

Ep #338: Are You Sure You Don't Just Want One Drink?



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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 338.

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.

All right, welcome back, everybody. Today, we are going to dive into a question that keeps so many of you stuck. So many of you can really feel put on the spot when people ask you, "Are you sure you don't just want one drink?"

So, you already know the scenario. The scenario is, someone says, "Can I get you a drink?" You say, "No, thanks." Then, the dreaded follow-up question, "Are you sure you don't just want one?" This question used to drive me nuts. I was like, "Oh, my God, I already said no. Why are you making me say no, again?"

Of course, the question is not unique to alcohol. It happens a lot with food, too. Maybe you're turning down a dessert and someone's like, "Oh, are you sure you don't just want one piece? It's so good." But I think it's important to address, because we spend so much time fixating on why people shouldn't do this. Why people shouldn't ask a follow up question when we say no.

But the fact of the matter is, whether it's alcohol, or food or whatever, this is going to be something that happens to you. We can't wave a magic wand and make it go away. We can't control other people's behavior, but we can use it to our advantage. It doesn't have to throw you off. It doesn't have to be a question that makes you mad. It can actually be something that helps you change your relationship with alcohol, and understand the habit better.

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So, we're going to talk about why this can feel like an uncomfortable or awkward question. There really are four reasons that boil down to, first, temptation. Second, feeling like you need to maybe justify or defend your decision. Number three, feeling judged. And number four, feeling like you're deviating from a social norm.

I'm going to go into all of these today, and talk about how you can actually, in that moment, ask yourself a more powerful question to really get to the root of how the habit is working in your unique situation.

But I do want to add, because I work with people on this all the time, that when we start talking about how you are responding or reacting to a question, a lot of times people go immediately to this place of, "Oh my God, I know I'm being so silly. I'm too old to worry about what other people think or wanting to fit in."

As if your emotions are something that you should just grow out of. As if you can just have enough logic inside of you that you can avoid this experience. I'm going to tell you, and I'm also going to explain, it just doesn't work that way. So, do pay attention if you're kind of noticing that you're like, "Oh, God, yeah, but I'm not a teenager anymore. Why is this bothering me?"

Alright, so we're going to discuss each of these four reasons today, and how to use each situation to help you not only keep your commitment, but understand the habit and create a better relationship with alcohol. Again, so often we think that solution is just getting everybody to mind their own business. I remember thinking this.

I remember thinking, "God, it would be so much easier to say no, people in my life didn't give me a hard time. If people didn't insist on knowing why I

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didn't want to drink tonight." I'm going to tell you, that line of thinking is a decoy.

As soon as you go down that path, it is always a sign that you need to bring your attention inward. Trust me on this. You can easily end up fixating on all the external factors that are making change difficult. Making it hard for you to say no. What will happen, when you're focused on external factors, you will start to believe your unique situation is set up so that it is impossible for you to succeed.

I remember thinking this, and I hear people say all the time, "I could change. It would be easy for me to say no, but I come from this family of big drinkers. So, what we do when we get together, we just all drink a lot. This would be so much easier, but my closest friends they all drink. It's how we socialize."

Maybe you blame it on location, "I live in wine country. My city has a huge beer culture. The music scene and nightlife where I live, it all revolves around drinking." Listen, I get it. I had my own version of these thoughts. But there's simply no use, there's no benefit on focusing on why you can't change, why you can't succeed. Spending your mental energy there, is a dead end, always.

It's so much more valuable to figure out *why* this is a difficult question for you. *Why* you'd rather avoid it. Because if you have that information, you can leverage it to help you succeed. So, let's talk about the four reasons why this question, "Are you sure you don't want just one," can feel so uncomfortable?

Number one, temptation. The fact of the matter is, you might kind of actually want the drink. Right? So, maybe, before you were heading out, before you decided that you were going to say no, maybe you had a lot of

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back and forth, right? Like, should I drink? Should I not? What am I going to do?

Then, you get to that point where you're like, "Okay, listen, this is my plan. This is what I'm going to do." But when you get to that point, when you make a commitment, that doesn't mean that your desire immediately just poof, disappears. Part of you very likely still wants to say yes. Part of you still has the desire.

But what happens, is that we think because we've made a commitment that that part of us shouldn't be there, right? It's like, "Okay, listen, I decided I was going to say no. Someone asked if I wanted to drink, and I said no. I said no thanks. Now, I'm supposed to be home free. Then, here they come with the follow up question."

I think why this is frustrating, is because we are generally taught that the smart thing to do is just ignore your desire, push it down, pretend it's not there. When someone asks the follow-up question, "Are you sure you don't want just one," it forces you to engage with this thing that you wish, oh, God, why are you there? I don't want you to be there.

Then, you start to be in this place of, "I don't know, right? I'm not sure." It's almost like it triggers that back and forth that you didn't even want to be there. It starts to have you question your result. Now, yeah, we can have a whole conversation, it'd be so much easier. It'd be so much easier if they just didn't have that follow-up question. If you just accepted no, the first time I said no to a drink. But friends, I promise, this really can be a good thing.

Because maybe their follow-up question can help you dig a little deeper into why you have all the back and forth. You can start asking yourself, why am I on the fence? Why am I wavering, right now? What have I told myself

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will be harder without the drink? Maybe you think, "I don't know. I'm just going to have less fun. This event won't be as special. It's going to be harder for me to make conversation. It's going to be harder for me to feel at ease."

Whatever your answer is, your answer is important. Because your answer points you in the direction of what your brain has learned to associate alcohol with. If you ignore this piece of the puzzle, it will be impossible for you to change your relationship with alcohol long term.

Because what you will do is you'll just fixate on saying, "No. I just need to say no. I just need to have more willpower." You'll put all your energy there, instead of teaching your brain, "Listen, I know we practiced the way to deal with jitters in social situations was to have a drink. But now, we're going to practice something else."

I mean, whatever that is for you, instead of just being in this place of saying no, you can actually move and shift into this place of teaching your brain something new. You can use temptation to your advantage by simply asking the question of yourself, why am I on the fence? That answer will reveal so much.

The second reason this question can suck, is when it feels like you just need to justify or defend your decision. Right? Because now it's like, "Ugh, I've got to explain why I'm not drinking tonight." Now, here's the thing. Of course, you don't have to. You can just say, "No, thanks," again. But in these moments, it's almost like we miss that that's an option. I know that I did, right? The idea that I could just be like, "No, I'm good," it was like, "Oh God, no. I've got to justify; I've got to explain my decision."

Now, there are lots of reasons why sometimes you might feel like you need to defend or justify a decision, but the one that I see come up most often

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with people that I work with, is simply that you're so used to saying yes, based on making someone else happy. So, think about it. It's this idea that it's impolite not to accept what has been offered to you.

I remember learning this lesson when I was a kid. I think I've talked about this on the podcast before, but I remember going to a great aunt's house. She had made baked ham for everyone to eat. I do not like ham. I don't like baked ham. I was a little kid, and I was just like, "No, I don't like it. No, thanks." I told her I didn't want any.

Oh, my God, I remember really getting an earful from my mother on the way home. She was like, "Rachel, when you are a guest in someone's house, you do not have preferences. You accept whatever they are serving. It is rude to say no." Suddenly, I learned, at a very young age, that I should be making decisions not simply based on what I wanted, but what was going to make someone else happy. Saying yes, it's the polite thing to do.

Now, listen, I'm not saying that's what always is going on when you feel the need to justify or defend your decision. But in my experience, this comes up a lot for people. Again, it's true of alcohol. It can be true of food, too. It can be true for lots of things. We have been socialized, for years and years, if not decades, that the polite thing to do is to accept what someone offers us.

So, then the question you can ask in this situation is, who am I trying to make comfortable or happy here? Am I trying to make the person offering me the drink comfortable and happy? Maybe because you're like, "I don't know. I mean, if they planned on opening this special bottle of wine, and now they're going to be disappointed if I'm not having any."

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Are you, maybe, trying to make them comfortable, because you're worried that they won't want to drink alone? I remember this happening to me. I hear people tell me this a lot, when people in their life will say, "I wouldn't have opened the bottle, if I knew you weren't going to have some. There's no point in me getting a drink if you're not going to have a drink, too."

I mean, this really is real. But instead of trying to get rid of other people and what they say, instead of trying to constantly focus on having them just fully on board with our decisions, I just want you to get curious. Am I thinking, right now, about what they want, or what I want? That question can be so powerful for you to consider. Whose comfort am I prioritizing right now, and why?

The third reason that this question can be uncomfortable, is feeling like you will be judged for saying no. Very likely, you have a lot of drama tied up in what you think it means about you if you're not drinking or if you say no. What are they going to think about me? I will tell you; it usually boils down to, "Maybe they'll think I have a problem," especially for those of you...

Maybe you're like, "Yeah, everybody in this situation knows me as someone who drinks, and drinks with gusto." Right? "So, if I say no, they're going to be like, 'What's going on? Why are you suddenly saying no?'" But what I'm always teaching people is that whatever your fears are, about how someone else might judge you based on your decisions around alcohol, it is always, always, always how you're already judging yourself. You are just projecting your own negative thoughts and fears onto that other person.

Maybe that negative thought or fear is, "Maybe they'll think I have a problem. Maybe they'll think I'm not fun." Listen, you're only worried about this because you already have these thoughts yourself. You may already be thinking to yourself, "I don't know, I'm just one of those people. Once I

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start, I can't stop. One always leads to more. I'm just someone that's missing an off switch. I have an addictive personality.”

I guarantee those thoughts don't feel very good. I guarantee they're probably creating a lot of shame for you. Or you might have thoughts like, “I'm just not as fun. I'm not as outgoing. I'm not as social without a drink.” Again, I guarantee those thoughts are not creating a lot of positive emotion.

So, what you end up doing is you have, perhaps, unconscious thoughts and fears about what it means about you, and unknowingly you're inserting them into the situation. But I will tell you this; weirdly, it's kind of a good thing. Because what it does, is it shines a light on these thought patterns that are already there. There's no use pretending that they're not there.

Then, the question to ask is, okay, when this question feels uncomfortable, what do I think saying no means about me? Do you think it means, clearly, there's something wrong with me. Right? The only reason I'm saying no is because I've proved over and over again that I don't know when to call it quits.

Do you think it means, I'm just not as fun, I'm not as enjoyable to be around without a drink? I will tell you, whatever your version of this answer is, it all needs to be cleaned up if you want to change your relationship with alcohol long term. Not only that, you're not drinking too much because something is wrong with you. You're drinking too much because your brain learned that the urge for more is always answered.

So, you're in this predicament of either you're obeying the urge, or you're going to war with them; neither of these works. You need another alternative. You need to learn how to say no to that urge, peacefully. Which, by the way, is a skill. It's a skill that you have to practice. It's not something that you just magically discovered one day.

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If you're thinking, "I'm just not as fun," it's not because deep down you're truly an unfun person. It's because your brain learned to associate that when these negative emotions come up that get in the way of having fun. So, whether it's anxiety or insecurity or whatever, your brain learned that the way to deal with them was by drinking over the emotion. Which, of course, does not actually deal with them in the long term.

It actually does the opposite. It makes you feel less capable of handling them on your own. So, instead of feeling a little anxious or a little insecure in a social situation, and normalizing that, and then also just noticing that that will subside on its own, what we end up doing is drinking over it.

Then, believing incorrectly that the drink is unnecessary for you to be fun. When truly, it's not. So, the question to ask yourself here is really simple. What am I making it mean about me when I say no to a drink? Your answer is so crucial.

Okay, and then finally, reason number four is the belief that you are somehow deviating from a social norm. Again, this is what I hear people say. When this comes up, people immediately want to jump to, "I'm too old for this. I'm too old to care what other people think." My answer is always, "Oh, really?" Because the need for belonging is not just a nice to have thing. It was an evolutionary advantage to be accepted as part of a group. When you're part of a community, when you're part of a group of people, it is easier to survive.

In a group, it's easier to share your resources, to have food and shelter and clean water. In a group, it's easier to protect yourself from danger because there's more of you. So, the idea that you can just logic your way out of the desire to belong and be accepted, it doesn't work like that.

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But here's the thing, you can question the thoughts that you have about drinking. Thoughts like, "Everyone drinks. Everyone loves to drink. It's weird not to drink. Only Mormons and super religious people or alcoholics, they're the only people who don't drink."

I will tell you; I had some version of these thoughts forever. I spent so much time accepting that these thoughts were true. I kind of treated them like they were data points. I went years and years before I even attempted questioning them. Before I even started to say, "Well, maybe not everyone drinks, and not because they're very religious or an alcoholic. Some people actually don't really like the taste, or they don't like feeling buzzed or intoxicated."

Some people would actually rather not drink, but they simply say yes, because they feel like it's expected of them. Not only that, I think it's important just to realize when we treat it like it's a social norm, that social norms are always changing. They're so much more fluid than we think.

But more importantly, these thoughts prevent you from seeing all the ways you do belong, regardless of what you're drinking. So, I like to remind myself that my brain has so much more practice, over the years, pointing out how I don't belong. What separates me from others. What makes me different. That practice started well before alcohol ever entered my life.

So, I really, with all that practice, that kind of ingrained neural pathway, I really have to ask my brain to go to work and say, "What do I have in common? What are all the ways that I'm actually very similar and connected to these people, rather than how I'm different?"

Your question is simply, okay, how do I belong? Rather than, how am I outside the group? You really can start asking yourself, how am I part of

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this group? Rather than, how am I separate from it? What do we have in common? Rather than, how am I different?

Honestly, that question is so powerful in so many instances that have nothing to do with alcohol. But I really hope if you're taking one thing away from this episode, it's that this question that you might think, "I just want to avoid. I just don't want anyone to kind of ever ask a follow-up question like, 'Are you sure you don't want to have just one?'"

I hope you take away that instead of it being an obstacle to change, or an obstacle to commitment, that question can actually be a stepping stone for you. Because you can use it to understand yourself and the habit, and all of these thought patterns that are ingrained. You can use it to really understand your relationship with alcohol on a deeper level.

So, just to quickly recap, those four questions are: Why am I on the fence? Whose comfort am I prioritizing, and why? What am I making it mean about me when I say no to a drink? How am I part of this group? Rather than, how am I separate from it.

Just try answering one of those the next time that you're faced with that question. Or you can try answering them right now. You can try to envision a moment when this has happened to you in the past, and see which question will reveal something to you.

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.

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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.