

Ep #350: The Goal of Enjoying a 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 350.

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. So, today, we're going to do something a little bit different. I'm going to share a story that came in from a podcast listener. People will write in all the time with their questions and a lot of success stories, and I want to share one that my team forwarded to me recently.

It's also just so wild to me that I've had this podcast, I guess, since 2017. People can read my book and listen to the podcast, and I never meet them. I never meet them. Then they can have this incredible, incredible transformation. It really is so amazing for me, personally. But it's just also, I think, a testament to the power of this approach and this work.

So, the person who wrote in, this is someone who is drinking, they said, about one to two bottles of wine, four to five times a week. In the last two months, she's had six drinks, six. Each time she drank, she had one drink and enjoyed it, and then stopped. Not only that, found it easy to stop.

Imagine that. Imagine going from one to two bottles to a single drink and finding it easy to say, "No more. I've had enough." This person, just so we're clear, they're still living their life, right? She's traveling for work, she's going on vacation, she's on an airplane, she's going to happy hours at conferences, she's seeing friends. She's not become like a hermit in the woods.

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There's one part of what she wrote, one part of her story, that I really wanted to share with all of you. Because if you really pay attention, I'm going to unpack this a little bit more, it really shows this work in process.

So, she wrote, "Work travel involves drinking on the company's dime, or at conference receptions where the drinks are free. I traveled for work recently and was shocked and happily surprised when I got through the conference without needing or wanting to booze it up."

"I even went to an event held at a club and was by myself for about an hour before my colleague showed up. Normally, as an introvert, I would have had at least two drinks to feel more comfortable. But this time, I just stood in my discomfort and questioned it."

"It wasn't the most pleasant experience. But it allowed me to question why I thought I was some kind of loser for being there by myself. I was able to sort through my thoughts within the first 10 to 15 minutes, and was fine afterwards."

Now listen, as someone who used to travel a lot for work, I've talked about this on the podcast before. I would travel overseas. There was a period of time when it was like once a month. I was spending a lot of time in hotel rooms, in airplanes, going to conferences. I really understand this. Welcome receptions at conferences were like the seventh level of hell.

I had so much anxiety. I had so much anxiety about travel. I had anxiety about work and the presentations that I was doing. I had anxiety about going to all these dinners and these events and meeting new people. I was just like a little ball of anxiety traveling around the world.

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My way of coping with anxiety was by trying to drink over it. But of course, one led to two, two led to three, and there were more than a few work receptions that I have very hazy memories about.

So, the question is, how did this person do it? How did she totally, radically, shift her relationship with alcohol? I'm going to tell you this, she did it by coming up with a goal that was about enjoyment. She writes all about this in the email that she sent to us.

Her goal wasn't a number. It wasn't about counting drinks. It wasn't about becoming a superb rule follower. I remember thinking that so much. Like, I just need to become this really disciplined person. I just need to become really good at following rules. Which, you know, even as I say it, it just doesn't sound very fun. That's what I believed for the longest time.

No, her goal was simply, if I'm going to drink I'm going to enjoy the drink. That was not her goal before. She realized her unconscious goal before was, 'let's get buzzed, let's get drunk, let's numb how I feel, let's drink until I feel confident, let's drink as a form of entertainment.' That was actually her unconscious goal.

I think what makes this approach that I'm teaching for all of you different, is acknowledging that enjoyment and pleasure are a totally legitimate goal to have. Acknowledging that drinking can be a form of pleasure, it can be a form of enjoyment. And, that's not bad. I'm not trying to convince you that you really shouldn't drink, it's really bad for you.

I don't personally have a goal that everyone out there should stop drinking, everyone should just abstain, that we'd all be better off. No, my goal is for everyone listening is to say, "Hey, let's empower you to figure out what works for you, what feels good for you." Because you know what doesn't feel good, right? That's why you're here. That's why you're listening.

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You know it doesn't feel good when you're drinking way too much. When you feel like you're on autopilot. When you feel like you wake up in the morning, and you have all this resolve, and today is going to be different. Today, I'm not going to drink at the end of the day.

Then, you give in. It doesn't feel good to feel like you can't control yourself. That once you start, you can't stop. Also, it really doesn't feel good when it just doesn't make sense. When it feels like your behaviors, your actions, are illogical. But I promise you that they aren't.

Alcohol can be a form of pleasure. It has been a form of pleasure for thousands of years. You can enjoy drinking, but here's the thing, not if you feel compelled to drink. When you feel compelled to drink, the experience of drinking is neither pleasurable nor enjoyable.

I really want you to hear that. A lot of people will say, "Well, I don't have to drink. I just really like to." I had this mindset. For a long time, I would say this to myself, over and over again. What I meant by that, when I would say, "Well, I don't have to drink, I just really like drinking." What I meant by that was, I'm not addicted, my body doesn't need alcohol. I'm not getting sick without it.

You know what? All of that was true. But I did feel compelled to drink even though, certainly back then, I would not want to admit that. By "compelled" I mean that I thought the drink was necessary in order to feel good, in order to have a good time. It was necessary for my emotional experience. It was necessary to have fun, to open up, to relax, to feel adult, to stop caring what people thought. It was necessary to feel confident.

It was necessary to feel connected to who I was with, to feel part of the group, to dance, to make things more special, more fancy, more celebratory. It definitely felt necessary for all of those things.

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And sure, back then I could say no. I could totally suffer through a terrible day or a terrible week at work and then not drink when I got home. I could suffer through dry weddings. I remember doing this and wondering the whole time, why on earth would you even bother getting married if you're not serving alcohol? Right?

I could suffer through that. I could suffer through a work conference sipping on a seltzer. But things didn't feel good to me. I wasn't having a good time; I wasn't enjoying myself. There was no physical necessity to drink, but there sure as hell was an emotional necessity.

Which is why I'm always going on and on and on about emotions. If you want lasting change, which is what I think everyone wants, right? We just want to figure this out and be done with it. I don't want to spend all this time ping pong back and forth, right? I just want to figure it out and move on with my life.

If you want that, if you want that lasting change when it comes to your relationship with alcohol, it is simply never, ever going to be enough to just feel healthy when you say no. That was what I relied on for the longest time. It also was the pinnacle of what I thought was possible. Right? “Well, I can feel really healthy.”

I tried, for the longest time, saying no to my desire, saying no to my urges, by having this kind of smug satisfaction like, “Hey, I'm not poisoning my liver. Hey, I'm not slurring my words and acting like a fool.” But the problem was, I wasn't having a very good time.

If, when you say no, you feel healthy, but you're not enjoying yourself as much, things just feel kind of meh. If you still have this feeling, like drinking and alcohol could unlock something inside of you that is otherwise inaccessible, then I promise you, saying no is going to always leave you feeling like you're missing out. Always. That's not what I want for you.

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That doesn't have to be your life. You don't have to be in that situation. This is why the think-feel-act cycle that I talk about matters so much. This is why your emotions and your thoughts matter so much. Not only so we can understand the habit. Not only so we can kind of use that think, feel, act to diagram, "Hey, why exactly is this happening?"

But so that we can use it to enjoy ourselves more. So, we can figure out, hey, what's really going on right now? Why is it hard for me to feel connected? Why is it hard for me right now to relax? What's happening inside my brain?

Looking at your thoughts and your emotions, this is exactly what this person did. She didn't suffer through a work conference, gritting her teeth in order not to drink, she acknowledged her discomfort. Then, she got curious about it.

I'm always talking about curiosity. She acknowledged her discomfort, she got curious, and she found the thought creating it. This idea that being there by herself made her some sort of loser. Then she found that thought and she questioned it. "Maybe it's not true? Maybe this is a thought error on the part of my brain."

By doing this, instead of immediately racing to the open bar to feel less anxious; that's what I would have done for the longest time. If the open bar hadn't opened up, I would be like, "Okay, well, there's got to be a food platter somewhere."

But I feel like I used to be the person, at these conference receptions with the swinging doors, where the waiters would come out holding the trays of food and drink... I was the person positioned by the door. I was like, "I just need the thing. What is the thing that I'm going to be able to consume that's going to make me feel better?"

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So, she didn't immediately race to an open bar in order to feel less anxious. She watched her discomfort pass, and with it, her desire to drink. Because she got curious. Because she acknowledged her emotional state. She found the thought creating it. She started to question it.

That's really as simple as this work is. That's the beauty of it. Anyone can do it; you all have the ability to do this. That's the key. The key is not, "Okay. Let me just figure out how do I say no. How do I grit my teeth? How do I make it through?" No, the key is going inside. Looking at, hey, what's my experience right now?

Here's the thing, you're not going to feel compelled to drink when you know that alcohol isn't necessary to feel better. When it's not necessary to have a good time. When it's not necessary to make things fun, or special, or romantic, or relaxed, or whatever it is.

When you don't feel compelled, when you truly can take it or leave it... and a lot of people get confused by this. They'll take it or leave it, but truly it's like, "Yeah, okay, it's just not a big deal if it's there. And not a big deal if it isn't there."

When it's not necessary to have a good time, then it's a lot easier to actually enjoy what you're drinking and take pleasure from the alcohol, if that's what you want. Some of you will want to do this. Some of you will be surprised, after doing this work, that you won't want to. That you won't be kind of focused on enjoyment and pleasure from drinking. That's okay, too.

But the point is to be able to make the decision from a place of freedom. From a place where your brain no longer has all this chatter about drinking. "Should I or shouldn't I? How much? How come? Why is it so hard for me?"

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That's what this approach offers. You have to be curious. You have to be willing to look just beyond what's inside your glass, and get curious about what's happening inside of you.

Understanding, “You know what? Right now, I do feel kind of compelled. I might not want to admit it. But I do feel kind of compelled. I do think that it's necessary in order to relax at the end of the day, in order to find what I'm doing or who I'm with more entertaining. In order to have a good time, in order to feel more connected, in order to feel more adult.”

Whatever it is, just that acknowledgement, “Yeah, you know what? I think that's going on for me,” that can start to shift everything for you. All right. So first, thank you to the person who sent in their story. I love getting them. I love it when my team forwards these stories to me. We do get so many.

I'm going to say, she had a question about urges, which I'm going to tackle in our next episode. So, we're going to be talking about that. But just know, if you're in a place right now where it feels like, “Yeah, okay, I don't have to drink, I can say no,” and you're trying to kind of push through with the solace of, oh, I'm being so healthy. Just know that there is something waiting for you on the other side.

That it's not about just suffering and being healthy. That you actually can have more pleasure. More pleasure in your life, more enjoyment in your life. And, if you want to, you can take more pleasure and enjoyment from your drinking instead of being on autopilot.

Alright, that's it for today. I will see you all 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 and start your transformation today.