

Ep #359: The Upgrade Archetype



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Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, Episode 359.

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, everybody. Welcome back. I am so excited for today's episode. Last week on the podcast, I introduced a totally new concept called The Drink Archetypes. I'm so excited about it. So, the drink archetypes are eight unconscious patterns that influence why you drink and why you reach for another. They're so important for you to understand if you want to change the habit.

So today, we're going to do a deep dive into one of the archetypes called The Upgrade. Now, just as a reminder, it's so important that you understand the drink archetypes that influence you. Because I will tell you this, it does not matter how motivated you are to change or how many good reasons you have to cut back or to stop drinking.

It is going to be very challenging for you to resist temptation or for you to keep your commitment, if you're trying to do this work without this information. You really need to understand what's happening beneath the surface of the habit, and that's where the drink archetypes come in. You need to know which ones influence your own drinking.

And, this piece is really important, once you know which ones are influencing your drinking, you need to know well, how do I work with it? Otherwise, your attempts at change are just going to be like burning through a lot of willpower or gritting your teeth or trying to avoid temptation, and feeling like things are really hit or miss, which is super frustrating.

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So, that's why so many people end up in the place of, "Ugh, God, why is this so hard for me?" But the only reason why you're frustrated is because you're lacking this information. You don't have the information yet on the drink archetypes. It really will transform everything for you.

If you haven't yet taken the quiz that I created, please go do that. You can take the quiz at FindYourDrinkType.com, it's totally free. You will get a full breakdown of how all eight archetypes apply to you.

With that said, let's talk about The Upgrade. I love that name, The Upgrade. You can probably imagine what it's about. The Upgrade is all about using alcohol to elevate your experience. To make things more special. To appreciate the finer things in life.

The Upgrade archetype is a very common theme that runs through a lot of people's drinking. And remember, the archetypes don't just apply to problematic drinking, they are patterns that show up regardless of how much or how often you drink. The Upgrade, it really does show up a lot.

You can kind of think of it as just like trying to seek out the best possible experience. Trying to make things as special as possible. So, perhaps, "Dinner is great, but wouldn't a nice bottle of wine make it better?" Or, "This get together's really fun, but a drink that would make it more festive." Or, I hear this one a lot, people sitting on the porch watching a sunset, and it's like, "It's lovely. But oh, with a drink in your hand, even better."

I mean, these are all examples of where The Upgrade archetype loves to show up. I think it's important just to get curious. First, why is it so ingrained in so many of us that alcohol makes things special? And I say us, because this archetype definitely showed up in my own drinking as well. And when I was doing my personal work to really change my relationship with alcohol, this is something I really had to work on.

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But the reason why I think it's so ingrained for so many people is really simple. It's just advertising, right? We're constantly getting the message that drinking is going to elevate your experience. It's going to enhance things; it's going to make things better and more special.

When you think about it, advertisers, they're not selling us fermented grapes or barley. They're selling us an experience. They're selling us specialness in the bottle. And so, it makes sense because we're just bombarded by all of these messages that so many people really connect with. So many people really are like, "Yeah, I truly believe that a drink just makes things a little bit better, a little bit more special."

That said, I also think that this archetype can be kind of challenging to unpack and work with, is because a lot of people have the experience that this is true, right? Think about maybe when you first started drinking. Think about in what ways it may have made certain things feel more special.

So, we have this experience, we've been getting this message from advertisers, and then we have our own personal experience. And then it's like, "Yeah, okay, but this is just really true. Alcohol just does make things better. It just does enhance and elevate the experience and make things more special."

But I think, and what I want for all of you, is just to get really curious with what's going on inside your brain when this archetype shows up. To get really curious about, you know what? Is alcohol actually elevating my experience? Is it truly making things more special? Or is it doing the opposite? Is it actually putting blinders on me?

That's what we're going to be talking about today. Because one of the things that I have realized, and I see with people over and over again, is that the more you associate alcohol with "enjoying" the finer things in life, the less enticing these fine things seem without it. So, you remove alcohol

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from the get together or the meal or the sunset, and suddenly, these things that were previously lovely, they're now just kind of okay. They're a little blah. They're just fine. And I will tell you this, fine and okay and blah is not anyone's idea of a good time.

When this happens, when it starts to feel like you take the drink away, and things truly just kind of feel less special, what will happen is that in certain situations, drinking may start to feel a little bit like a foregone conclusion.

Not because it actually is, you don't actually have to drink in these situations. But what's happening now is that not only is your lower brain expecting, "Hey, that's what we do. This is what we do, when we're watching the sunset. This is what we do when we go to a fancy dinner." Not only is your brain expecting that reward, but now, if you take the drink away, it's suddenly not as special.

Not only is your experience, if you remove the drink, now lacking, but and this is really key, your lower brain search for a reward is actually getting in the way of you taking in the full scene around you. This piece is really important.

So, I want you to think about it. Think about if you were just going to go out to a fancy dinner and skip the drinks. You're probably not going to be like, "Well, I'm going to skip the drinks tonight, and everything is going to feel equally elevated and just as special and enjoyable for me." That's probably not going to happen, right?

Probably, a part of you is like, "Well, if I skip the drinks at this fancy dinner, I mean, it's probably not going to be as good." You may have the experience of having done this in your life, and maybe sitting there feeling like you're sitting at the kids table and kind of missing out on the entire experience.

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What's happened, is that your lower brain has convinced you that this previously special experience of a fancy dinner is now not as special without alcohol. That's why drinking can start to feel like a foregone conclusion, rather than a deliberate choice.

Because I mean, who wants to miss out? Who wants to go to a fancy dinner and have it just be like, "Yeah, I mean, it was fine." Or watch the sunset and be like, "I mean, it was fine." So, I think that understanding this piece is really key.

To me, it's kind of the opposite of the good life. So, you know I live in San Francisco. I live near wine country. I feel like the concept of 'the good life' ever since I moved to California, I hear it a lot, it's bandied about. This idea of comfort and luxury and not needing to worry. I think at its core is this idea that 'the good life' is about having the sense of freedom.

But here's the thing, the experience of feeling like you need the drink for things to feel complete, or special or elevated, it's kind of the opposite of freedom. Right? It's not about freedom. It starts to feel a little bit like compulsion, like it's necessary. And this can be true no matter how much you drink. You don't have to drink a lot for this to be true.

It's just the sense of a drink is really what helps make this experience special, and if I take it away, now I'm suffering a little bit. And if I'm suffering a little bit, then I'm not really in this place where I can truly take it or leave it. Because I don't think any of us really want to be in a situation where we're like, "Yeah, well, I can say no and things were fine. It was okay." I mean, that's not what we're aiming for here, people, right?

And just to say, there is absolutely nothing wrong with associating alcohol was specialness, or using it to elevate your experience. So, it's not about trying to demonize this, it's just understanding that when The Upgrade archetype is present, when it's running in your brain, it can get a little tricky,

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if at some point, you're like, "You know what? I kind of want to cut back. I kind of want to step away from drinking for a bit."

It's not tricky to cut back or step away because of the alcohol. It's tricky because when you try to say no, what you don't realize is that your brain is like, "Well, I'm saying no to more than just a drink." I'm saying no to what my brain thinks that drink represents. I'm saying no to specialness. I'm saying no to this elevated experience. And who among us wants that? No one, none of us want a life that feels less special.

So, a lot of people, a lot, have The Upgrade archetype running in their unconscious. It's there, and they don't realize necessarily that it's there. And if at some point in your life, you decide that you want to change your drinking, or change your relationship with alcohol, you may get kind of frustrated. It may feel like things are not working.

I think a big part of our frustration is that we go into change using the wrong tactics, and this happens across the board. So, maybe you decide you want to cut back, maybe you decide you want to step away from drinking for a bit; whatever. And you think, "Okay, well, I just need to really remind myself that it's really important for me to be health. I know that maybe my drinking isn't doing great things for my health, so I'm just really going to focus on my health."

Or maybe you try the tactic of using certain food restrictions. I see a lot of people do this. They'll go on a diet, or do the Whole 30, and yeah, they want the benefits of the diet, but also partly, it's like, "Okay, well, on this diet, the Whole 30, I can't drink while I'm on it. So, no booze. That will help me cut back."

Or you might just use a tactic of willpower, right? "I should just be able to say no. I'm just going to double down on just saying no." Now, the problem with these tactics when you have The Upgrade archetype, is that none of

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these methods are going to actually help you say no, or change the habit long term. Now, they might work for a bit, but that Upgrade archetype, it's still there. It's still working behind the scenes.

You still have the belief, 'a drink makes everything special.' And until you do the work to address the archetype, it is going to be really, really, really difficult. Not only to keep your commitment, but to create lasting change. I do want to say this, because this is where people can get kind of freaked out.

When you're using these tactics and they're not working, you start to get a little worried, right? So, you're in this position, and you're like, "Well, I have all these good reasons for why I want to cut back, or why I want to change my relationship with alcohol, why I want to just stop drinking completely. I've got all these good reasons. And my methods aren't working."

This is where the brain can start to spin, and it spins in a lot of not very fun places. We start to ask questions like, "Why is this so hard for me? Is there something wrong with me? Do I have an addictive personality? Is this because grandpa had a problem with drinking?" We start to kind of spiral through these questions that all lead us to the same very unfun conclusion, 'I'm the problem.'

But really, you're not the problem. You're not the problem, at all. The real problem is that you're trying to change without addressing this unconscious pattern that keeps tripping you up. You're trying to change without tackling the belief that alcohol makes things special.

I will tell you this, I think the worst thing that happens is, when you know people are in the situation and they're really frustrated with their attempts and their attempts aren't working, they start to believe, "Well, maybe the only way to succeed when it comes to my drinking is by foregoing pleasure."

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I remember thinking this. I remember thinking to myself, “Well, I guess I just need to be happy with the fact that I'm so healthy.” Which is funny, because everyone says that sounding so morose. But I will tell you, that is not true, either. You don't have to suffer for your health in order to change your relationship with alcohol.

The trick, when it comes to The Upgrade archetype, the trick is to move towards pleasure not away from it. The key is really teaching your brain to find more specialness. To really look at your experiences. Mine those experiences for all the specialness that they have to offer, rather than just settling in this place of, ‘I mean, it was fine. I'm not drinking. I'm healthy.’ I mean, that's not where I want you guys to end up.

So, it's important to really know that this is a work that you need to do. You're not going to be able to overcome The Upgrade archetype by setting a bunch of rules or promising never to drink again. You have to really go to the place of the willingness to work with this idea and this belief that the drink makes things more special.

You have to really start to recognize that that thought might actually be working against you. When you keep thinking that a drink makes things special, it might actually be stealing your capacity for enjoyment. I want you to hear me out on this. Okay?

So, you have this belief, The Upgrade archetype, that the drink makes things more special. So, what happens? When you take the drink away will things now feel less special? It proves the thought true. But here's what else happens. You take the drink away, things feel less special, but as soon as your brain decides, “Hey, this is not as good. This is not as special.”

As soon as your brain decides that that is the truth of the situation, your ability to enjoy everything that is all around you just disappears. Because

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now your brain has convinced you that you're just staring at a situation that's not living up to its full potential. And its full potential is only possible if you had a drink.

Your lower brain's search for the drink, that kind of, "Where's my reward? I was promised a reward," that search is actually blocking your ability to take in the specialness of the scene around you. Because I promise you, it is there. But it's going to be very hard to even see that it's there, or take it in, with that underlying belief. It's like, "No, a drink is what would elevate things. A drink is what would make things more special."

What has happened when you have The Upgrade archetype, you unconsciously kind of elevate alcohol above all other things, all these other things that arguably have a lot of specialness and a lot of pleasure found within. But that specialness and that pleasure, it won't be accessible for you if you're not even looking for it. When your lower brain is just fixated on the drink, I promise you, it's not looking for it.

But think about it. Think about the moments, that you think that without a drink aren't as special or aren't as elevated. Think about everything else that's there. Maybe the food, or the setting, or the tastes, or the smells, or the view, or the company. Really picture that full scene. If you really picture that, there is so much there for you to take in. There's so much there for you to tap into.

But the lower brain is like, "No, ma'am, I do not care about these things. I am not interested. I just want to drink. I know that that is what will make the moment special." But why does the lower brain care about that? Only because it's fixated on rewards. So, you don't actually realize that this fixation of the lower brain is blocking your ability to take in and enjoy and find pleasure and specialness of everything around you. All of that, it just kind of disappears into the background.

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But here's the good news. Of course, it hasn't actually disappeared, it's still right there. And you can bring this ability, this ability to kind of find specialness and pleasure all around you, you can bring it back online. Everything that I'm describing, all of this is happening in our unconscious.

In that moment, the moment when things feel less special without a drink, we don't really even understand that what we're experiencing is the ramification of the belief, and all of the marketing and advertising that we get. That, 'Hey, a drink makes everything better or more special.'

And when you don't understand that that's what's unfolding behind the scenes, you're not able to be curious about, is that actually true? Can I question the validity of that thought? Can I look for specialness and find pleasure around me?

So, this truly is something that you can work on. It's a skill that you can develop. And one of the things that I talk about a lot in my own journey and my own experience, is how much more pleasure there is in my life now. Now that my lower brain is not fixated on alcohol, and alcohol is not front and center of everything that I do, in the way that it used to be.

I will tell you, I often, often find things in my environment much more special and interesting and pleasing than the people that I happen to be with. And I mean, this is so much so, that a lot of my friends will tease me about this.

But I really am the person who will be like, in mid conversation, be like, "Oh my God, guys, sorry to interrupt. But did you guys see the moon? It is amazing tonight." People will be like, "Yes, Rachel, we saw the moon." Whenever that happens, on the inside I'm like, "Did they really see the moon? Because they don't seem as impressed by it as I am. It's pretty magical tonight."

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To me, my ability to do this is because I have been exercising and activating this muscle to tune in to specialness and pleasure around me instead of just defaulting to, “No, what makes this special is the drink.” So, it’s the ability to slow down and really take things in and fully appreciate your surroundings. And find the specialness all around you, that’s available to you.

That’s something that you can work on. But it’s a muscle, it’s a muscle that needs you to work it out. I think a lot of times, we just don’t even realize that that’s an option because we’re so committed to, “I don’t need to do this, I just need a drink. That’s what will make things feel more special or more elevated.”

When we get caught in that pattern of thinking, it’s like everything around us that is special and amazing, those moments, they don’t register. Or if they do register, they don’t register nearly as much as they could. I truly think one of the amazing things of all, of the work that you can do to change your relationship with alcohol, is recognizing there is an untapped reservoir of pleasure inside yourself. It’s just waiting for you to find it.

That, to me, is so amazing. To see, “Oh, pleasure is not just this thing that I consume. That I have to drink and eat and buy. Pleasure is something that I create.” That, to me, that’s still kind of mind blowing. And again, this isn’t to say that using alcohol to make things special or elevate a meal is somehow bad or wrong or less pure than this specialness that you find in a full moon. That’s not what I’m saying.

What I really want you to understand is, when you have The Upgrade archetype, when you have this belief that a drink makes things special, it’s running in the background whether or not you realize it. And it’s going to be showing up and playing out in the habit. Your drinking is going to be reflective of this archetype.

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If my lower brain is really activated and fixated on finding a reward, that fixation is going to put blinders on me. And that is going to block my ability to elevate the experience on my own. I'm just going to be bolstering this idea that, oh, I don't need to do anything, because alcohol is what makes it special.

So again, the goal here is not to say, "Oh, I'm never going to drink again. I'm only going to find specialness in everything around me." The goal is just to understand what's happening underneath your drinking, underneath the habit. The goal is to see what's happening, and to realize, "Hey, I think that actually might be blocking my ability to access more specialness and more pleasure in my environment."

When you start to see what's going on beneath the surface, you can start to say, "You know what? Do I want to keep this belief that a drink makes everything special or a drink elevates the situation? What's the ramifications of keeping it? Or do I just want to start to challenge it and get curious about it? And if I'm going to challenge it, okay, well, what do I need to do? I guess, I need to exercise this muscle that Rachael is talking about."

So, that's the goal here. The goal is to put you in a more empowered place, right? And to get you to a place where you're not always kind of wrestling with keeping your commitment. It's not this kind of surface-level tug-of-war. You start to really understand, if you're feeling stuck, what's truly getting in the way.

When you have this skill, because it is a skill, the skill of knowing how to find more of what you're actually seeking, more of that specialness, more of that pleasure... When you know how to do that on your own, you start to see that the drink becomes a lot less necessary. And when you can do that, you're no longer in this place of feeling like, 'yeah, well, I mean, I can

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say no, but then it feels just like math. It feels like a chore. It feels like I'm kind of suffering for my health.' Because that's not going to last.

You are not left in this place of, it's fine, saying no, but kind of secretly wishing that you were drinking. You end up really able to take off these blinders, and just fully take in all the specialness around you. And then, when you develop this skill, then the decisions that you make around alcohol will start to feel like you truly are making a deliberate choice. Rather than, "Well, if I say no, it's just not going to be as good as it could be."

Also, here's the best part, when you learn how to do this, when you have this ability to create more specialness and take in more pleasure from your environment, when you drop the blinders, you also reduce your desire. You reduce all that chatter, all that internal back and forth about drinking.

Because then you can finally kind of see the drink for what it is. You can finally start to understand the fixation of the lower brain for what it is, and you can start to see the ramifications of it. And then, the decisions that you make about whether or not to drink no longer hinge on this, "Will I or won't I be able to enjoy this moment in the fullest if I say no?" Because you'll know how to do it on your own. You'll know how to enjoy things fully without the drink. And then, truly, you can take it or leave it.

Okay, that's it for today. I'll see you next week and we'll go into another archetype.

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.

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