

## Ep #333: Take Forever Off the Table



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #333: Take Forever Off the Table

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, Episode 333.

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. I just had to shoo my puppy away, who has been hanging out in my office with me; she's adorable. She's actually not really a puppy, she's now one. We got her a couple of months before I gave birth to my second little boy. Which was crazy because I don't know why you get a puppy before you give birth. But my husband and I thought it was a good idea. Anyway, I was shooing her away, saying, "You know what, Violet? I've got to do this episode. I've got to record this episode."

What I want to talk to you about today is something that I've addressed a little bit on the podcast. I talk about it a lot inside the membership. I talk about it a lot with people, when they start doing the work with me, about changing their relationship with alcohol. And that is feeling like you have to decide what you're going to do for the rest of your life.

You have to decide, "I'm never ever going to drink again. I'm never going to have more than this amount." The idea that we have to make a lifelong decision is so ingrained. It's so ingrained in how people think about alcohol, and people think about the struggle with alcohol. That it's this very black or white thing. Either you're a normal drinker, or you're an alcoholic. If you're an alcoholic, the only solution, lifelong abstinence.

We have so much black-and-white thinking around alcohol and how people drink and what struggle looks like. And I will tell you this, I was at a cocktail party last week, maybe. I was meeting someone for the first time, and the

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #333: Take Forever Off the Table

hostess was introducing me to a friend, and she was explaining what I do and my work and helping people really examine their relationship with alcohol and make more intentional decisions.

And the person she was introducing me to was like, “I really need this. This sounds like something that I should probably do.” And so, we got to talking about it, just over a chit-chat. And one of the things that I was talking about with her is that there are so many different degrees of struggle. And there are so many different ways in which your relationship with alcohol can just feel a little off.

It can feel like, maybe on the outside, people wouldn't even think that there was an issue. I know for some of you listening, you're like, “No, no, that's not me.” But for others of you, you're like, “Yeah, I don't know that anyone external thinks that there's necessarily a problem. But there is a piece about my relationship, my desire, my urges, the way that I look forward to it, and the way that I feel like it's necessary. There's a piece that just doesn't feel right for me.”

I think one of the problems is we don't have space, we don't have conversation, we don't have room to talk about the idea that there are many degrees of struggle. It's not just a delineation between ‘I'm normal drinker, I have no problems. It's never an issue, full stop’ and ‘I'm a very problematic drinker. And it's interfering with my life. And if I don't drink, it actually makes me physically ill.’ There's a lot of shades of grey in between that.

And so, I was explaining this to this woman, and just that, I could just see this kind of like release inside of her that was like, “Oh, yeah, that makes so much sense.” I think what I saw happen was the same experience that I had.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #333: Take Forever Off the Table

This idea that you can have things feel a little off, you can want to change your relationship with alcohol, you can even drink too much sometimes. You can do things that you wake up the next day regretting. But that doesn't mean that you have to fall into this a binary 'I'm totally normal,' or 'I have this big problem.' It's okay to be in this kind of like, I don't know, mushy, squishy middle.

And part of what I think can get very confusing and difficult is because we don't have that broader conversation. The conversation so often that we have when people try to talk about it or try to approach, "Hey, this is where I'm at," they're met with, "Make a lifelong decision. Decide what you're going to do for the rest of your life. You must say no for the rest of your life."

That mandate, that it must be a lifelong decision, that mandate is so daunting, and so intimidating for so many people, that I think what ends up happening is that, then you do nothing. That's what I did for a long time because I was like, "I don't want to make a lifelong decision. That sounds awful. I don't want to decide what I'm going to be doing when I'm 80."

The prospect of making that decision for the rest of my life was something that for many reasons I had so much fear and trepidation about, that then I wasn't doing anything. And the fact of the matter is, I think that we should take this off the table. Not just because it's daunting, and it creates a lot of anxiety and fear for people. Not just because I see how it prevents people from taking action, or being in this place of confusion for so long. Like, "I don't know what I want to do, and what decision should I make."

I think we should take it off the table because it's just not how things work. It can work that way for some people. But that is not the only option. You can make a decision for this moment in your life, just right now. This is what I'm going to do today, this month. This is what I'm going to do this year.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #333: Take Forever Off the Table

You can make a short-term decision that can be enormously transformative and powerful.

And I think, for a long time I just didn't even realize that was an option. I didn't even realize that not only could I make a short-term decision, but I could also change my mind at a later point. I could decide something different in the future. And that didn't mean that I was doing something wrong, or I was failing, or I was somehow fooling myself.

I was actually teaching this inside *Take a Break* today. I'm really excited about this. We're spending the whole month of June really talking about habit change 101, and going back to the basics. And one of the things that I was teaching today, was okay, so how do we start responding to our excuses in a believable, in a believable way? "Believable" is really key.

How do we shift into a place of authority and not feel like our only response is no, you can't have it, or scare tactics? Because I think that that shift is incredibly important. If, whenever you say no to your desire or an urge, you're always feeling a little annoyed or angry or deprived or disempowered, or whatever it is. If it's always feeling negative, then how is change is going to last?

And so, figuring out how do we create, how do we teach the brain to start to respond to the excuses that we have? Because I've talked about this before on the podcast. I've talked about the "rolodex of excuses"; your brain will just like flip, flip, flip, flip, flip through, right? Like, "Let me find the excuse that she's going to buy." Right? "What is it going to be that she's finally going to say, okay? All right, I give in."

You don't need to be daunted by the rolodex of excuses, if you know how to respond back to them in a way that truly is transformative. In a way beyond scare tactics, and just say no, and telling yourself that you're not allowed to.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #333: Take Forever Off the Table

So, I was going through this workshop with members, and honestly, it was really fun. It was the first time that I had taught this. I was showing them, I think it was something like 16 different ways that you can start to respond to your urges differently.

I will tell you this, my life would have been so different if someone had shared techniques with me back when I was kind of in the thick of it and really struggling. And the only way that I knew how to say no was to use willpower or isolate, or just kind of suffer in the name of health.

So, I was sharing all these different ways. I was walking them through here's how you use it, here's how you can apply it, this is how it works, and this is why it works. This is how it's working with your brain. I think that's a really important piece to understand.

But one of those techniques was, just take *forever* off the table. Take it off the table, it doesn't need to be there. You don't need to decide what you're going to do for the rest of your life. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is just focus on right now, right this moment, today.

Because when you have excuses, when your lower brain is offering you a lot of, "Ugh, this is always going to be hard, and this is always going to suck and I'm always going to feel deprived and I'm always going to feel like something's wrong with me." When you're getting a lot of excuses that are kind of looking at the vast expanse of your future and it doesn't look good, it will feel incredibly daunting. It will feel incredibly depressing.

We understand how the think-feel-act cycle works. How we feel, our emotional experience, is directly connected to our decision of whether or not to drink. And so, one of the most powerful things you can do is just say, "Listen, what am I just doing right now? What am I doing tonight? What am I doing for the next couple hours?" Can you start to reframe? Can you start

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #333: Take Forever Off the Table

to narrow down your decision and make it much smaller, so that it's less daunting?

When you narrow your focus, it actually can be incredibly beneficial. “Listen, I just have to get through this happy hour. I just have to get through this baseball game. I'm just getting through tonight. I'm just going to get through this weekend. If I really want to, I can always say yes, tomorrow.”

I remember telling myself that a lot. That thought, which I think many people believe is very dangerous, to kind of be like, “Oh, gosh, we're playing with fire here.” It actually was really beneficial for me. Because in that moment, I was like, “Okay, so I am empowered to make a different choice. I'm not deciding what I'm doing for the rest of my life.”

And what would happen for me, when I would say, “Listen, Rachel, if you really want it, you can always drink tomorrow. You can always go grab a bottle of wine tomorrow. You can always make that decision tomorrow.” What would happen for me, I'd sort of feel a little bit less disempowered.

And the other benefit was that what I was going through, the deprivation and dealing with my urges and the excuses, when I got to the other side, I always had a little bit of evidence of, okay, maybe that was the most fun I've ever had. Maybe that was actually difficult. But it wasn't nearly the kind of horrible, terrible, awful situation that my brain, with its built-in negativity bias, which of course all of us have, it wasn't nearly as bad.

I proved that I could do it. I showed myself that, yes, indeed, I was able to say no to an urge. And narrowing your focus, understanding that you don't have to decide something for the rest of your life, sometimes that's literally all it takes to help you take a step forward. Sometimes it's just that freedom.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart



## Ep #333: Take Forever Off the Table

I remember someone telling me long ago, someone sharing with me that he had really struggled with his drinking. This was when I was kind of knee deep in it. That he had really struggled with his drinking, and that he took a period of time where he wasn't drinking. And he figured out some stuff. He figured out some things, some important things, about how he was using alcohol as a coping mechanism. And the ways that his brain had learned to associate what a drink represented. He had done that work.

And I remember him saying to me, "Yeah, now and again, I enjoy a beer," and it blew my mind. It blew my mind because I was like, I don't think we're like allowed to do that. I didn't think that was okay. And so, to have someone saying to me, "Yeah, this is what my journey was. And it didn't look like everybody else's journey. Doesn't look like the journey that we're told we're supposed to have. But this is what worked for me." That was incredibly, incredibly powerful.

It gave me this little motivation to say, "Okay, so maybe I'll take a break for a little bit. Because I do want to figure this out. And I don't like my relationship with alcohol. And yes, I understand that it is connected to other things in my life and my relationship with myself and my romantic relationships and my relationship with emotions. I want to take this discreet period of time off. I'm not saying that I'm going to give it up forever. I'm saying, I want to spend this time really doing the deeper work."

And for me, there was so much freedom in that. So, here's what I encourage for all of you today. What would happen if you just took "forever" off the table? What if you didn't have to decide what you were going to do for the rest of your life? What if you just focused on: Here is the challenge before me, today, in this moment?

"I'm feeling so stressed out and all I want is a drink. I have this urge that just feels like it's going on and on and on and it's never going away. I have friends coming into town." Whatever it is, what is the challenge before me?

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart



## Ep #333: Take Forever Off the Table

Right now, in this moment, can we just focus on that? Can we just focus on what you need to do to support yourself to make it through that?

Can you take “forever” off the table and ask yourself: What do I need to do to create success right now? It will feel way less daunting. Way more empowering to know that you don't have to make a decision for the rest of your life. So, I challenge you to do that. See what's possible.

And by the way, if you want the 15 other techniques that I have for how do you start talking back to your excuses, in a way that works with your brain, that works with the reward cycle, we're going to be talking about all this month inside *Take a Break*. So, I encourage you to come on over and check it out there.

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

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart