

Ep #336: How To Say "No" Tonight



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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 336.

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, everyone. We are talking about a topic today that I actually haven't discussed on the podcast before. But it is something that I help people with all the time when I start working with them. Because one of the main tools that I have people use is a 30-Day Challenge. A 30-day break from drinking, that actually looks quite different from what you might be familiar with when it comes to Dry January or Sober October.

Because it's really all about practicing tools. Tools to help you respond differently to your urges. Tools to help you talk back to your excuses. Also, tools to help you get back on track if you're not perfect, which the vast majority of people aren't. I think a lot of times what happens, is we go into a Dry January or Sober October with this idea of, "I just have to say no. I just have to make it through these 30 days."

There is a lot of benefit in doing that, but I think what ends up happening is there are so many people who attempt it, maybe they get three days or 12 days or 22 days, whatever, they get to some period of time, where actually they feel like they aren't able to continue. They give in. One of the downsides that I see is that there's really nothing there to help people.

Not only get back on track, but how do I learn from this? Because one of the things that I talk to people a lot, is this idea that sometimes what appears to be a setback, what appears to be a mistake, is actually a key to

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understanding the habit. It actually is a window into something that you don't yet have full awareness about.

And so, if you can start to shift and look at when we want to have a knee-jerk kind of response of, "Oh, this is a setback," into, "How could this be a stepping stone for me?" That really changes everything. But what I want to talk to you about today, the piece that comes up so much is, "How do I say no tonight? How do I do it tonight?"

I think there's a lot of misconception around this, as well. Because it's this kind of idea of, "Oh my god, you can't even say no for a night?" But that's actually not what I see people struggling with. What I see people struggling with is looking at their relationship with alcohol and knowing that they want it to be different, but honestly, not having a lot of very obvious, negative repercussions.

I'm not saying that with the kind of wink-wink, actually, there are a ton of negative repercussions. I'm truly talking about many people who are in this situation where they don't really notice a lot of effects to their physical health, or their mental wellbeing. They don't notice a lot of impact on their personal relationships, or anything that's happening during their day, their productivity.

But they still have this kind of inner sense that they want to change their relationship, they want to drink less. Maybe they want to stop drinking. But when you don't have those very obvious repercussions, then saying 'no' can feel tricky. Because of course, we all wake up in the morning with the best intentions, right?

And it's not just around drinking. We all wake up in the morning and it's like, "Today's going to be different. I'm going to eat right. I'm going to get all my steps in. I'm not going to be lost on my phone. I'm going to get everything done on my to-do list. And by the way, I'm also going to take a break from

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drinking tonight." I mean, that's how all of us wake up. We wake up with the best of intentions.

I think where people end up kind of stumbling here, is expecting that the best of intentions that they have in the morning are going to carry through to the evening. They're not. They're not going to carry through. Not because something's wrong with you. Not because you lack commitment.

Because when you wake up in the morning, and you have the best of intentions, you haven't gone through your day yet. You haven't had the emotional experience of your day yet. You've expended very little energy. And so, one of the things that I talk to people about, especially when they're really new to this work with me, is number one, you have to expect, no matter how you feel in the morning, you have to expect that you will not want to say 'no' tonight.

I think this is actually one of the places where people get stuck. Because they're like, "No, no, I really do want to say 'no'. Look at all these good reasons. I really do want tonight to be different." And it's like, I get it. And please prepare that you won't want to.

Doesn't mean anything about you. Doesn't mean something's wrong with you. It means that you're a normal human. You're going to go through your day, you're going to be tired, you're going to have had a lot of ups and downs with your emotions, and you're going to get to the end of the day and your resolve, it's just not going to be the same as it is in the morning.

That doesn't mean that something's wrong with you. It means that we have to prepare you for not wanting to say 'no' in the evening. And so, when you do that, when you think about it... Okay, yes, imagine you're starting your 30-day break today, and you wake up and you're really excited. You're all on board, and you're finally going to do this. You're very gung-ho. You have to, at the same time, also expect that you aren't going to want to do it.

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I think that that's where people get a little caught, because they don't want to acknowledge that part of them. It's like, "Yeah, no. I don't really feel like it." But if you expect that you're not going to want to say no, all of a sudden, you can start to have a different conversation with yourself and a conversation that will help you prepare for the evening.

To start to think about, why won't you want to say no? What are the reasons when the end of the day rolls around? Maybe it's when your workday ends and you walk through the door. Maybe it's that point where you're cooking dinner. Maybe it's when you finally get the kids to bed.

Why won't you want to say 'no'? Really think about that. Because your answer to that question is the thing that we need to prepare you for. How are you going to prepare in that moment for the fact that you're going to be tired, you will have had a lot of emotional ups and downs, you will be very low in energy? How are we going to prepare you for that moment?

That preparation, it's not just what are you going to say to yourself. What are the words that you're going to use to help you through in that moment? It's also, what is the willingness that you need to have? It's both words and willingness. What do I mean by this?

Well, words are kind of obvious. In that moment, when you're very low energy, when you're exhausted, when you've had all these emotional ups and downs, maybe the kids have been crazy tonight, maybe you had this unexpected project at work, maybe you're fighting with your partner, what are the words that are going to help you follow through in that moment? What do you need to say to yourself?

That's the more obvious part of it. The other piece is the willingness. You need a willingness to be disappointed. I know that when I say that it's like, "Oh my god, can we please skip over that step?" You can't. Because your brain is like, "Hey, this is what we do. This is our routine. We're going to

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have a drink. I get this reward. It's five o'clock, I'm cooking dinner, I've got the kids to bed," whatever the cue is for you, your lower brain has an expectation that a reward should be coming.

And so, not only do you have the words to help you through in this moment, do you have the willingness? The willingness to feel a little disappointed that you're not getting that reward that your lower brain is so used to? The willingness to feel a little annoyed? Maybe a little angry? Maybe a little restless? Maybe a little anxious? Do you have that willingness?

Again, a lot of times we don't prepare ourselves for this, because when we make the commitment, we make the commitment first thing in the morning. We make the commitment when we're full of energy. We have all of these good reasons on our side. We have this idea that these good reasons should just carry us through.

But are you willing to move towards a little bit of disappointment, or annoyance or restlessness or anxiety? Are you willing to move towards that? And if not, that's just a good thing to know. There's no way to change a habit, to change this neural pathway, without accepting that some form of disappointment or annoyance or anxiety or restlessness is going to come.

I know that that's a downer to hear me say that, but that's just how it works. Because your lower brain is expecting a reward. It wants that reward. Its whole job is to find rewards in your environment. It thinks one is coming, so of course, there's going to be a little negative emotion.

Now, here's the thing, it's the willingness to move towards that negative emotion, but also knowing that it will dissipate. It's not going to be there forever. So many times, I talk to people, and they talk about "witching hour." "I just have to get through this period." It's different for different people. Maybe it's five to seven, or six to eight. It's usually some sort of one- to two-hour window.

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If they can just get through that period, they see that whatever kind of anxiety or restlessness or disappointment, it really does fade. But you have to have both of these things. You have to have both the words that are going to help you get through. And you have to have the willingness.

The final thing that I want to add today, is really just considering maybe some of that restlessness, maybe some of that anxiety, that then you have to be willing to move towards, it's there, not just because you had a long day and a hectic day, a lot of turmoil and ups and downs, you got kids to get to bed and stuff going on with your partner, stuff's going on with work.

I want you to consider that anxiety, that restlessness, is there simply because of the habit. Simply because that lower brain really wants that reward. That's a big thing for a lot of people to start to shift their mindset. Because people will tell me, "I just don't want to feel anxious at the end of the day. I don't want to feel stressed out. I just want to have this release. I just want to be able to shut off my mind."

And most of the time, I would say the vast majority of the time, people attribute that anxiety and the restlessness to everything that has happened during their day. I do believe that part of that is what is happening. But I also think that a lot of the anxiety and restlessness is simply there because that lower brain is not getting the reward it expects.

And then, all of a sudden, you really do have a new way to kind of look at that end of the day, not saying yes to the reward, not getting the thing that your lower brain expects. It's like, "Oh, so maybe this anxiety and restlessness and annoyance and disappointment is here simply because of the habit."

Now, the good news, and there is good news with this, the good news is that your lower brain, yes, it wants to reward but guess what? It also wants

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to save energy. And so, it will start to pipe down when it becomes clear that that's not going to happen.

It doesn't want to waste energy on something that's not coming. And really understanding, that in order to get to this place where you have a different relationship with alcohol, you do have to go through a kind of a swamp, I guess is a way to say it. You have to go through this kind of uncomfortable period. There's no way around it.

But you can reframe it. You can think about it as, "This uncomfortable period that I'm going through, it's like the discomfort that I feel at the gym." If I went to the gym and I didn't have any sweat at the end of a workout, I would think I hadn't really gotten a good workout. Same is true here.

So, what I am moving towards is actually the thing that is helping me change the habit. It's actually the thing that's helping me create a new neural pathway. So please, for everyone out there, no matter if you're for the first time thinking about changing your relationship with alcohol. Maybe you've been thinking about it for years. Maybe you've been thinking about it for decades.

The work that you do to expect that you won't want to say 'no', to prepare yourself for that, to know that it's coming despite all the good reasons that you have. The work that you do to prepare yourself with words and willingness, and reframe that disappointment or anxiety or restlessness that comes up, that really is everything.

That's how you say 'no' tonight. Sometimes all you need to do is just focus on, what do I need to do tonight? We don't have to think about tomorrow or the weekend or the month. Let's just think of about what you need to do in order to say 'no', today.

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All right, 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 RachelHart.com/join and start your transformation today.