

Ep #351: Mastering Your Urges



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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

Ep #351: Mastering Your Urges

You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, Episode 351.

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.

Alright, everybody, welcome back. So, last week, I shared a story from one of my listeners all about the difference between having a goal when it comes to your relationship with alcohol that's kind of centralized around a number versus a goal connected to enjoyment.

If you haven't listened to that episode, go back and listen, because I really think understanding the difference here, between focusing on a number versus focusing on enjoyment, is so key. The listener who wrote in she also had a question, and I promised that I would address it in an episode.

This is what she wrote, "How can I learn to deal with urges when I'm not having them? I'm nervous about what I will do when I finally get an urge that's hard to scratch." And so, this is what we're going to be talking about today. Not only what to do when you're like, "Well, I'm not having a lot of urges to drink," but also kind of that fear around that urge that's just very hard to say no to.

I want to start off by saying that I think one of the big mistakes that we make across the board is that we assume that the urge to drink is unlike any of our other urges. We do this, we make this assumption, because we're like, "Well, it's different. It's alcohol, right? Alcohol, intoxicates you. It's different."

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

Ep #351: Mastering Your Urges

My approach, everything that I'm teaching you guys, is really to stop putting alcohol and the desire to drink in this kind of separate category. Stop siloing it and treating it as if it is totally separate and totally different and unique from all our other urges, it's not.

When you start to understand this, it can be incredibly, incredibly powerful. Not only for the work that you're doing to change your relationship with alcohol, but the work that you're doing just in life, and trying to live a life where you're not kind of being led and dominated by your lower brain.

We talk a lot about the different parts of the brain, the higher brain and the lower brain. Your lower brain, it wants rewards, right? Its goal is simply let me avoid pain, find pleasure, and do it as easily as possible. That's the place where the habit resides. That's really what's driving the habit.

The thing is, that desire for pleasure to feel good, that can come in many shapes or forms. Yeah, alcohol and drugs, they can be a reward, but so can coffee and sugar and refined flour. And so too, can putting a bunch of stuff in your Amazon shopping cart and buying it. Sex can be a reward. Likes and hearts and comments on social media can be rewards.

You can have urges for all of these things. You can have the desire for more wine and more drugs and more sex and more food and more stuff and more likes, which means that you can have urges for all of these things. Right? That urge is simply the desire to like, go do the thing, go get the thing, go get the wine, or the drugs, or the sex or the food or the stuff. Go pick up your phone and check to see, 'hey, did anybody like this?'

But we treat alcohol like it's different. What we do is we limit our ability to practice with all of our urges, right? Because we're sitting there, kind of like waiting around being, 'okay, when am I going to have the urge to drink?'

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

Ep #351: Mastering Your Urges

Some of the people that I work with, some people, when they start out working with me, they've got urges every day, right? Other people will go many days, sometimes weeks at a time, without experiencing an urge to drink.

Again, we have this tendency to kind of think, "Oh, well, the person with lots of urges to drink every day, that person has more of a problem and the person with fewer urges." No, that's not the case people. The urges that we have and when we have them are simply a reflection of the habit. There's simply a reflection of the cues that your brain has learned to associate with alcohol.

So, listen, if your routine is pouring a glass of wine every night when you're cooking dinner, then guess what? You're more likely to have urges every night when you're cooking dinner. If you are someone who tends to save up your drinking for the weekends, then guess what? You're more likely to go Monday through Thursday without a lot of urges.

One is not better or worse than the other. It's simply that underneath the habit looks different. But the thing really is, that none of this matters, because humans have urges to go do things all the time, right? You had urges for rewards before you ever started drinking.

So, to go back to that question of, how can I learn how to deal with urges when I'm not having them? Well, you can use the tools that I teach. You can name the urge and notice what it's like in your body and practice allowing it. Practice opening up to it and being curious about it rather than kind of fighting it off or restricting it, or distracting yourself.

You can practice that with all of your urges. I always tell people inside the membership, when they're watching a coaching call, we'll just practice giving this call your full attention. It's hard, right? It's hard to sit there and

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

Ep #351: Mastering Your Urges

give something your full attention. Because what do we want to do? We want to multitask. We want to check our phone and open other screens.

But with those urges, you can practice naming and noticing and allowing. You guys can do the same thing when you're listening to this episode. Right? How many other things do you want to be doing? Anything in my inbox, right? Anything happened in the news?

We have this tendency to think that, oh, that doesn't count, right? Like working with the urge to pick up my phone or the urge to multitask, that isn't going to help me with my drinking. That's totally wrong. It most definitely will help you.

Because, honestly, the more attention that you pay to all of your urges, the more that you're going to see, not only how surrounded we are by rewards in our environment, but how much the lower brain wants to dominate.

So often, I think all the time, we'll see all these articles about how technology is ruining us. There are all these screens and too many distractions, and we're losing our ability to focus. I'm kind of like, well, what if we flip that on its head?

What if we thought about, oh, I now have so much opportunity to practice, I have so much opportunity to teach my brain that the lower brain is not in charge. I have so much opportunity to get stronger with my ability to name notice and allow. I have so much opportunity to practice being with more subtle urges, to tune into my body more, to notice what's happening.

To understand, hey, how am I actually feeling? A question, which frankly, most of us never really pay attention to unless how we're feeling is kind of huge, right? It's kind of like off the Richter scale.

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

Ep #351: Mastering Your Urges

The abundance of rewards in our environment, it can be amazing. It can really help you harness what's happening inside of you. To me, I like approaching all of my urges from this place of, it's always trying to tell me something. It's always trying to give me information.

It's not this kind of buzzing gnat that I'm trying to swat away. It's not this annoyance, it's insight. It's a little window into, 'Hey, what's going on inside of you, Rachel? My physical state, my emotional state, what I'm thinking, how I'm feeling, and what I'm truly desiring, it's all there in my urges.

Now, the second part of the question was, "I'm nervous about what I will do when I finally get an urge that's hard to scratch." Again, I think the moment that you realize you're surrounded by urges, you realize, okay, I don't have to wait to be on the lookout for that one urge that's going to be really hard to scratch. Or I'm going to be really tempted to give in and grab the bottle. Because I can practice all the time.

But I think this idea of something being an urge that's hard to scratch, it's important to kind of break it out and look at it. The moment when you really, really want a drink, or really, really think that you need the drink, or you're finding it hard to say no, that moment, one of the things that you can do is kind of remind yourself that saying no is easy.

It literally requires that you do nothing. You don't get up and move your arm, you just do nothing. The drink is not there inching towards you, right? You don't need to back away from it.

But it feels hard in that moment when you're doing nothing because of how you feel. The urge isn't hard. It's not hard to say no. What's hard is how you feel. You're not used to managing how you feel in that moment on your own. Right? We're just used to no, no, we say yes to the urge. We're used to drink to solve how we feel.

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

Ep #351: Mastering Your Urges

Half the time, we have no idea how we're even feeling. We don't even realize we're trying to solve something, because we don't even know what's happening on the inside. It seems hard to say no, right? That urge where you're like, oh, it's the one that's going to be that's hard to scratch.

What's hard about it is only how you're feeling in that moment when you're doing nothing. Again, I ask people all the time, “Hey, how are you feeling? How are you feeling in the moment before the urge appeared? If we can go back and dissect what was going on and analyze that moment before the urge showed up, what was going on?”

I usually get a blank stare. I used to give that same blank stare, by the way. I was like, “What are you talking about? I have no idea. I don't know. I just want the drink.”

And then it's like, “What about that moment after the urge has appeared and you're doing nothing, how are you feeling in that moment? What's happening for you?” Again, same thing, I just want to revert to this place of, “I don't know, it's just horrible.”

But what's actually happening on the inside? What happens when we let go of this knee jerk, ‘I just want the drink. I just want to say yes.’ What's actually happening in the moment, when there's an urge and your experience is, ‘this is one that's hard to scratch?’

What's happening, is you're having a hard time managing how you feel. That's what's happening. And when you just turn that conversation around, instead of, “Oh, I really want to drink right now. I really need it,” and ask yourself, “What's going on for me? How am I really?” That's a conversation that's missing.

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

Ep #351: Mastering Your Urges

If you can have that conversation with yourself in that moment and not be freaked out by the answer, not be freaked out, like, “Oh my God, I'm going to start having fun, right? I'm anxious, I'm feeling awkward or upset or scared or overwhelmed, or angry or lonely or bored or whatever.”

If you can have that conversation with yourself and not be freaked out by the answer, whatever your answer is, then you know you have everything you need to feel the urge and allow it and let it pass. Because what you have then, is emotional resilience. That's the key.

So often, we want to treat the habit like it's all just kind of a numbers game of saying no. Like, “Did I just say no? Did I say no? How many times did I say no?” No, really unwinding the habit is about developing the muscle of emotional resilience to receive any answer to, “Hey, what's actually happening for you right now?” And to know that, “Yeah, I got this. I'm not freaked out by what that answer is.”

When you have emotional resilience, there's never going to be an urge that's hard to scratch. Because you know that you can handle whatever is going on. Imagine how your life would change if you had that knowledge? Which, by the way, everyone can develop. I don't care how old you are. I don't care how long you have just been running away from how you feel, and trying to cover up how you feel. You can develop it.

I didn't have emotional resilience. It's a muscle that all of us can learn to build and develop. But imagine how different your life would be with that knowledge, “I can handle it. Whatever's happening, I got it. When I feel that urge and it's strong, I can always find out what's going on inside of me. When I get that answer of what's actually happening, I have the tools and the wherewithal to see myself through.”

So, think about this piece today, how your life would change? How you approach your work to change your relationship with alcohol? To

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

Ep #351: Mastering Your Urges

understand, “Oh, what if I'm really developing resilience for whatever is underneath the urge?” Think about all the urges you could be practicing with in your life around food, around shopping, around your phone; all of them. Get curious about your own hard to scratch moments and why it feels like it's hard to scratch. “What's really happening for me?”

Alright, 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.

[Take a Break from Drinking](https://RachelHart.com/join) with Rachel Hart