

Ep #313: Why You Aren't Having Fun During Dry January



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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 313.

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, everyone, today, we are talking about having fun during dry January. Now, you can really apply what I'm going to teach today to having fun, at any point of the year. But I want to talk about it, specifically, with dry January. Because I watch so many people embark on a month of not drinking. And, I just even hear how it's talked about. I mean, just listen to the term, dry January. Does that sound enjoyable?

It might sound very healthy. But does it sound fun when you describe something as dry? Like oh, I had a very dry conversation with this person. That was a very dry talk. No, it's not signaling that we're particularly having a good time or enjoying this.

You guys hear me talk a lot, on the podcast, about words. I don't know if it's just the fact that I'm the daughter of an English teacher, or that I worked in communications for a long time. But I really think that words matter. And a lot of times, when we're approaching the work of saying no or taking a break from drinking, pressing pause, taking some time off, we have this unconscious belief going along with it.

Like okay, well, you know, I'm going to be really healthy. I'm going to get my gold star. But I'm not going to have a lot of fun. And what I say to people all the time, whenever I'm working with people, I always really harp

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on the fact that we cannot put off fun and pleasure. We cannot put that off to the side. It is important. It is essential.

And in fact, I don't think that you can change your relationship with alcohol, if you aren't focused on fun and pleasure. This has to be key; it really has to be one of your primary things. Because what I see happen for so many people, when they decide; you know what? I don't like my drinking. I don't like how much I'm drinking. I don't like my behavior. I don't like, you know, how I feel the next day.

When we finally decide to take action, what happens is that, at first, you have that little honeymoon period of; oh, this is how I can feel when I'm not drinking. Now listen, that honeymoon period doesn't necessarily happen on day one or day two, or even that first week. Especially for those of you who drink every day, right? You're opening up a bottle of wine as part of your nightly routine.

It may not happen that first week. It can take a week or two to adjust. But a lot of times, people will very early on start to be like, "Oh, hey, I feel better. I have more energy. I'm sleeping better. This feels great." And, we are able to kind of ride that high of feeling better, and having more energy, and sleeping better, and your digestion is better.

You're able to ride that high for a little bit. And what happens, is people ride that high, and they kind of say, "Well, it's worth it. It's worth it, feeling this way, even if I'm not having as much fun." But then, here's what happens; it's what happened to me. It's like you feel really great, at first. And then, you kind of settle into real life.

It's like; okay, well, all the benefits of feeling great are starting to wear off and I'm still human. I still want to have fun. I still want to have pleasure. So,

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what am I supposed to do now? And I will tell you, the reason why I focus on this so much...

In fact, inside *Take a Break*, after people complete that initial 30-Day Challenge, there's a whole kind of deep dive into different classes. And one of them is all about cultivating pleasure. Because I think it's so important, and it's so often overlooked.

Or, it's talked about in this really kind of superficial way, "Yeah, find a new hobby. Take a pottery class; nothing wrong with pottery." I just mean, it's talked about in this way of filling up your day with activities, and that's not what I'm talking about.

What I'm talking about is true fun, true pleasure, and really understanding what's getting in the way. Because what happens, again, a lot of people really freak out at that moment where it's like; okay, so I feel better. I'm healthier. I'm drinking less, that's great. But I'm not having as much fun. And then, this place is where so many people get stuck. And where they often kind of throw in the towel too soon.

Because it's like; yeah, but I want to have fun. I want to enjoy myself. And I always say, "You know, we cannot change at the expense of having good time." We cannot say, "Well, I'm just going to suffer for my health. And, that's going to be enough." It's just not enough.

I think, that really, it is in our DNA to desire enjoyment and connection and fun and pleasure. And I will tell you, I think the moment where people get a little freaked out, that's where I get kind of excited. Because I'm like, "Ooh, this is actually a really exciting time for people. You just don't realize how exciting it is." You're kind of like, "Wow, here we go. I'm feeling better. But I'm not enjoying life as much."

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I want you to know this, if you're not enjoying yourself as much when you're not drinking, it is not because not drinking isn't fun. I know that was a double negative. But that's not what's going on. It's because you need to teach your mind new ways to have fun. And, I'm not talking about hobbies.

I'm talking about really examining what is happening in your mind. What are those thoughts? What are you focused on when you aren't enjoying yourself? And, how to start changing that. Because most people will resign themselves to a choice of; okay, well, either I can drink tonight and have a good time and have fun. But I'm probably going to feel like crap tomorrow. And maybe, I'm going to overdo it. Or, I can not drink tonight, and I'll feel better tomorrow. But I'm not really going to have a good time.

It seems like we're always in this position of kind of balancing having fun versus how we're going to feel the next day. But the problem with these options is that it assumes that not drinking is less fun. It's basically asking yourself, "Okay, listen. Just suffer tonight. Suffer through this evening. Suffer through this party. Don't drink, and you're not gonna have to feel bad tomorrow, right? Because you made the good, smart decisions tonight."

And, a lot of you are trying to motivate yourself this way. I know I did, for a very long time. Or, it's like, I can drink, and I can have fun. I was coaching someone on this recently, who was like, "I just am afraid. I'm afraid of changing my relationship with alcohol, even though it's not serving me. Even though I can see all the ways in which I just don't like how I'm behaving."

"And, I don't like kind of impact that it's having on my health, and my relationships, and all these things. But I'm truly afraid to change my relationship with it because I'm not sure that I'm going to have fun anymore."

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And so, if you're worried about that, if you're kind of thinking like, "Yeah, dry January. Okay, I'm healthy, but it's kind of dry, kind of boring," This episode is really for you. What we're going to talk about today are the four things that get in the way of having a good time. Again, this is not about filling up, you know, your free time with activities. This is paying attention to what is happening in your mind.

If you aren't having fun, if you're not enjoying yourself, it has nothing to do with what's in your glass. It has nothing to do with what you're drinking. It has to do with what's happening in your mind. I really want you to stay with me, because I know for some of you, you're like, "Oh, okay, so I can just think all the amazing unicorn and rainbow thoughts, and have an amazing time."

But I really want you to just, if you're skeptical, just put a pin in it; just for the rest of this episode, and consider what I'm saying. If you're not having a good time. If you're not having fun. I don't care where you are, what you're doing, who you're with. If you're blaming it on not drinking, I want you to consider that it has nothing to do with alcohol.

And actually, it has to do with what is happening unconsciously in your mind. You are judging yourself in one of four areas. And when you find yourself doing this, it is always going to block having fun. You can apply this to any situation, whatever you are doing, whoever you are with. Even if you're by yourself, does not matter.

I'm going to talk about these four areas, and that I just want you to consider, I want you to kind of try this thought on. I talk about this a lot inside *Take a Break*. When I'm working with people, I talk about trying a thought on; just try it on. You don't have to keep it forever. Just try on the

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idea that what's preventing you from having a good time and enjoying yourself has nothing to do with what you are or aren't drinking.

Okay, so the four areas. Your mind is always at work, judging one of these four areas, when you're not having a good time. Okay, the first; number one. This is the most obvious; you're judging yourself. This is what so many of us kind of default to. "If I'm going to judge anything, I'm going to judge myself first."

So, I'm thinking, "Oh, God, I have nothing to say. I have nothing interesting to say, right? Everyone here is smarter or prettier, or more accomplished, or more successful. I don't belong." Or, maybe in that moment, judging like; I should know what to do for fun right now, and I don't.

I remember this, I didn't even have to be in a social situation with other people. I remember kind of thinking to myself, "Oh, my God. How do you not know how to have fun?" Because, you know, when I was doing this work, all of the sudden, I had a lot of free time. I was doing it when I was single. I was living in New York City. I was in this major city surrounded with so many things to do.

I had a lot of free time; wasn't in a relationship, didn't have kids. And I was like, "Rachel, how do you not know how to have fun?" I mean, it was so painful for me to think, "God, what is wrong with you? You don't even know what to do right now, to have a good time without a drink."

So again, it doesn't matter if you're with people, if you're by yourself, the first place where you will find your mind judging is usually yourself. Judging yourself in relation to other people, or just judging yourself in general. So, pay attention. Is that happening? Are you judging yourself? If you are, it is definitely going to block having fun.

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This is how the think-feel-act cycle works. This is why we have to pay attention to all of our thoughts. Not just our thoughts about alcohol. Not just our excuses for why 'one won't hurt.' We pay attention to all of the sentences in our mind because the think-feel-act cycle it's always working. It's not just with alcohol, it works with everything.

Number two; if you're not judging yourself, you're probably judging others. This is another place where I would get really caught. It was kind of a defense mechanism for me, especially if I felt uncomfortable, right? So, I'd be judging other people like, "Oh, God, these people are so shallow. What they're talking about is so boring, or irrelevant, or not serious."

I mean, yes, I definitely would have those thoughts. Or, I'd be judging people being like, "They're rude. I have nothing in common with them. Their politics are totally different from mine. We have nothing in common." You might be judging people's behavior like what's happening around you. It doesn't have to be the adults, it can be the kids, right?

"Why are they behaving this way?" I will tell you, I had a lot of judgment of children, before my own. So, apologies to everyone out there for the children that I judged; I definitely had a lot of judgment there. But just notice if your mind is judging others, right? And generally, judging them in a negative way.

More often, what you'll find when you're judging yourself, you're kind of putting other people up on a pedestal, and then seeing yourself as somehow not measuring up. But you might also be judging others and just thinking, "You know, what they're talking about is kind of boring. I'm not even interested."

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Maybe, it's just everybody's talking about sports, and you don't really care about it. You're just judging that you have nothing in common, right? Or, that their behavior is bothering you, or their conversation is boring. Now, listen, I'm not saying that you should enjoy everyone equally, or that every conversation is amazing. I just want you to pay attention to where you are blocking yourself from having a good time. Okay?

The third place where your mind will be judging, is where you are. Right? Think about how many times you're somewhere, thinking how you don't want to be there. Or, you are in a place and you're judging; it's too hot. It's too cold. I'm not interested in where I am. I don't want to be here. I didn't even want to come.

You're judging the place where you are. You're resisting the fact that you're there. You're thinking about all the ways that it is wrong, all the ways that it should be different. You cannot have fun when you are doing this. You simply cannot enjoy yourself when, as you look around the room, as you look around where you are, you're just thinking about all the ways that you don't want to be in this place or it's wrong.

And then, finally, you might be judging the activity, right? You might be judging what you're doing. You might be telling yourself, "Oh my God, I'm no good at this. I look stupid. I feel stupid. Everyone is better than me. This isn't my thing. I don't know."

It doesn't matter what you're doing, it doesn't matter what the activity is. You can be, I don't know, in a knitting group, or you can be at karaoke. But when you're judging what you're doing, you're judging your performance. You're telling yourself that you look stupid, or you feel stupid.

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I mean, I think about this all the time. I even think about going to quiz nights; I remember doing this. I would go to quiz nights at bars, and I wasn't drinking. And I could not have a good time, because I was so all up in judging what I was doing. Just judging myself and feeling like; oh, God, I don't know any of these answers. I should know these answers. All these people are having good time, and I'm not having a good time. What's wrong with me? Why can't I enjoy myself?

All the time, I just wanted to go back to; well, of course, it's because you're not drinking. You would be having a better time if you were drinking. But the fact of the matter is, is that when your mind is judging in a negative way, it is always going to block fun.

Those four roadblocks, they are blocking having a good time: When you're judging yourself, when you're judging others, when you're judging the place, when you're judging where you are. That is it. That is what is preventing you from having good time; has zero to do with drinking.

I think what happens, and I've talked about this in other episodes, I've talked about the difference between creating fun and consuming fun. We all, initially, know how to create fun. We know how to make fun for ourselves.

And then, over time we start to lose that skill. We start to consume fun. We start to look to things; whether it's alcohol, or food, or drugs. We start to look to things like; oh, this thing is going to make me have a good time. And I think when we start consuming too much fun, the brain gets to be a little lazy, right?

It's kind of out of practice of creating fun. It's like; I don't need to create fun, let's just have a drink. I don't need to create fun, let's just eat something.

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Right? So, we kind of settle into this life of tricking ourselves that we're enjoying what we're doing, we're having a good time, except that when we take the thing that we're consuming out of the picture, well what happens?

We find that no, we don't have a lot of thoughts that create a good time. We don't have a lot of thoughts that create fun. Because we have so many thoughts that are just judging everything, that we were simply consuming over.

Again, I'm not saying that you need to like everyone and everything you do and every place that you are. I'm just saying, if you could, for a second, question the idea, "That the reason that I'm not having fun, is because I'm not drinking." If you could just question that thought and get curious.

What am I thinking about in the moment that I'm not having fun? What am I thinking about? What am I judging? Is it me? Is it other people? Is it where I am? Is it what I'm doing? When you start to do that, you start to see; oh, well, maybe if I could start shifting some of these thoughts. Maybe, if I could be less judgmental of myself, and who I'm with, and what I'm doing, and where I am, maybe I could start to have a better time.

I will tell you, this is the thing, in the work that I do, that people underestimate the most. They underestimate their ability to change their experience, change their enjoyment, simply by noticing what they're thinking, and starting to shift that.

But when you start to do that, when you start to see; yeah, the reason I'm not having fun, it's not because there's something wrong with me. It's not because of what's in my glass. It, literally, is a sentence in my mind that just popped up. I didn't choose it.

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Right? That's the other piece, "I didn't choose this sentence. It's just what my brain handed to me." When you start to realize that that's the only thing blocking you, and you start to learn how to change it, how to shift that in a really believable way, you start to see; oh, I literally don't need these things that I thought I needed, in order to have a good time. I can create this fun. I can create this pleasure for myself.

Again, I know this is a stretch for a lot of you listening, but I just want to offer this out there, especially during this month. Especially during Dry January. When I think so many people out there... And I really applaud all of you who are doing the work in Dry January. But I just want to acknowledge also, that a lot of you are doing the work with the kind of underlying assumption that you're not going to have as much fun.

And so, I just wanted to offer up this episode as a little way for you to start to wiggle that thought, and really start to consider; what blocks me from having fun? When do I have fun? How do I create fun for myself? Can I make events and experiences and where I am, more enjoyable simply by shifting a thought?

When you make fun and pleasure just as much a priority as learning how to say no to an urge, learning how to say no to temptation or an excuse, you will see that the change that you start to create for yourself, it is so much more solid. Because it's not on this foundation of; well, I just gotta suffer for my health.

It really is on a foundation now, of; oh, it really doesn't matter what's in my glass. Because I'm always looking to my mind if I'm not having a good time. I'm always starting there, first. And when I see that I can change that, then changing my relationship with alcohol is so much easier.

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All right, 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 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.