break membership and they start that 30-Day Challenge. The skills of learning how to set a commitment, and follow through, and what happens when you don't follow through, and learning how to fail well, on purpose.

Because perfection is not the secret to change. In fact, if you think that being perfect is how you're going to change the habit, and how you're going to change your relationship to alcohol, you're sorely mistaken, doesn't work that way.

Talk about this skill of really learning how to manage your mind. Sometimes I talk about it like a toddler versus a parent, your lower brain is a toddler, the parent is your higher brain, they're always going to be in conflict, I am always in conflict with my three-year-old soon to be four-year-old.

He has a lot of ideas about what he wants, and what he likes, and how he wants to do things. It's my job as a parent to supervise him. He throws a lot of fits, and he stomps his feet a lot. He gets really angry, and he says, "Mama, I'm so red." We read this book called the *Color Monster*, which I love by the way, where they talk about your feelings as colors. That's the

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

one that he always... “Mama, I'm so red. I'm so red.” I said, “It's okay to be red. It's okay to be red. But we don't hit and kick people when we feel this way. You can stomp and you can be angry, but we don't do this.”

So, you're going to have that kind of tension between the toddler and the parent inside of you. That's normal. We're not trying to get rid of the toddler. We're just trying to be like, “Hey, I got you, I can help you manage this in a more helpful way.” You've got to master the skill of making your urges harmless, making your urges no big deal, taking the power out of them.

That starts with understanding why you think they're powerful. Why you think that saying no to an urge is awful. It's not awful. It's totally fine. It's not a big deal. We often talk about this technique, that we use inside *Take a Break*, which is like, “Hey, urge. Hi, I see you.” And, it sounds so silly. When I introduce it to people I know, they're kind of like, “Wait, what?”

We're so used to going to war, and we're so used to distracting, and we're so used to trying to just make our urges go away, in this belief that if we didn't have any urges, it wouldn't be a problem. Right? That would actually be the solution. But listen, we're not going to get rid of urges.

What we can do, however, is make them harmless. What we can do, is make them pass incredibly quickly. Part of how we do that, is by welcoming them, “Hey, I see you. I was expecting you. No big deal. You're welcome.” It's amazing how that shift, that little shift, of just welcoming an urge and being curious about it really can change everything.

Then of course, it's practicing the think-feel-act cycle, and understanding how do I get these thoughts in my head, out of my head onto paper so I can build awareness, and I can start to see what they're creating for me, and I can learn how to change them in a believable way.

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

So, these four skills really are the key, they're the foundation. But the reason why we have advanced classes inside *Take a Break...* The reason why we unlock, every month, a new class for people is because we know that there are so many things that can derail the process of change, even if you are practicing these four foundational skills.

I want to talk a little bit today about what I have found those things to be. What I have found actually derails change and has people quit on themselves and give up, is maybe not what you're expecting. Some of this will sound familiar to you, but some of it might be a little less familiar to you.

It really is because I look at the habit of drinking and don't just think that it's about alcohol. I see it in relationship to your entire life, and your relationship to your body, and your relationship to yourself, and your relationship to other habits.

I think that's one of the things why this work is so powerful, and so transformative, and creates lasting change. We're not just fixated on alcohol. We're not just thinking that's the only piece of the puzzle. "I just have to understand why I keep saying yes, and how to say, no more." You have to understand it in the broader context of yourself, and your life, and your relationships.

One of the very first things that I see derail people, and frankly, this used to derail me quite a bit, is I would unconsciously, habit switch, whenever I would say no. So, I would decide, "Okay, I'm not drinking tonight. I'm not drinking this week, or this weekend," or whatever. I'd make some kind of rule for myself. Then, I would feel a lot of deprivation.

And then, I was like, "Well, but I mean, I can have some extra food, right? I can have the extra slice of pizza. I can have the chips because I'm being so good over here. Don't I deserve to be a little bad in this other part of my life?" Habit switching is very, very common. It is very common, because

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

when you understand how a habit works inside of you, when you understand that it is connected to how you're feeling, just because you said no to a drink doesn't mean that all those feelings, that you may have been reaching for a glass to deal with, just magically disappear. Right?

If you have been using a glass of wine, or you have been opening up the fridge at the end of the day and grabbing a beer, because you're feeling stressed, or because you want to signal that you're off the clock, you're done for the day, or you don't want to think anymore... If you've been using it because you feel bored, if you've been using it because it just feels more comfortable in social situations when you have a glass in your hand. What you start to understand is, "Oh, just because I said no, those emotions didn't go away."

If you're not looking at the bigger picture, if you're not understanding, "Okay, so then what? If it's not all just about alcohol, but I actually have to pay attention to how I'm feeling and what my desire has really been about..." If you don't do that work, then of course, you're going to have it switch.

Of course, your brain just gonna be like, "Okay, well, I guess we're not allowed to drink. So, what are we allowed to do? How can I deal with this stress? How can I deal with this boredom? How can I deal with feeling uncomfortable?" Now, I'm not saying that drinking is always for this reason. But this is a big thing that happens for a lot of people. And, it can feel very demoralizing.

It's like, "I came here to get healthier and to feel better. And now, I'm eating more. What's that all about? I don't like that." Or, "I came here because I wanted to have better times in the evenings. I wanted to enjoy my evenings more instead of just zoning out on the couch in front of Netflix, with a bottle of wine. But now, I find that I'm so fixated on distracting myself. I'm kind of making excuses to stay longer at work."

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

I remember doing this a lot, that it was like, “Okay, no. I'm not going to go to this happy hour. I'm just going to stay here and keep working.” That is not the goal, people. The goal is not to be like, “Okay, I just gotta find things to keep myself busy, that I actually don't want to be doing either.”

That's one of the very first things that we introduce, is this idea of habit switching. We introduce it in the first advanced class called, Avoiding Numbing. It is this idea that when you take a break from drinking, not only does it give you a window into your mind, which is a really good thing, but if you don't understand how the habit is connected to how you feel, then it's very easy to switch into other habits, like, eating too much food or keeping yourself busy around the clock, or zoning out in front of screens.

We go through a whole host of how this can show up differently for different people. In order to avoid this trap, you have to learn how to respond differently to your emotions and your body. This is a big thing.

Those first 30 days, we're really focusing on your mind. Your mind is incredibly important, don't get me wrong, we need to really have a window into it. You need to have awareness; you need to be able to see think-feel-act cycle unfold. But if you think that you're going to change a habit, only from the place of your mind, you are wrong.

You cannot ignore your body, especially for all of you out there who are like, “Listen, I don't want to stop drinking forever. I just want to drink more consciously. I just want to be able to control myself.” If you think that you're going to be able to do that and ignore your body, you are very wrong.

So, that first thing that we are introducing people once they have completed the 30 days... That first thing we see as the biggest inflection point, where people can get offtrack, is if they aren't, not only, understanding habit switching, but if they're just purely trying to do this work from the place of their mind and the place of their thoughts. And ignoring, “You know what?

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

We feel our emotions in our body. Our body actually has quite a bit of information to give us about what feels good, when it comes to alcohol, and what does not.”

When your body has had enough... That's a huge question, just in and of itself. For all of you out there, right now, you can ask yourself, “Okay, so this second glass of wine, is it my mind that wants it, or my body?” Most people don't even really think, in that way. But once you start thinking, “Oh, is my mind desiring it? Or, is my body desiring it?” It really starts to shift things for you.

The next thing that derails people; stress and overwhelm. This is why so many people, I always laugh, but so many people are like, “Rachel it's just not the right time. It's not the right time for me to join *Take a Break*. I got too much going on.” Or, what will happen a lot, is people will sign up. They'll be on like, day three, and they'll write into our customer support team, and it's like, “Oh, my God, this thing happened at my kid's school. This thing happened to my partner. My elderly parent is in the hospital. We just found out that we have to move to a new city.”

It's so fascinating because they'll write in, and they'll be like, “I just... This was not the right time. I made a bad decision to sign up.” And, I'm always like, “No, no. This is the perfect time,” because if you think that you are just going to be successful when everything's going right in your life, guess what's going to happen? You're never going to learn how to be successful when the shit hits the fan. You're never going to learn how to be successful, and how to say no to your urges, when you have a lot of stress and overwhelm.

When you have a lot of stress and overwhelm, that is the time for you to double down. Because that's when you're really learning how to do this work, not when everything is perfect, and everything's going according to plan, and everything is lovely. I mean, that's what we think. That's when we

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

think is the time to change a habit, “I’ve just got to wait until my calendar clears.”

No, you have to do this work in the midst of real life. You know what? Real life means that you're going to deal with stress and overwhelm, we cannot delete it. We can't delete it, but we can teach you a new way to manage it.

We can teach you how to manage it, especially if you've been dealing with stress and overwhelm by just being on this path of, “I gotta do. I gotta do. I gotta do.” Then, you're exhausted at the end of the day and it's like, “Okay, where's my reward? Today was terrible.”

You can start to learn a new way to manage it. But that idea, that stress and overwhelm is somehow a problem, no, it's really your practice. It's your practice of learning how to show up differently with those two emotions, that so often derail people.

It's like, “Everything was going well, you know? And then, I lost my job. Everything was going well, and then I got this message from my kid at college. And it just, you know, threw me for a loop.” No, those are the times... That's the time when you have to be teaching your brain a new way to deal with stress and overwhelm.

Another area that often derails people, I talk about this a lot on the podcast, I think it is so important, is this idea of feeling very healthy but suffering for your health. Feeling like, “I'm being so good. I'm not drinking. I'm drinking so much less, but I'm not enjoying myself as much.” That is a huge piece of the puzzle.

I think so often, we really mislead people, and try to tell them that they should be so proud of the choices that they're making. So proud of all the good that they're doing for their body. But ignoring the fact that humans

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

were designed to seek pleasure. Pleasure is not a bad thing. Pleasure is a good thing. We want pleasure.

There is a part of your brain, called your “lower brain,” that's just like a whole part of its mission, find pleasure. And so, if you feel like, when you are saying no to a drink, you will have less pleasure, that is a problem.

That problem cannot be solved by saying, “Yeah, but I'm so healthy and I'm being so good. Look at this streak I have. Look at all these gold stars.” That's what I thought for the longest time. “I just need to collect enough gold stars, then this desire for pleasure is gonna go away.” No, you need pleasure. Pleasure is a good thing. You just need to learn how to cultivate it.

That's what we're not shown how to do. We're not shown how to cultivate pleasure; we're shown how to consume pleasure. We don't even realize that pleasure is something that we can create and enhance. It's something that is available to us in every moment. I want you to think about that.

Pleasure is available to you in every moment. Notice how your brain wants to fight and be like, “You don't know what my moment is like.” Pleasure is always there. The problem is, we don't realize it's a skill. We think that it's, “Yeah, I drink my pleasure, and I eat my pleasure, and I watch my pleasure, and I buy my pleasure.” Instead of, “Oh, no. I'm the creator of my pleasure.” That peace cannot be ignored.

Nor can, reconnecting to your body. This is another thing that often derails a lot of people. If you're constantly at war with your physical self, guess what? It's exhausting. I think that this is so important. And so often, a missed piece of the puzzle.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

I didn't realize, for the longest time, how I have this constant undercurrent of feeling kind of discouraged, or disconnected, or confused, or let down or unhappy with my body. I was always looking at it and thinking, immediately, what needed to change, and what needed to fix, or what I needed to fix, and what was wrong with it, and how it wasn't performing the way that I thought it should.

I had this undercurrent of being disappointed by my body, both its appearance and, also, its performance. Like, "Why are you sick again? Why do you feel this way? Why do you have this headache? Why are you so tired? I had this really antagonistic relationship with my body.

And here's the thing, when you're constantly at this low-level unhappiness, or confusion, or let-down, or disappointed by your body it's very difficult to break the habit of drinking. Now, many people will be like, "I don't even understand how is this connected." But remember, we cannot just change the habit from the source of your mind, you have to change it from your body, as well.

But if you don't like your body, if you don't want to listen to your body, because you feel like, "I can't trust my body. It lets me down a lot." Or, if you're just having this undercurrent of constantly having these small, little judgments throughout the day, it will add up. You will find yourself looking for relief.

This is especially true, for a lot of people, with social interactions. It's like getting ready to go out. I remember this, so intensely, getting ready to go out was so uncomfortable for me. That's why I started pre-gaming. That's why I often started drinking before I even left the house. Because in getting ready to go out, not only was I having the anxiety about, "Okay, I don't really know people there. What am I going to talk about? This is just going to be weird," but I was also having that low-level discontent about how I looked and what I was wearing, and what were other people going to wear.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

It all sounds so silly, but that really was something that fed the habit for me, and could feed the habit for a lot of people. If you think that you can ignore your body, when it comes to changing your drinking or changing your relationship with alcohol, you just simply can't.

Relationships is another area where so many people get derailed. We have a whole course all about building healthy relationships. Here's the thing, when you put other people's happiness ahead of your own, your relationship with alcohol will always be about what other people want you to do, rather than what's right for you.

I did this for a very long time. I would hate it. I'd go out to dinner with a friend, and be like, "Oh, I'm not drinking." Or like, "I'm not going to have another round," and they'd be like, "Oh, come on, Rachel, just have a little fun. Don't make me drink alone." I hated letting people down. I often put other people's needs ahead of my own.

And, guess what? That showed up in my drinking. Learning how to have those kinds of healthier relationships and also, without going to the extreme of, "I just need to cut these people out of my life." I feel like that's, a lot of times, what ends up happening.

We think, "Oh, I just gotta get rid of them. I don't know how to set these boundaries. It's uncomfortable for me to set these boundaries. So, what I'm going to do, is just not ever be around the person." The problem with that is, guess what? There's going to be future people. There's going to be future people that you feel uncomfortable... If you're not good at setting boundaries, if it makes you feel uncomfortable, just isolating yourself and cutting people out of your life is not going to be a good long-term solution.

There are so many other things, so many other things, that we focus on when it comes to what can derail you, and your process to change. Sometimes, it is your ability to feel confident on your own. Teach your

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

brain, “You know what? I don't need a drink to feel sexy, or outgoing, or feel like the fun version of myself.”

When you have all these stories about what alcohol does for you, what you don't realize is you start to create this idea in your mind that it's essential. So, how do you start to challenge yourself to be bold without a drink by your side? I didn't want to be a shrinking violet.

I, for the longest time, had this belief that when I drank, fun Rachel came out. So, it was very hard for me to let go of the idea of drinking. Because then I was like, “But what about fun, Rachel? I want her.” It wasn't like, “Okay. So, the solution is I just have to say no and let go of the idea of fun Rachel? How do I figure out how to be her?”

How do I be that version of myself that I wanted to be, and be silly, and spontaneous, and not worry what other people thought, and be the first person on the dance floor? How do I step into her, without feeling like I need to be three drinks in?

Another thing is owning your time, this is huge. Feeling like you are at the mercy of the clock, and that might feel like, “I'm at the mercy of the clock, because I don't have enough time in the day.” Or, that might feel like, “I'm at the mercy of the clock because I have too much time. I have too much time on my hands.” It's so fascinating how it can play out either way for people.

That's why you will search out relief. feeling like, “Oh my god, I just... there's so much I needed to do, and I didn't get done. My day was crazy. Where's my relief?” Or, “Oh my god, I can't believe I have the whole night ahead of me, or the whole weekend ahead of me. What am I going to do? Let's find some relief.”

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

Learning how to take ownership of your time so that you're not constantly chasing after more, or trying to escape the present moment, is so important. Again, I just want you to think about this. This has nothing to do with quantity. We're talking about time here. But it's so important for lasting change.

We have a whole thing about releasing shame and regret. That's another huge thing that can derail people. I see this happen all the time.

People will be many months into the membership. They'll say, "You know what, everything has changed for me. I feel like a totally different person. I have a totally different relationship with myself, have a totally different relationship with alcohol. I feel in control for the first time. I really like who I am. But I can't shake how I feel about the past. I can't get rid of the shame that I have about some of my drinking. Or, how I hurt people. Or, the things that I did or said when I was drunk."

They hold on to that pain. They hold on to this discomfort. The problem is... So often what happens, and by the way, this was me too, so often what happens is we think that, "If I can just be a good enough person now, I'm going to be able to release that shame and regret at some point." But you know what? It doesn't work that way. You have to actually learn how to let go of shame, without trying to go back in the past and change things.

You have to learn how to let go of regret, without pretending like it didn't happen. Or, trying to be a totally unflawed version of yourself now. This piece is so important. This was one of the most challenging things for me, "How do I let go of that shame and regret that I had?"

Then, mastering self-care. This is another piece. If you have gotten in the habit of using a drink as a way to take care of yourself, then how are you actually going to change your relationship with self-care? What does that actually look like?

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

And in fact, can you have a totally different idea about self-care instead of bubble baths? What if it is about how you talk to yourself? What are the true tenets of self-care for you? How do you create your own unique self-care handbook? That's something we actually have people create. You can't just hope that you're going to know how to take care of yourself in the moment, you actually have to create a little handbook for yourself.

There are so many ways in which you can be derailed on this journey, unnecessarily. And, it happens because people have this very incredibly narrow view of, "We should just talk about alcohol. It should just be about saying yes or saying no," when, in fact, we need to look at the entire picture of your life.

We need to look at your relationship with yourself, and other people, and time, and your body. We need to understand your relationship with your emotions, we need to look at all of it. We need to understand how you're feeling about the past, the goals that you're setting for the future, the ways in which you take care of yourself, the ways in which you make yourself feel confident and amazing, the ways in which you're building pleasure into your life. All of that goes into lasting change.

A lot of times people will look at these classes, and they'll be kind of surprised because they think, "Whoa. What does that have to do with alcohol?" But that's the point, we have such a narrow view.

That narrow view is what is actually making it so you're not having lasting change, because you're so fixated on just the drink. And, "Did I say yes, or did I say no? What was the quantity, and how much?" I want you to see that change, at the deepest level, has to take everything in your life into consideration.

That's how you evolve to the next level of yourself. That's how you transform, and that will change everything for you. You don't need to be

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #284: How to Avoid Derailing Your Progress

derailed on the process of change. You just need to start understanding that the process of change takes in everything in your life. You have to look at the complete picture. That's what will make a difference.

Alright, that's it for today, and we'll 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.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart