

Ep #327: Revisiting: Three Reasons You Drink Too Much



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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 327.

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.

Hey, everybody. Welcome back. I wanted to do this episode about why you are drinking too much. Because I just see people over and over again inside the membership, I see them come in very stuck on this issue. We have so much shame, internalized shame, about why did I drink that much? Why can't I learn my lesson? Why am I always overdoing it? Why can't I be like this other person who knows when to call it quits?

We have so much shame and so much internalized blame and thinking that something must be wrong with us, or something must be wrong with our brain. That we have some sort of flaw that leads to our drinking. If I have one mission in my life, it is to eradicate that belief, to eradicate this idea that there is something wrong with you, that you are broken, that your brain is somehow different if you find yourself drinking more than you want to.

It's so important to get rid of that belief. Not just because hey, you should really be kind to yourself and compassionate. No, it has nothing to do with that. It's important to get rid of that belief because as long as that shame is there, it is going to block you. It is going to get in the way of understanding how the habit works.

If you can't really see that habit clearly, if you can't understand how it's working for you, and it will work differently for everyone, but if you don't have a window into that, how on earth are you going to change it? This is why you get stuck trying to use willpower or trying to use avoidance.

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This is why it can feel like Groundhog Day. You just keep repeating the same scenario over and over again, promising that you're going to be good, promising that this time will be different, and then breaking that promise. Not because something is wrong with you, but because you can't see the habit.

Shame, embarrassment, disappointment, believing that something is wrong with you, believing that somehow your brain is broken. I told myself for a long time I think my brain is just missing an off switch. Other people have this kind of magical off switch, and they know when to call it quits. My brain's missing that. That is not what is going on.

So what I am going to share with you today, it's actually an episode that I recorded way back in 2019. It's Three Reasons Why You Drink Too Much, but it's so important. It's one of the most downloaded episodes, but it's also, I think, one of the most important episodes for you to listen to and listen to multiple times to really let it sink in.

Hey, this is why you're drinking too much. This is the real problem. It has nothing to do with you. It has nothing to do with your brain. It has nothing to do with who you are. It has nothing to do with your DNA. When you really understand hey, these are the obstacles that are getting in the way that will change everything.

So have a listen to this episode. Even if you've listened to it before, I would encourage you to listen to it over and over again. Listen to it multiple times and really start thinking all right, where are these reasons showing up for me? Which of these reasons might feel more difficult than the other? Because this is your work. When you start to approach your drinking in this way, you will have the path before you for how to change your relationship with alcohol forever. All right, everybody, enjoy this episode.

I'm going to be talking about the three reasons why you drink too much. The reason why it is not simple to understand what I'm going to be talking

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about today, the reason why it's going to take your brain a second to catch up with what I'm saying is because all three of these reasons have nothing to do with why you currently think that you are drinking too much. All of the reasons that you currently have, that your brain is currently telling you for why it is you have this habit are totally wrong.

So even though what I'm going to talk to you about today is really simple, it is asking you to let go of these beliefs that you have had, that you have used to try to explain why it is that you have this habit with alcohol that is not serving you. I'm going to tell you this. The reason why I am able to understand this is because I also had a lot of nonsense in my brain about why it was that I had this habit around drinking and why it was that I drank too much.

It was not because I was weak-willed or lacking discipline, and you aren't either. That's not the problem for you. It was not because I had an addictive personality, which is something that I had told myself for so long. When in reality, there is no such thing. It is not because of my family background. It is not because of your family background. It's not because there's something wrong with you or wrong with your brain. I used to tell myself this all the time. I think I just lost the brain lottery. But that's not what happened.

All of these reasons, telling yourself that you lack discipline, telling yourself that you have an addictive personality, or that you are predisposed because of your family background, or that you just have something wrong with your brain, none of them are true. When you believe these reasons, even if they feel true for you right now, even if you want to say, "Rachel, you don't know me. I have a lot of evidence."

I'm going to tell you this. When you understand how the think-feel-act cycle works, you're going to see that all of these reason that you're telling yourself right now are just going to make you feel shame and guilt and

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defeated and hopeless. They will not get you where you want to go. But I'm going to talk to you today beyond just that. We're not even just going to be talking just why believing these reasons is going to keep you stuck. I'm actually going to talk to you today about how it is that they're just not true.

So let's talk about the three reasons why you have a habit around drinking and why you are drinking too much. The first is really simple. You don't yet know how to allow the urge to drink to be there and to not answer it. Or you sometimes know how to allow it and sometimes don't, or you think you know how to allow it but actually are using willpower. But quite simply right now you just don't know how to allow the urge to drink to be there and not answer it. That's the first reason.

The second is you don't know how to stop believing all of your excuses, and there are a lot of excuses that are fueling the habit. Until you actually understand the practice of how to stop believing them because it is a practice, you're going to be stuck.

Then the third reason is that you don't know how to learn from what happened last night. I cannot tell you how important this one is, and I cannot tell you how much I wanted to skip this in my own life, how much my clients want to skip this. They say let's not look at last night, let's just move forward. Let's just start with a fresh page. But it's not how it works. You have to learn from what happened last night. You have to know how to do this.

Now, the good news is that all three of these things, allowing the urge, stopping believing your excuses, and learning from last night, they're all skills that you can actually learn how to do. So let's just start with the first one. What does it mean to allow an urge? I spend so much time with my clients really trying to break this down because you think you know, and you don't know.

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What you are doing is you are resisting or pushing it away or trying to ignore the urge to drink. You're telling me, I'm allowing it. That is not allowing it. If you are resisting or pushing it away or trying to ignore the urge, you are doing it wrong.

Now, please know that's okay that you're doing it wrong right now. We're not taught how to allow urges, much less now to allow negative emotions in our life. This is a skill that you have to practice and develop. Allowing simply means that you open yourself up to it.

Now, why would you want to open yourself up to something that you're trying not to do? Well simply, to take all the power away from it. You have to breathe into the urge. You don't freak out that it's there. You're not upset that it appeared. Now, this is still going to feel a little uncomfortable, but it's okay because you know that the discomfort isn't the problem.

I think of allowing an urge like welcoming a guest into your home. You don't open the door, let your guest in, and then shove them in the closet. You don't open your door, welcome your guest, sit down next to them on the couch, and then stare at your watch the entire time. You're like have a seat, stay here all day, happy to have you here. This is what you can do with the urge to drink and, frankly, the urge to do anything.

Now listen, this freaks a lot of people out and it used to freak me out too. This idea of I don't want to allow this urge to be there. I don't even like that it's there. I'm afraid that if I allow it to be there that I'm just going to answer it. I'm just going to say yes to it over and over again.

But here's the thing. Once you are willing to let the urge stay, the opposite happens. Because when you're resisting, you're trying to make it go away. You're trying to shove it into the closet. That's where all the tension appears. So what happens? The urge hangs around longer. It feels

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stronger. It feels worse. When you open up to it, that's when the tension dissipates.

Now, you can allow an urge before you start drinking, and you can allow an urge after you start drinking. So that would be the urge to have more. It doesn't matter at what point you do it. A lot of times people will say, "Okay, this all make sense Rachel, but once I start drinking, everything's out the window at that point. How could I possibly stop?"

It really is the irony, I think, of what our brain is telling us. Because on the one hand, you are drawn to this work. You are drawn to what I teach because I'm teaching you that you aren't powerless. You know that you're not powerless. You are drawn to this idea that you're not powerless. You know that you can make decisions and you have free will. But on the other hand, you're also telling yourself, "Well, I mean, if I have a sip of alcohol, forget it." So then you are saying that you're powerless. So listen, which one is it?

I want you to imagine that you had maybe three glasses of wine, and someone you really, really admired, whoever that person is for you, knocked on your front door. You opened up the door, and there they were. Now listen, you've already consumed the three glasses of wine. You already have whatever blood alcohol content right now is in your system. But what would happen in that moment?

Would you be like, "Oh my god, I'm so excited you're here. I have admired you for so long, but I really need to have another drink?" No. Of course you wouldn't. Their appearance doesn't change the programming in your brain. It doesn't make it so that your lower brain stops wanting a reward. It doesn't make it so all of a sudden you're not intoxicated, or you don't have a blood alcohol level in your system. None of that's happening. There would still be more wine left in the bottle that you could drink.

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But you wouldn't be so focused on it. You wouldn't be so focused on the reward because your brain would be choosing to think about something else. This is what I'm teaching you guys to do. This is what I teach people to do when they're in the Take A Break program.

But you have to understand why it is right now that you believe you can't allow the urge to be there so that we can actually teach your brain that you can. Allowing the urge is one of the most profound things that you will ever teach your brain to do because you will see how many applications it has well beyond just drinking.

But it is also one of the things where it really is a very subtle skill. The slight difference between what it means to resist and what it means to ignore and what it means to allow, it's really very subtle, but it makes all of the difference.

So that's why you really have to work with a coach. That's why I needed to work with a coach. Because it's so subtle that in many ways, a lot of people will actually miss it. You'll get caught in this place of just believing that you don't have the power and the ability and the skill to allow your desire to be there and to breathe it in and to open up to it and to not run and freak out because you're afraid that that desire is in charge of you. It's not.

Now, the second reason why you have this habit around drinking is because you don't know how to stop believing your excuses. Right now, all the excuses, I deserve it, who cares, just one, it doesn't matter, screw it, it's fancy, this is such a nice bottle, I need a break, everyone else is, whatever your excuses are. You're believing these excuses as if they are the truth.

They are not the truth, my friends. They are thoughts that fuel the habit. The reason they fuel the habit is because every time you have believed them, every time you have listened to them, your brain has learned that it

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will get the reward of dopamine. So now it believes hey, these are really good thoughts to think. Every time Rachel believes these thoughts, we're going to get rewarded. We should think them more often.

Now, you can't just stop thinking these thoughts and switch over to positive thinking. This is what a lot of people try to do and what people ask me about all the time. "Okay, just tell me how to stop thinking these thoughts. All right, just tell me how to have a more compelling reason." That's not what you need to do. You have to actually understand how these thoughts are perpetuating the habit.

This is why learning how to manage your mind is such a big component of what I teach. You have to master the self-coaching model. You have to be able to write it down. You cannot do it in your head. You have to be able to see how a thought like I deserve it doesn't just perpetuate the habit of drinking.

It perpetuates itself. The more you listen to it, the more you reward it, the more you will think it, the more you will believe it. The more you will teach your brain that what you deserve in life is just the reward of dopamine. So it's perpetuating the habit, and it's also perpetuating itself.

Now listen, you cannot understand this in your head. I promise you this because I tried to do this in my head for a really long time too. It made a lot of sense. I really took to the think-feel-act cycle. I really liked the idea that there was this logical way to understand my thoughts and my feelings and my actions, and I wanted to do it all mentally. I didn't want to write it out. I didn't have time to write it out. I didn't even want to look at it on a piece of paper because some of the things I was writing out, I felt kind of ashamed to be thinking or to be doing or to be feeling.

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You have to write it out. You have to get it on paper. I cannot tell you the number of people that I work with. I'll be coaching them, and I always know when they're not writing it out. I always know when they're trying to skip that step. They're telling themselves, "I can just do it in my head." You can't. You are wrong. You have to start to see not just that you have excuses, you have to see what they're creating for you. You can only see that when you get it down on paper.

The third reason why you're drinking too much, why you have this habit, is because you don't yet know how to actually learn from what happened last night because you don't even want to look at what happened last night. You're so quick to judge how much you drank as a sign that you're a screw up and something is wrong with you, and you're never going to figure it out that you just want to put blinders on and pretend like last night didn't happen.

But listen, there's no way to stop the habit and change it if you don't learn how to stop judging yourself and start understanding exactly what's going down in the moment. That's where all your information is. That's where every single step, every single piece of the pathway forward for change is in what happened last night, which I think is so crazy.

It literally is like you have your most valuable player, which is what happened last night, and you're like, you can sit this game out. Just stay on the bench. That's what we do all the time, and it never works. You have got to have your most valuable player in the game.

The reason why last night is so valuable is because it is telling you. It has all the information for how you were feeling, what you were thinking, what you were believing, the excuses you made, the justifications you made, what happened when the urge appeared. It has all that information. You're saying, "Hey MVP, just sit out of this game. I'm going to figure this out without you." It is never going to work.

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Learning from last night is the skill of learning how to look at your actions without judgment. If you can master that through the habit of drinking and changing the habit of drinking, oh my lord, you will master that in so many different ways in your life. Because it's not just last night and how much we drank that we don't want to look at. It's so many things. Think about how many things in your past you just wish like, can we just erase that? Can we just forget about it? Instead of seeing that it's an opportunity for growth.

I always say that learning how not to judge yourself isn't about being nicer to yourself. It's not about being more compassionate. I don't care if you do those things. Just for the sake of being nice, the sake of being more compassionate, who cares? You learn how not to judge what you did last night so that you can create change. Why did you want to drink? What thoughts did you believe? What excuses did you make? What happened when you tried to say no? What happened when you felt the urge?

Not judging what happened is so you can access all of this information. But you're not looking at what happened last night because you're so sure that it means that there's something wrong with you and you did something wrong.

Listen, if you drank too much last night or last weekend or last month or 10 years ago, I don't care when it happened. It means nothing about you as a person. I want you to see if you can open your brain up to this idea. It means nothing. Absolutely nothing.

This was one of the most challenging things that I had to work on. I believed that it meant everything about me. I didn't want it to mean something about me, but I was sure that it did. Listen, if you can drop the judgment, if you can see that your actions are simply a result of a thought and a feeling, that's it. It's not an indication of your character. It's not an indication of your brain. It's not an indication of your ability to succeed in the future. It's just a thought and feeling, and that's why you said yes.

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If you can drop that judgment, you will be able to change the habit. This really is the key. I know today is like a little bit of a rant episode from me, but I've been hearing this so much from so many people that I'm working with. These ideas that I can't figure this out because there's something wrong with me, or I'm not strong enough, or I'm not disciplined enough, or I just have an addictive personality, or I have all these addicts or alcoholics in my family, or I just lost the brain lottery.

This is what I've been hearing over and over again. It's so frustrating for me because I want you to just see that none of those reasons are correct. You just don't know how to allow an urge yet. You just don't know how to stop believing your excuses. You just don't know how to learn from last night.

Now, the best news is that these are skills that you can master. You don't have to be a better person. You don't have to make amends. You don't have to get forgiveness for wrongs or misdeeds because I want you to consider that it doesn't mean anything about you. I don't care how much you've had to drink. I don't care what you've done.

Whatever action you took, just because of a thought and a feeling. The only thing you need to learn how to do is to manage your mind. You can learn how to do this. I don't care how much you have been drinking. I don't care how long you've been drinking. I don't care what's happened in your past. You can learn how to change this habit because you have the most valuable tool on the planet. You have a human brain. It's just that no one has ever shown you how to use it.

That's what you can learn when you stop trying to beat yourself up and to shame yourself into change and start understanding that this skill is no different than learning how to ride a bike. Just got to get on the bike and start pedaling. That's it. All right everybody, that's it for today. I will see you next week.

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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 RachelHart.com/join and start your transformation today.