

Ep #285: When Changing Your Drinking Is Overwhelming



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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 285.

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, everyone. We are talking today about what to do when change feels over whelming. I had someone write in recently who was saying, "You know, I listened to the podcast, and I really want to do this work. But then, I think about everything that drinking does for me. I think of all of the things, all of the ways that I use it. And, change just seems so overwhelming."

I remember thinking this as well, in my own life, in large part because I had constructed so much of my life around alcohol. I don't mean that I was drinking all the time, I just mean that it was something that my brain had learned to think. "Oh, a drink goes hand-in-hand with this. A drink goes hand-in-hand at a party, at a wedding, when I'm celebrating, when I'm stressed out after work, at happy-hours, when I'm networking, when I'm dating, when I'm meeting new people, when I'm bored. When I want to have a picnic in Central Park, and listen to the symphony, of course, we bring a bottle of wine."

There were so many things that my brain had learned to associate, "Oh, alcohol is involved with this." I was coaching someone recently about baseball, this was a big thing for me, too. It's like going to baseball games; you've got hot dog in one hand and a cold beer in the other. This is what you do.

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I started to also realize, it wasn't just that my brain had learned to associate that drinking just happened with all of these things, but I did start to understand that I used a drink as a way to deal, often, with how I was feeling.

So, if I was feeling lonely, or bored, or uncomfortable, or anxious, or angry, or stressed, or if I was feeling really celebratory and I wanted to feel more of that, I wanted to feel more relaxed, my brain had learned, "Oh, yeah. Just pour a drink, you'll feel better." It felt like the work to change the habit, the work to change by drinking, the work to change my relationship with alcohol was just daunting. It was like, "But it's just part of everything and I use it in so many different ways. How on earth, am I ever going to figure out how to do this?"

What I want you to know, first and foremost, it is totally normal for change to feel overwhelming. But the reason why change feels overwhelming is not because it is, it's because of the story that your brain is telling you about what it will look like on the other side.

I will tell you, for the longest time, my brain was not telling me a very good story about what it was going to look like on the other side. My brain was painting a picture where everything was just kind of dull, or blah, or I was missing out. Things were less fun. I felt less connected. I was less at ease. I wasn't able to access the fun version of myself. I was turning down invites. I was the odd man out. My brain was painting a story that, in fact, was very overwhelming.

So, it wasn't that change was overwhelming, I was overwhelmed by the future that I saw in front of me. Here's the thing, I knew I wanted a different future. No matter how hard I tried, I could not shake that knowing. I could not shake the part of me, the intuition, that little niggling that was like,

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“Something is not right here, Rachel. Something feels off. Something about how you relate to alcohol needs to change.” I couldn't shake that.

But I was daunted at the idea because, not only had I learned, had my brain learned to connect alcohol with so many different parts of my life, but when I started to think of what the future would look like, my brain reverted to not a really great story. I want you to know, if you've been listening to this podcast and you have started to understand all of the ways that you use alcohol and all of the ways that it's helping you...

We talk about this a lot here, we can't just think about the ways that it's causing problems, we have to understand how it's helping you, as well. But if you find yourself slipping into this place of, “Oh God, this feels just so overwhelming,” I want you to know that's because of the story your brain is telling you about what it's going to look like on the other side.

I want you, just for a minute, to consider maybe your brain is wrong. I know that this can be hard to conceive of right now, but maybe your brain is wrong. Maybe, when it tells you that things are going to be: Less fun, and less enjoyable, and less pleasurable, and less connected, and that you will be the odd man out, and that you will be stuck just feeling stressed, and bored, and anxious, and that you won't have as good of a time when you're at the beach, or on a picnic, or in Paris, or traveling, that maybe your brain is wrong about all of it. I know mine was.

That's the thing that I think has been so powerful about doing this work, and so powerful for everyone I work with inside the *Take a Break* membership. We talk about when you get to this place where, you see that your brain was wrong, you start to wonder, “Hmm, what else might my brain be wrong about?”

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My brain was certainly wrong about the idea that I was someone who could never be an entrepreneur. I mean, I remember thinking that. “Oh, there's no way.” My brain was certainly wrong about the idea that I was going to be alone for the rest of my life, and that I would never be a mom; those things were not true.

My brain was wrong about the idea that the only place that I could ever be happy was in New England. I remember thinking that for a long time, and here I am in California. My brain has been wrong about a lot of things, mostly about what I can do, and the possibilities for me, and what I'm capable of.

I want you to consider that when you do this work, that is one of the unanticipated benefits. People start to see, “Oh, my gosh. My brain was really wrong about my future. What it would look like when I changed my relationship with alcohol, and what all these events would look like, and who I would be, and how I would be received. And, if it's wrong about all of that, what else might be wrong about?”

That is such an exciting thought to have when you stop believing your brain, and you think, “Hmm, maybe it's wrong. What else could it be wrong about?” I will tell you, though, that when you feel overwhelmed, although it's totally normal, the solution is very simple.

The solution is your willingness to feel uncomfortable. Now, I didn't say it was easy. I said it was simple. Right? Being willing to feel uncomfortable is a solution because what happens is, when we believe that this is overwhelming, and what are we going to do, we want to hide out from it. We want to stay in the safety of what we already know, even though, part of us knows that our relationship with alcohol is not serving us. So, you have to be willing to feel uncomfortable.

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Now the thing is, no one teaches us how to do this. The only reason, right now, why that feels daunting... “Oh my god, she wants me to be okay with feeling uncomfortable? No, thank you.” I mean, that's what I would have said too, “No, thank you. Eww. I'm uncomfortable enough. I don't need to feel more of it.”

The only reason, right now, why this feels daunting is because no one actually gives you a process for how to do this. In fact, what we have been taught from a very young age is, “Here, just eat this.” Right? “Just go distract yourself over here. Just watch something, you'll feel better. Don't think about it.” That's another thing, “Just don't think about it, you'll feel better.” So, we're not given a process for how to teach ourselves to feel uncomfortable, we are taught to ignore it. We're taught to eat over it. And, many of us learn, later on in life, to drink over it or to work over it.

We're not given the tools or the process for how to actually recognize that the discomfort that you feel is okay, you can handle it. It's not a big deal. This is the process that I teach people inside *Take a Break*. This is what we're working on when I talk about this work is like going to the gym. These are the exercises that you're doing.

You're learning the process for; how do I develop this skill that no one actually ever showed me? “Any tools to deal with? Just ignore, don't think about it. Do this other thing.” That process is very simple, but most people don't have a lot of practice with it. It is the process of learning how to separate out the sensation in your body, from the story in your mind. I guarantee, that story is making it worse.

We start out with urges. That is the first place where we apply this work. Can you separate out the sensation of the urge in your body, from the story of, “It's too much. It will never go away, I hate this. I have too many?” You

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have so much story about the urges. That, often, is what is creating all of your suffering. It's not actually the urge itself. The urge itself, is a little restlessness. It's not a big deal.

Learning how to do that work, of separating out what is happening in your mind from what's happening in your body, is so powerful because it helps you start to see that you don't need to be at the mercy of your urges. Now, here's the thing, this is the amazing piece of learning this skill; we take that application, which everybody initially learns how to do during the 30-Day Challenge, we take that application of learning how to separate out what's happening in your body from what's happening in your mind, and understanding how that story is making it worse.

Understanding how to start to shift that story, in a believable way, we can then take it and apply it to every uncomfortable emotion that you're having. Whether it's: Anxiety, or stress, or anger, or loneliness, or shame, or boredom, it doesn't matter what it is. This is the thing that is so powerful; is the skill of being able to separate out what is happening in this body of mine, from the story about the emotion.

When you get really good at doing that, what happens is that you're able to navigate any uncomfortable feeling, and the uncomfortable emotion, without needing to drink over it, or eat over it, or distract yourself, or work over it. Because you know that you have the exact tool that you need, right in front of you. That tool is the ability to separate out what's happening in your body from what's happening in your mind.

So, what does this mean? What am I talking about? How do we do this? I will tell you, for me, if you had told me this a decade ago, I would have been like, "I don't get it? What is she talking about?" What I'm talking about is actually being able to *name* the physical sensations that you can notice,

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without attaching judgment to them. Those physical sensations might have to do with muscle tension. They might have to do with breathing, or heart rate, or temperature.

At first, a lot of people will just revert to, “I don't know. I don't know. I'm not sure. I don't know how to describe it.” That is very normal because we're not in the practice, and we don't have the experience with really describing sensations in our body, without saying things like, “It just feels awful. I just feel so uncomfortable. I just want to crawl out of my skin.”

Do you see the difference there between, “I feel a tightness in my chest,” and “I just want to crawl out of my skin?” “I feel a flip-floppy sensation in my stomach,” to “I feel awful?” That's the difference there. So, you start separating that out so you can start to see.

Okay, listen. I'm not saying this sensation is amazing and wonderful, and you want to have it all the time. But if you compare it to the story that you have, you start to see, that story is not so great. When I tell myself this story, that it's unbearable, and it's horrible, and it's never gonna go away, and I hate this, and I can't stand it, guess what I end up doing? I end up creating a lot of fear, on top of how I'm already feeling.

We don't realize that what we end up doing, is making our emotional experience worse. The solution, when things feel overwhelming, is being willing to feel uncomfortable. Not just when it feels overwhelming to change your drinking, but when anything in life feels overwhelming. This is a solution.

The way that you know how to do this, is by working on this process. Learning how to separate out what's happening in your body from what's happening in your mind. I cannot even tell you how transformative this is. I

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will be the first to say, that it sounded very weird and very woo to me. It sounded very like, “Okay, we're, like, talking about what's happening in the body now? No, thank you.” That was not a place I wanted to hang out.

But I can also tell you, having done this work and having helped so many people learn how to do this... Watching myself and watching other people start to no longer feel like they are at the mercy of their emotions, or they need to avoid certain feelings, to know that you really can navigate any emotion on your own, without a drink, without eating over it, without working over it, without distracting yourself, without turning on Netflix, that is true power.

What is really holding you back from anything that you want in life? Think about it. Yes, I know that you want to change your drinking. I know that you want to change your relationship with alcohol. But that's not the end, that's not the endpoint. I know that you have dreams, and desires, and goals, and things that you have been called to go after, that you're not going after.

So, why don't we go after these things that we so actually deeply desire?” Because we're afraid of how we'll feel. We're afraid of how we'll feel when we start. Or, if we fail, or if it doesn't work out. We're always trying to avoid feeling uncomfortable. That is the plague that has been set up on modern society, constantly trying to avoid emotional discomfort. And, when you realize that you don't need to avoid it, because you've mastered this process, you can separate out the sensation in your body from the story in your mind, and you could start to change the story.

You can start to tell yourself, “Hey, this is a totally normal human emotion, nothing has gone wrong. I haven't done anything wrong. I'm not going to die. I'm okay, I'm safe.” When you can do that, you will start not only changing your relationship with all of the things that you have been using to

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try to manage your emotions, whether it is alcohol, or food, or smoking or work or whatever... Not only will you change that, but you will also change your willingness to go after what you really want in life.

That, to me, is the most beautiful and important thing. Because that's what I really see is the goal of this work. Changing your drinking is about unlocking your potential. It's not about arriving at some sort of magic number. It's not about becoming a rule follower. It's about freeing up all this energy in your mind. Energy that has been consumed with desire, and urges, and judgment, and shame, wondering if you will ever figure it out.

Use all that mental energy to go after what you really want to go after in life, which is so much bigger. I know it is. So, if it seems overwhelming, you're in good company. It's totally normal. The solution is the willingness to feel uncomfortable. The process is learning how to separate out what's happening in your body, from what's happening in your mind. It is easier than you think, but it will take practice.

Man, I'll tell you, when you learn how to do this, when you know that you can navigate any emotion, the worst thing that can happen is a feeling, you will be unstoppable. That is the beauty of doing this work.

Alright everyone 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

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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.