

## Ep #321: Why Your Commitment Falls Apart



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #321: Why Your Commitment Falls Apart

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, Episode 321.

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, everybody, welcome back. We are going to be talking about commitment. I'm going to be doing a real deep dive into commitment, and how to understand what's going on when you break your commitment, over the next couple episodes. I think this piece is so important.

It's so important if you want to change your relationship with alcohol. And it is the place that most people spend the least amount of time actually examining and dissecting. We spend a lot of time beating ourselves up. We spend a lot of time deciding that our ability to follow through is some sort of character flaw, or something built into our personality, like, "I'm just not someone who's good at keeping commitments."

We spend a lot of time judging, and not a lot of time getting curious. And so, that's what we're going to start the process of today, developing this curiosity. Now, I will tell you, when people join the membership and start doing this work, one of the things that they will do to practice the tools, is start a 30-Day Challenge. So, 30 days of not drinking.

Now, this is very different from a lot of other challenges out there, because it is very focused on: How do you keep going? What happens if you break your commitment? What happens if you slip up? Most people will not be perfect. Most people will have a moment during those 30 days, where they will say yes, they will give in.

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Now, that does not mean that they failed. In fact, such a huge piece of what I'm trying to show people is that these moments are incredibly important to understand and dissect and build awareness about if you want to change the habit.

So often we think, "Listen, I just want to do it right. I just want to make a commitment and follow through on my commitment. I don't want to make any mistakes. I can't afford making mistakes anymore." The problem with that perfectionist mindset is it is always setting you up to fail.

Because of course we all have the intention, right? Whenever we make a commitment in life, we always have the intention of, yeah, I want to follow through. But the problem then is the moment that we don't. And it doesn't matter if it's around drinking or your diet or going to the gym or saving money. It really doesn't matter what the commitment is about.

The moment that we break our commitment, we don't end up going and looking back and examining what happened, because we mistakenly believe that we failed. So much of what I'm trying to do and trying to show people, and frankly, I had to do so much work on my own, to learn this myself, is that everything I perceived as a setback, everything that I perceived as me screwing up, that was actually a stepping stone.

That was actually something that I can use and leverage, to start to change and evolve. So, I have people use an exercise inside *Take a Break* called *Assessing What Happened*. It's an exercise that people can use if they're in the 30-Day Challenge and they give in.

It's an exercise that people can use when they're reintroducing alcohol if that's something that they want to do. This exercise really, always applies. And by the way, it's such an important skill. When you really master it around drinking, around alcohol, it is a skill that you can apply to anything in your life.

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So, what that exercise is all about is slowing down the habit. Right? Something that feels so fast, so automatic, as if you weren't even thinking, we want to slow it down. We want to build and create so much awareness about every single step. Not for all this unnecessary shame. Not to beat ourselves up; all of us do that too much.

We're already in this place of like, "Oh God, I don't want to look. I don't want to look back because I screwed up. And screwing up means that I'm never going to figure this out, that this is impossible." And then what happens when we have that thought and we feel defeated, it leads to backsliding.

Where we screw up and we're like, "Oh, God, I just want to forget, that happened. I want to pretend it didn't happen. Let's just start over. Let's restart the clock." But restarting the clock is just as problematic, but problematic in a different way. Because what you're doing there, is you're continuing on with this perfectionist mindset. You're not actually examining what happened, to learn and grow from it.

You know, it's so funny, because I think a lot of times people have this thought of, "You know, I should have learned my lesson by now. Oh, my God, I can't believe I did that again. I can't believe how much I drank. I can't believe what I did when I was drunk. I should have learned my lesson by now."

And I'm always like, "Oh, really?" Because are you spending any time actually going back and really parsing through what happened with a fine-tooth comb? Of course not. We don't want to do that because we have so much shame and believe that the mistake shouldn't have happened.

And both of those outcomes, whether or not you start telling yourself, "I can't figure this out. It's impossible," and you start backsliding, or you want to pretend it didn't happen and just restart the clock, both of those things

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are going to keep you stuck. Because you never actually gain the awareness and the realization of what's going on, of what's happening behind the scenes.

What we're going to really focus on today is what happens really, before you even try to follow through on that commitment. How you are feeling in the lead up. So many people don't understand that they make a commitment, but they're starting from such shaky ground.

We're starting from this place of like, "Okay, I'm not going to drink. I'm only going to have one." So, we make this commitment, but we don't ever realize, we don't ever spend time examining, the emotion that we have about our commitment. Making a commitment isn't enough. That's not just, "I made a commitment. Full stop. I'm done."

You have to make a commitment, and then you need to get curious and understand how you feel about that commitment. Because there's a very big difference between feeling totally confident in your commitment. Like, "Yes, I've got this. It's going to happen no matter what." Versus, "Oh, no. Not so sure." Versus all that doubt and insecurity.

Now, listen, I'm not saying that doubt and insecurity and feeling unsure is a problem. It's not a problem. And I'm also not saying that you need to feel confident 100% of the time. I mean, that just isn't how it works when you're acquiring a new skill.

When you're learning how to be someone that can feel the urge and have the desire and not act on it, the idea that you should feel confident, that you can do this 100% of the time, doesn't make any sense. Especially not when you're starting out and your brain is trying to learn and acquire this skill.

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What I just want you to realize is that most people never, ever take the time to consider this emotional component. They never take the time to understand how they feel about their commitment.

Even though you may have been listening to this podcast for a long time, you may have heard me talk about the think-feel-act cycle and really understand, “Oh, hey, my drinking doesn't just happen. That action, the act of me drinking, doesn't come out of the clear blue sky. There's a thought and a feeling connected to it.”

So, you may really understand intellectually, that piece of think-feel-act, but then at the same time, ignore this emotional component, the feeling part of your commitment. And I will tell you this, whenever I do this exercise, when I'm working with someone to assess what happened, we're going back and we're looking like, “Okay, you know you are on day 11, and you broke your commitment last night. Let's understand what was going on.”

Whenever I do this exercise with someone, they always start out in this place of like, “Oh God, do we have to look? Do I have to go into the nitty-gritty?” But this first step is so important; just getting the data on how you were feeling beforehand. I'm talking about well before it even came time for you to follow through on your commitment.

How are you feeling ahead of time? Because there's your commitment, whatever it is, right? “Tonight, I'm not drinking. Tonight, I'm not going to have more than two.” There's the commitment, and then there's your thought about your commitment.

This is what we are often completely blind to. We don't even realize that we have a thought about the commitment that then creates a feeling. We have zero awareness about this piece of the puzzle, when this piece matters almost more than anything.

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And so, I'll say to people, "Okay, so you made a commitment. What was it? Let's just get the data, the facts. No judgment here. Let's just understand right now what that commitment was. And in the lead up, well before, you had to put that commitment into action. Maybe when you were getting ready to go out... Maybe when you were thinking about heading to the restaurant... Maybe when you were anticipating what the date was going to be like..."

"What were you thinking about your commitment in the lead up? While you were getting ready? While you were envisioning the date? While you were sitting at work at 3pm, before it was time to go home? What were you thinking about the plan you had made?"

When I do this with people, there'll be all these thoughts. A lot of them revolve around hope. "I hope I follow this. I hope it works. I hope I'm good." Hope sounds good, but when you look at that thought and you ask yourself, how do you feel when you're hoping? You're probably going to feel some level of insecurity.

You might have a thought, like, "Yeah, I'm not totally sure I can do this. This is going to be really hard. I wish I didn't have to do this. So-and-so is going to give me a hard time. I just know that I'm going to be so tempted. I think the urge is just going to be there all night long and ruin my time." Now listen, none of these thoughts are a problem. You just need to know that they're there.

You need to understand how these thoughts that you're having, in the lead up about your commitment, are going to affect how you show up, and what happens next. When you feel unsure or doubtful or worried or anxious about your commitment because of one of these thoughts, well, then what? What do you do next?



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Now, kind of logically, we would think, “Okay, well, if I'm feeling so insecure, anxious about this, then I should prepare better.” But then, when we actually look at what happens when we actually examine that think-feel-act cycle, what I see time and time again, is people not preparing. We're not preparing for, “Okay, so how am I actually going to follow through?”

And the question then is, why? If we have uncovered that in the lead up, we have this doubt, or this worry or this anxiety? If we're telling ourselves, “You know, I hope this works. I hope I follow through. I hope I'm good. I don't know, this is going to be really hard.” Why aren't we preparing more?

I think what happens is it most of the time, not only are we not even aware that we have these thoughts about the commitment, and we're not even maybe tuned into the doubt, the anxiety, or the worry that's there. Most of the time, if we have an inkling that it's there, if we're feeling kind of unsure, or like we're on shaky ground, and I don't know if I can do this, we just want to push those emotions away.

We just want to pretend that they're not there. When, of course, that's the exact opposite of what you should be doing. Right? You want to acknowledge that they're there, so that you can plan differently, so that you can prepare. Maybe that preparation looks like, Okay, my thought about my commitment is ‘yeah, I hope this works.’

Well, how can I start shifting this thought? What would it be like to go through this event or spend the evening with a thought like, ‘Listen, I'm doing this no matter what.’ Maybe it's shifting your thought.

Maybe it's planning what you're going to do in the moment when things get hard. You already know what your obstacles and challenges are. You know that better than anyone. You have all that information at your fingertips. So, what are you going to do in the moment that it gets hard? What are you going to say to yourself? How are you going to keep yourself on track?

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Maybe it's planning ahead of time, 'Listen, I need to kind of have this at the ready.' Right? 'I need to know what I'm going to say to myself when that person is giving me a really hard time, or when I'm sitting there feeling like I'm the kid at the adults' table because everybody else is drinking.' What am I going to say to myself in this moment, to help me stay the course?

And sometimes, for a lot of people that I work with, it's really just accepting that that emotion is there, and that nothing has gone wrong. It's like yeah, of course you feel a little doubtful. Of course, you have a little anxiety. That's normal. That's okay. You're trying to teach your brain something new. You're not doing anything wrong. Nothing's gone wrong.

You don't need to push those emotions away. You can acknowledge and normalize them and say, "You know what? Listen, this is me learning something new. Of course, I feel a little anxious hanging out with this group of people who I'm used to always drinking with. Of course, I have a little anxiety, that's normal. That anxiety is coming along with me. It's okay, it can come, I can feel a little anxious. I can bring it along for the ride."

I can't tell you the number of times where I was headed out somewhere. And my plan was okay, Rachel, listen, you're not drinking tonight. And I would feel so anxious about so many things. So anxious about not drinking, so anxious about what people would think, what I would say, right? I had all this anxiety.

And all I could think about in the lead up was, "How do I get rid of it? How do I get rid of this anxiety?" But there's a problem with this approach. Because the more that I tell myself, "I need to get rid of my anxiety." What happens? The more power I give it.

The same thing with urges. I talk about this with people all the time, especially when people are new inside the membership. And they're like, "Okay, I'm here. How do I get rid of all the urges? How do I avoid them?"

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And it's like, listen, if you need to avoid the urges, it means you think they have some power. It means you think that they're a problem. When urges are just a normal part of having a brain. Same thing with anxiety. Listen, it may not be the emotion that you would choose to feel when you're headed out, but it's still normal.

When you tell yourself you have to get rid of it immediately, it just becomes more powerful, right? Because now it's this thing that you have to figure out how to make it go away, instead of, okay, I'm feeling anxious. That's normal. Nothing has gone wrong here.

You know what? I bet that I'm not the only one. I bet I'm not the only person here who feels a little anxiety sometimes when they are meeting new people. Or maybe, when they're showing up with people they've known for a long time, and they're trying to show up differently.

Listen, maybe it's not anxiety that's the thing bubbling up for you, maybe it's deprivation, maybe it's disconnection, maybe it's feeling annoyed. Whatever it is, instead of telling yourself, "Oh, my God, I've got to get rid of it right now." You can start to normalize it. Bring it along, instead of pushing it away, instead of making it the problem.

That's the thing, when we start to bring it along, when we start to normalize it, we take its power away because it's no longer this thing that we have to immediately get rid of. That is a signal that something has gone really wrong.

So, the very thing that you don't want to do, the very thing of oh God, I made this commitment. And now I'm feeling like I'm on shaky ground. And I'm feeling insecure about it. I don't want to acknowledge that I feel insecure. I just want to pretend that I don't.

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We're so sure that acknowledging it is going to make us feel worse, when actually it's what will make us feel better. It's how we start to feel empowered, instead of at the mercy of it. Because when you acknowledge it, when you normalize it, you're no longer at odds with it. You are teaching your brain a new way to show up.

And the final thing that I will say when you're thinking about how you are feeling, what you're thinking about your commitment in the lead up, well before you have to put that commitment into action, what I want to add is that when I do this exercise with so many people... So many of them will realize, "You know what? I didn't actually have a specific commitment or plan in place. I was in this very hazy vague area of, I'm just going to try to be good."

And when they see that, it's so powerful because then it's like, well what does that even mean? Does good mean you're not drinking? Does good mean you're just having one? Does it mean that you just have to make sure you don't do anything that you'll regret tomorrow? That you won't act stupid?

We think so often that we actually have a commitment going into a situation, when in reality we don't. We have this very hazy, vague, yeah, I'm going to try to be good tonight. But not realizing that being vague has given your lower brain so much wiggle room to work with in the moment. Because you never actually specified what being good meant.

And I think what will happen for some, people will discover that they hesitate to make a concrete plan. They hesitate to get specific because they have so much practice and experience being awful to themselves, and beating themselves up when they don't follow through.

And so, keeping things kind of hazy or vague, it almost is like a protective mechanism. Right? If I keep things really vague, then I'm at less risk of

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messing up. When, of course, what you're doing, what seems like it is protective in the moment is actually setting you up for more difficulty in the long run. Because you're giving your lower brain all this wiggle room in the moment to keep redefining what it means to be good. Because you're not really clear on yeah, what do I need to practice?

So, the way to really know if you're committed in the lead up, it's not about being totally certain or totally confident in your ability to follow through. It's just to ask yourself, well, first, what is my commitment? Do I even have a specific one? Is it concrete? And then, what are my thoughts about it? How do I feel when I think, "I don't know. This is going to be really hard. I'm not sure I can do this. I hope that I'm good?"

What emotions are bubbling up for me? And then instead of pretending that they're not there or trying to push them away, okay, so if I know that I'm going into the situation feeling anxious or worried about deprivation or feeling shaky, then what additional steps do I need to take to prepare?

That's what you want to do. Not to all of a sudden become this person who has this iron will. But to be someone who knows how to set yourself up to succeed. And guess what? Many times, you will learn this lesson after the fact. And there's nothing wrong with that.

In fact, being able to, after you break your commitment, go back, and do this work and just get curious about, how was I feeling in the lead up? What was I thinking to myself? It is some of the most powerful work that you can do.

Alright, 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

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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](http://www.RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.