

Ep #286: Why You're Stuck in a Rut with Drinking



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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 286.

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, everyone. Welcome back. We're talking about something that so many of you struggle with. I struggled with this for such a long time. I felt like I was in a rut, I was stuck in a rut when it came to my drinking.

I know a lot of you out there can relate, a lot of you can identify. It feels like, you just can't change. No matter what you do, no matter what you try, change just doesn't happen. You watch yourself repeating the same habit over and over again. Maybe it's every night, or every weekend, whatever it looks like for you.

You watch yourself, and it feels like you're, kind of, in that movie, *Groundhog's Day*, like the same thing keeps playing out, over and over. You can see that it's not serving you. You have this desire to change, but you can't figure out why you're stuck in a rut.

And that's what I want to talk to you about today. Because, you're not stuck in a rut for the reasons that you think you are. Once you really understand this, once you understand how to get unstuck, then everything changes. So many people that come to the *Take a Break* membership, this is where they're at.

They're just like, "I don't understand. I have tried so many things. I have put in all this time, and effort, and mental energy. I know I want to change, and

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I know it's not serving me, and I don't like the relationship that I have with drinking. Something about it just doesn't feel right or it feels off. I have all this desire to be different, but here I am. It's just groundhog's day over and over again.”

The reason that you aren't changing, and this is what people discover, during the 30-Day break, this is why the 30-Day break is so powerful... It's not about proving that you're able to say no for 30-days. It's like what happens when you create this clarity for yourself; what happens when you approach saying no, from this place of let me understand the habit, rather than let me double down on willpower, and avoiding, and distracting.

You can't change what you can't see. And this is what most people don't understand before they started doing this work. I know you see you're drinking. I know that you're very aware of how much you're drinking, and what you're drinking, and when you're drinking, and the effects of your drinking. But that doesn't mean that you're actually seeing that habit at work.

For most people, all they see, of the think-feel-act cycle, is the action part; the thoughts and the feelings. That's what they're so blind to. That's what I was blind to for the longest time. And I didn't even know to put any focus there. I didn't even know that I should be paying attention to my thoughts and my feelings.

I was just so fixated on, “You're drinking too much.” How do we change it? What rules do we need? How do we become more disciplined? But you're only seeing one little piece, and that's why the break is so powerful. Here's what people discover when they start doing the work inside the membership. They discover that the reason why they're stuck in a rut, the reason why they are going through groundhog's ay over and over again, it's because of a story in their mind.

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A narrative that they have about why change isn't possible. I have this, too. I see it with people over and over again. And if you don't do the work, to not only identify what that story is for you, and it can take a couple different flavors, we're going to talk about what it looks like. If you don't do the work, first, to find the story and then to challenge it, guess what? You're going to be stuck in a rut forever, and that's not what I want for you.

I was stuck in a rut for too long, myself, because I didn't even realize that these stories were there. I didn't even know that they were actually what was behind the habit, and behind all my failed attempts. So, I'm going to talk you through what these stories are.

You're going to recognize yourself in some of these. It's okay. You might recognize yourself in all of them. That's okay. What you want to start to understand, is that the reason you're stuck in a rut is not because there's something wrong with you, it's because of this narrative that your brain has come up with. This story that you have unconsciously adopted to explain why it is you drink the way that you do.

And by the way, it's not correct. It's not right. Not one bit. Once you understand how that think-feel-act cycle works, you'll see that these stories are just your brain's interpretation of what's happening. It's not actually why you reach for the glass.

The first one is, "I'm just someone who..." So, I used to kind of fill in the blank here with, "I'm just someone who always overdoes it." That was a story I had about myself, for a long time. It wasn't just with a gin and tonic. I just overdid everything. When it came to consumption, my story was, "I'm just someone who always overdoes it." I overdo it with food. I overdo it with attention. I overdo it with money. I overdo it with smoking. I just really had this belief, "I'm just someone who overdose it. That's just who I am. That's Rachel."

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And, of course, what I didn't know at the time was, just because I had a lot of evidence that this was true, does not actually make it true. I want you to think about that.

For all of you out there who are like, "Yeah, I'm just someone who ever does it. I'm someone who never knows how to rein myself in. I'm someone who always take things too far. I'm someone who never follows through," these stories, that we have about ourselves, will feel really true. Because when you don't understand how the think-feel-act cycle works, you aren't realizing that, that thought will then lead to what you are creating in your life.

Not only that, your brain will just reject all the contradictory evidence out there. I had a lot of evidence in my life, that I wasn't someone who always overdid it. That I actually reined myself in quite a bit. But that did not fit with my narrative. It didn't fit with my narrative, to say, "You know what, Rachel? Actually, there's plenty of things that you do in your life where you don't overdo it. Where you say, 'Enough is enough;' where you quit before you take things too far."

And in fact, you know what? That actually happened with my drinking sometimes. Sometimes it'd be like, "You know what? I'm just going to go home. You know what? I've had enough." But it didn't fit with this narrative. And so, I would always be like, "Ah, whatever, that was a fluke. I'm just someone who that thought is poison." It's poison because what it's telling you is this is your essential identity; I'm just someone who. And, if it's your essential identity, how are you going to change it?

The way I understood this, for a long time was like, "I don't know, something's just baked into my DNA. This is just who I am, I came out of the womb this way." When you have this story about yourself, that you're someone who never follows through, or always over does it, or doesn't know how to rein yourself in...

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When you start to see it as part of your essential identity, guess what? How are you going to change your essential identity? That's what I thought. It's just like, "Okay, this is just baked into my DNA. So, I'm screwed." I didn't realize, "Oh. No, this is actually an optional story. And the more that I cling to it, and believe it, the more that I stay stuck in this rut."

Another story about why you can't change is, "Something is wrong with me. Something is wrong with my brain." This is just a different version of, "I'm just someone who." Goes more into looking at how there's some sort of flaw. So, I talk about this a lot. I talked about it in my book, *Why Can't I Drink Like Everyone Else*. I talked about it on the podcast.

I had a story, for a long time, that something was wrong with my brain. That my brain was missing an off switch. So, it wasn't even just that, "Yeah, this is baked into my DNA. I'm just someone who can't rein herself in. I'm just someone who over does it..." But then, my secondary explanation for that was, "Yeah, because I'm missing an off switch in my brain."

I cannot tell you the number of people, when I started doing this work, when I started working with people to help them change their relationship with alcohol... The number of people that would say, "Oh, my God, when you said that, when you said, 'Yeah, I just think I'm missing an off switch.' That's exactly what I think about myself."

Again, when you believe that there is some part of you that is broken, or missing something, how are you going to fix that? How are you going to change that, you can't get a brain transplant?

I really was just like, "I don't know, I guess I'm just doomed with this brain." I did not understand that the brain, in between my ears, was the greatest tool. It was the greatest asset I had, in order to change the habit of drinking, in order to change my relationship with alcohol. I didn't think that at all.

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I have this very antagonistic relationship with my brain because I was like, "No, something's wrong with it. Something is missing in there. The wiring is screwed up; it's wired wrong." So, I didn't see it as a tool I could utilize, I saw it as something that I had to constantly fight against.

That is not going to help you change your drinking. When the thing that is actually going to be your best asset, your best resource, your ability to actually watch your own thinking, to start to slow down how you respond to urges; that all happens in your brain.

When you're demonizing it, when you're telling yourself, "No, something's wrong with it," guess what? You can't utilize all that it has to offer. And this isn't about being smart, by the way. For everyone out there, this is not about you have to get good grades in school, in order to utilize your brain. In fact, school has nothing to do with it.

All you need are the tools. All you need is for someone to show you, "Hey, this is how your brain works. This is the difference between your higher brain and your lower brain. This is how habits are formed. This is how rewards work." This is why we spend so much time, inside the *Take a Break* membership, not just learning the think-feel-act cycle and a different way to respond to your urges, but actually, studying the brain.

It's really important that you understand how the brain works. It's still so mystifying to me, that we go through our lives and no one teaches us anything about our brain. It's the greatest tool that we have. And people are just like, "Okay. Hope it works. Good luck." To me, that is fundamental. Everyone should understand the basics of how the brain works.

But when you're telling yourself, "I don't know, I think something's just wrong with me. Something's wrong with my brain. I'm missing something. The wiring is off," guess what? You're actually not going to be able to utilize this part of you, that is your greatest asset.

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It is your greatest asset. Your brain is your greatest asset. I want you to really try to let that sink in. I don't care what your report card looked like. It is the greatest asset that you have, at your disposal. It's just, no one showed you how to use it.

Another story about why you can't change, "It runs in my family." Right? "Drinking too much, addiction, alcoholism, drug use. It all just runs in my family." I have this, too. I could look at my mom's side of the family and be like, "Listen, a lot of people here they got problems with alcohol and problems with drugs. I guess that I just got too much of the mom's side of the family DNA, versus the dad's side of the family."

And so, when I would tell myself, "Well, maybe I'm like this because of my grandfather. Maybe I'm like this because of my mom's siblings." Again, it's like there's no way out, when you're telling yourself that it runs in your family. Now, listen, do I think that there's a genetic component? And that genes can play a role? And that different brains can function slightly differently, when it comes to a reward? Sure, of course. But the problem that I find, is that we just give way too much, in terms of explaining why we are the way we are, why we do the things that we do, to our genetics.

Yes, genetics can play a role. But genes are not your destiny. This is a really important piece. Genes are not your destiny. There is a big difference between predisposed and predetermined. Yes, you might have a predisposition to have a certain relationship with alcohol or to have a certain relationship with your reward cycle, in your brain. Predisposed, means that there's, yeah, maybe an increased likelihood. But it's not predetermined.

I think that, that piece is so important because, often, what happens when we say it runs in my family, what we're really saying is, "So, there's no hope for me. There's no hope for me because again, it's encoded inside of me."

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I think what's so amazing and so unfortunate... What's amazing, is that we have this incredible, incredible brain that can constantly create new neural pathways. And, the unfortunate thing, is that we treat it as if we are chiseling stone. Instead of seeing it as this very flexible part of us, that can change, and grow, and evolve.

So often when we say it runs in my family, it's just like, "Yep. Well, there's nothing I can do." I mean, you know what else runs in your family? It's not just your DNA, it's what you saw growing up. It's the messages that you were told. It's how you watched the adults in your life, cope with their negative emotions. It's the behaviors that you watched around you.

I think people often, kind of miss that piece of it. When you say, "It runs in my family," it's often like, "Yeah, it's the DNA. It's encoded inside of me. It's my genetics." Instead of acknowledging, "Maybe it runs in my family," it's that no one has ever shown us how to cope in healthy ways.

And so, "My grandparents didn't know how to cope. And so, my parents didn't learn how to cope. And so, no one taught me how to cope." When you see it that way, when you see it as skill-based, then you're just like, "Oh, I'm just the generation that figures this out."

That's what I often think, now, "I'm just the generation who figures this out. That, was my role. No one really understood anything about the think-feel-act cycle. That urges were harmless. Or, that negative emotions didn't need to be immediately solved with food, or a drink. I'm the one who figured that out."

The last story, that will keep you stuck in a rut is, "Nothing I've tried, has worked." Oh, my Lord, this was such a big one for me. Because I tried so many things, I put so many different rules in place: Only drinking on certain days, or certain amounts, or with certain people, or on a full stomach, or only drinking certain things. Right? No hard alcohol, just wine. I mean, it

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was just so many, so many rules; only having a certain number of drinks in an hour, or trying to pace myself with people that I labeled, as slow drinkers.

So, I was trying all these things, and I didn't realize I was just trying the same thing over and over, which was just to put a rule in place, and then try to follow it. But the problem is, when you try to do that, when you're just trying to follow rules, you have no idea why you're actually breaking them. You have no idea, the thought and the feeling that led to you saying, "You know what? I'm not going to follow that."

What your brain does, is then come up with the story of, "Well, you know, I didn't follow it because I'm just someone who... Something is wrong with me. It runs in my family." What we end up doing, is we end up pointing to all our past attempts, and using that as evidence that we can't change.

As opposed, to understanding: Number one, your past attempts don't mean anything about your future. They really don't. I want you to think about that; they don't. But number two, you know what? Everything that you've tried, you've just been trying the same version, of something.

You've been trying, just a slightly different version of; let me be a rule follower, let me follow this rule. It *feels* like you will be trying many different things. I promise you, you're not. I promise you, until you start doing this work, 'til you start really understanding how the habit works and the think-feel-act cycle, you are just trying the same thing over and over.

This is why you're stuck in a rut. And I know what it's like to be stuck in a rut. I know what it's like to feel like you're devoting all this time and energy to worrying: Am I ever going to figure this out? And why can't I figure this out? And what is wrong with me? Do I really have a problem?

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But here's the thing, the way to get out of this rut, not only is to identify the stories that you're telling yourself, but also recognize that change is always possible, when you're willing to examine what's going on. When you're willing to be curious.

None of these stories allow for curiosity, because it's like the story's already been written. "I'm just someone who overdoes it, the end. Something is just wrong with my brain, the end. It runs in my family, the end. Nothing I've tried before has worked, the end." When you have these stories, they actually prevent examination because you're so sure you know why you're struggling.

So, it's like, "Why would I need to think about this anymore? Why would I need to be curious? My brain's already got the explanation for me." That's what this work is about, at its deepest level. It's about knowing that you can change anything you want, if you are willing to examine what's going on.

If, you're willing to examine, "Hey, what is it about my urges that feel problematic? What is it that makes it hard to say no? Are they really a problem? Is the urge really terrible, awful? Does it really last all night long? Is there really no urge?" That's what some people will say when they come to *Take a Break*. "Oh, I don't even have urges." You do. You're just so used to responding to them, so quickly, that you don't even notice that they're there.

What happens? Are you willing to be curious when people around you are drinking, and you're not? Or, are you just, "Well, that's just terrible, obviously. Obviously, that feels terrible?" Are you willing to be curious like, what's unfolding inside of you? How are you feeling? What are you thinking?

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For me, it was so much of, "This is unfair." And you know what? I had a "this is unfair" storyline running in many areas of my life. So, it was just a new version of that storyline popping up around alcohol.

Are you willing to examine and be curious about, "Hey, what else do I want right now? Yes, I want the drink. Yes, I want the IPA. Yes, I want the Chardonnay. Yes, I want the gin and tonic," whatever it is. "What else do I want in this moment? What else am I desiring?"

What is the desire that's under that desire to drink? Does it have to do with needing relief? Needing connection? Not wanting to feel bored or lonely? Not wanting to have to go home? Not wanting the night to end? Not wanting to feel like you're stuck in your head? What else is there?

Are you willing to be curious? So often, so many people will be like, "Well, I just love the taste. So, it's all about me and Chardonnay. And I just love it too much." Okay, you love the taste.

What else are you desiring? What else are you wanting in that moment, when you notice that urge? And what feels difficult about stopping? When you really think about this, can you be curious? What is actually difficult in that moment; to stop, to put your glass down, to not finish what's in your glass, to not finish what's in your bottle? Why is that challenging? If you're willing to examine this...

And this is what we do. This is what we do inside *Take a Break*. This is what the membership is all about. It's about creating a place for people to foster curiosity, and to examine the habit. Because you can only ever change it from that place. You can only ever move forward, if you're willing to be in a place of examination and curiosity. And wondering, "Hey, what's actually going on here?"

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When you're stuck in these stories, that so many of you have, that I had for the longest time, you will be stuck in a rut when it comes to your drinking. And that is no fun. It is no fun to tell yourself that you can't change.

You're just someone who always overdoes that. You're just someone who never follows through. You're just someone who can't keep a commitment. There's just something wrong with your brain. Or, it's because it runs in your family, or nothing you worked has tried. So therefore, you're doomed.

That is not fun, people. It sucks. And you know what? Here's the thing, if you can identify yourself in one, or all of those stories, I'm sure that you can see how that story shows up in more than just your relationship with alcohol. And that's why this work is so important. That's why it's so transformative.

You start to see, that's what is holding you back when it comes to changing the habit and learning how to drink less, or learning how to say no, changing your relationship with alcohol. You start to see, "Oh, I think that might be what's holding me back in life." And that's when things get kind of exciting.

That's why I say this work is always about learning this meta-skill. These meta-skills, that we can apply to every habit we want to change, every goal we're not going after, everything in our life where we feel stuck in a rut; you can apply it all.

That's why this work... That's why doing the work of changing your relationship with alcohol, changing the habit of drinking it's like a launchpad to becoming the next version of yourself. That's what *Take a Break* is all about.

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Who cares how much you drink? I don't? Really, who cares? What matters is, are you stepping into the person that you want to be? Are you living a life that feels amazing? That's what I want for you.

I don't care about the quantity or the amount. We're all going to land in a different place, that's the beautiful thing. I care about: Do you have the tools? Do you have the skills that you need, to be able to stop the behaviors that aren't working for you, and to go after the ones that you really want?

So, listen, if you feel like you're stuck in a rut, it's got nothing to do with you. Nothing is wrong with you. It's all just because of a story. And if you're willing to examine, if you're willing to be curious everything will change. And P.S., that's why it helps to work with coaches. That's why it helps not to try to do this all on your own.

Because when you try to do this all on your own, your brain just going to want to default back to those stories that aren't serving you. That's the importance of really doing this work in a way in which you can start to see, "Oh, maybe there is nothing wrong with me. Maybe actually, I've just been telling myself a crappy story this whole time.

All right, 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

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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.