

Ep #290: What Resistance to Not Drinking is Trying to Teach You



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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 290.

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, hello, everyone. I'm talking today about when you have resistance to taking time off from drinking.

So, I, of course see this a lot, because the very first thing that everyone does when they join the membership, is you take a 30-day break. That's what we do. That's what we start with.

A lot of people will write in, and they will say, "Well, but I've taken two breaks before. I don't actually want to stop drinking, so why would I take a break? Now's not really a good time." I see this resistance all the time, coming up, and I think that you really need to understand what it is about.

Because I will tell you this, I had this resistance, too; I really did. Even though I was really desperate to figure out why was my drinking something that I struggled with? Why did it seem to look different for my friends and my family? Why did I seem to struggle to say 'no,' or to rein myself in? Or, why was it unpredictable? Why was I sometimes responsible, and other times it was like, you know, 2am at the falafel truck? What was going on?

I had all this desire to figure this out and I also often, had a lot of resistance to having periods of not drinking. So, what was going on there? Now, what was going on for me is that every time I would say, "You know, I just got to

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take some time off. I just need a break from this,” it was always motivated from, usually a place of shame and regret. And number two, it was always fueled by being a rule follower, and using willpower, and avoiding, and distracting. That's the only way that I knew how to do it.

I certainly did not want to stop drinking for the rest of my life. I was just like, “Maybe if I could just pull back for a second, just get my bearings.” What I didn't understand is that I wasn't getting my bearings at all, because I didn't even know how to find my bearings. I didn't even know how to find how the habit was working in my brain.

All I knew was, “Okay, she's got to be good for a while. I'm just going to say no. And I'm going to avoid, and I'm going to use willpower, and I'm going to distract. I'm going to turn down invites.” And you know what? It felt terrible. So, I understand why people have a lot of resistance to taking time off. I understand why people are like, “Yeah, but I want to keep drinking, Rachel. I just want to drink less, so why would I take a 30-day break?” I get it.

But I want to explain to you what is actually happening. What you're missing today when that resistance bubbles up inside of you. And when you assume, “Okay, this isn't for me, because I want to keep drinking in the long term.” The resistance is showing you how the habit works. It's actually giving you a window into your obstacles. A window into what is blocking change.

Here's what I know for sure; there is no one, anywhere in the world, right now that cannot take a 30-day break from drinking. I don't care what's happening in your life. I don't care who you are. It is of course, totally possible for you.

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Now, you will come to me, and you will say, “Okay, you haven't seen what's on my calendar. You don't know what's coming up. You know, my son is getting married. We've got this vacation plan. I've got my elderly parent in the hospital. Work has been crazy. It's about to be basketball season,” I don't know whatever it is, we've got so many reasons why now is not a good time.

There is nothing in the world preventing you from taking 30 days, off right now. Nothing; that is an actual reason. Nothing. The only thing that is preventing you, is everything that you are anticipating that you would feel, and what it would be like to go for those 30 days. And listen, all of that anticipatory negative emotion, and all of the anticipatory negative thoughts, are actually a beautiful thing for you to be able to see.

They're actually incredibly helpful because they're going to show you the thoughts and feelings that are fueling the habit. The problem is most people, when they feel this resistance, they assume the resistance is correct. The resistance means, “I shouldn't take a break. I shouldn't take time off. This isn't the right solution for me.” Instead of understanding, no, the resistance is here to show you your mind.

Listen, for all of you out there who are thinking to yourself, “Well, I've proved that I can not drink. I've proved that I don't have to drink, or I don't need to drink.” I want you to pay special attention to this, because again, taking a short period off from drinking, it's not about proving that you don't need to drink.

Now, I understand this because this was something... The very first time that I decided, “Oh, I just need to take a break. I've got to cut this out,” I was in my early 20's. I was living in New York City. And, definitely at that

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point, it was about proving to me that I didn't need it. Proving to myself, I didn't have to drink.

I was so afraid that the way that I drank, and the fact that I sometimes would feel kind of out of control, and the fact that it was hard to rein myself in, plus my family history, plus the story that I always overdid it, plus the belief that my brain was missing an off-switch; I was really afraid that it meant that I had a real problem. And so, at that point, it was very important to me... "Okay, well, let's prove that I don't need it." And it felt powerful, in a way, to be like, "Okay. Here, see? I don't have to drink. I don't need to drink."

But what I didn't understand; what I was missing, was that proving to yourself that you don't need a drink, you're not really proving much of anything to yourself, at all. Because, of course, no one needs a drink. What you have to really understand is: Why do I want it so much? What's the desire about? When I think the desire is, "Ooh, I just like how it makes me feel. I like who I become. I like the way that it tastes," what is that twin desire that is also there? That so often goes unacknowledged?

I knew how to take breaks through gritting my teeth, and saying "no," and turning down invitations, and distracting myself, and avoiding certain people. That was not sustainable. It did not feel good.

Yes, it gave me a little window into how my body felt, when I wasn't drinking all the time. When it didn't start out as like, "Yeah, of course, Friday night's going to be a rager." Yeah, it gave me a window into what it was like to wake up on a Saturday morning, and not have your body be detoxing the entire night before.

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But that window into the physical impact, it's really only going to last for so long. I think that, that can be a beautiful window for people. Especially for many people that I work with, who assume that the reason that they have low energy, and the reason that they struggle with sleeping, and the reason that their digestion is off, is just because they're getting older. "I'm just getting older. This just happens with old age."

The number of people who do the 30-Day Challenge with me, and say, "Oh my god. I can't even believe how my two glasses a night ritual was truly impacting how I felt. How that was truly impacting my skin, and my sleep, and my digestion, and my energy levels, and my mood, and my anxiety."

So yes, there's a beautiful thing that happens when you give yourself a break to discover the real impact that alcohol has on your body. But that can't be all of it. It can't just be, "I'm going to prove to myself that I don't need to drink. And I'm going to just focus on how it's so good and healthy for my body." Because, sure, it's healthy.

But you know what? I didn't want to suffer from my health. That wasn't worth it to me. I wanted to be someone who knew how to relax and have fun, and let go of my worries and my inhibitions, and be silly and not be caught up in my head. I wanted to be someone who did things that were fancy, and special, and fun, and knew how to celebrate. I wanted to have all of that. It wasn't worth it to me to just be, "Yeah, well I'm so healthy. I'm just so happy I'm not waking up feeling sluggish or hungover."

And so, really understanding that my resistance to taking time off from drinking was a resistance to, "That's not what I want my life to look like. I don't want my life to just be about everything that's healthy. I don't want my life to be avoiding certain situations or certain people. Or, to be traveling and feel like this isn't as special or fun."

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I wanted to have all the pleasure, and all the enjoyment, and all the connection. I wanted to feel good. I wanted to know how to relax after a long day. And that's what I felt I was giving up. That's really what my resistance was.

The resistance was more of this sense of, “Yeah, but I don't think that life is going to be as fun, or as special, or enjoyable. And who wants that?” There's no point in your life, when taking a short break from alcohol isn't possible. There are only all these points where your brain is telling you how it's going to be terrible. Or, now's not the right time. Or, you should wait until your calendar clears up. Or, until that vacation happens. Or, the wedding is over. Or, the holidays are done with. Or, you've made it through summer break.

That's all that's happening, and it's because your brain is anticipating the ways in which you will not enjoy yourself. The ways in which just saying “no,” will be a struggle, will be uncomfortable. What I want you to learn is a way to say “no” that feels easy. A way to say “no” that feels light. A way to say “no” that doesn't feel hard, or deprived, or like you're missing out.

That doesn't just happen because you get to walk around being virtuous, because you're not drinking tonight and you're going to feel so amazing in the morning; definitely does not happen. It happens because you learn how to separate out what's happening in your body, from what's happening in your mind. You learn how to separate out the sensation of the urge, from the story of the urge.

You learn how to start to change how you feel, and change how you show up on your own, as opposed to feeling like, “No, I really need a drink in order to relax. I really need a drink in order to be social.” You will learn how to start feeling connected, and creating more pleasure in your life, without

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believing that that connection and that pleasure comes from what you're consuming.

It's about learning a skill set. And when you have resistance to taking even a month off from drinking, that resistance is an amazing thing for you to pay attention to. But I don't want you to pay attention to it in the way of, "Obviously, it means I shouldn't do it." It's really handing you your specific map, to how the habit works uniquely in your situation. We just don't realize that.

The resistance is a good thing. The resistance is going to show you how to change the habit, at the deepest level, in a sustainable way. Not just by being a rule follower and being disciplined, because it's not going to last. It's not how we change habits. It's exhausting. It's not what anybody wants.

No one wants to go through life and just be like, "Okay, well, at the end of the day I'm really happy that I lived my life as a rule follower." That's not what we want. We want connection, and pleasure, and enjoyment. We want to reach our goals. We want new experiences. We want to be delighted.

A lot of times, it feels like that isn't really so possible, if you don't have a drink. And, I just want to offer, of course it feels that way, because no one has ever shown you how to create that. People have only shown you how to consume it. People have only shown you how to consume the pleasure that you want, or the connection that you want. As opposed to, "No. I get to create it for myself. I know how to do this because I understand how my mind works."

So, for those of you with resistance coming up; you notice yourself wanting to find the right time, or thinking, "There's just too much going on. Too

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many things coming up. It just wouldn't be enjoyable.” Instead of just believing that resistance, I want you to see if you can use it to understand, “This is what's really happening underneath the surface.”

Because when you start doing that work, you start doing the deep work of habit change. Where saying “no” becomes easy and enjoyable because you realize, “I get to create what I want to create. I don't have to rely on this drink.” Not just patting yourself on the back for being so virtuous and saying “no.” And then, it's so much easier to create the relationship that you want to have with alcohol, whatever that looks like for you.

All right, pay attention to that resistance people. That is 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.

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