

Ep #366: The Hourglass



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Rachel Hart

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You are listening to The Take a Break Podcast with Rachel Hart, Episode 366.

Hello my friends. I'm back with another episode about The Drink Archetypes, and today we're talking about The Hourglass archetype. Just as a reminder, The Drink Archetypes are eight unconscious patterns that influence why you drink and why you reach for another. I have a whole episode number 358 that introduces this concept of The Drink Archetypes.

Today we're going to do a deep dive into The Hourglass, which is all about using a drink as a way to pass the time. Understanding this archetype is so important if you find yourself drinking when you're bored or when there's not a lot to do. Remember, knowing which archetypes apply to you is so important because it helps you see the unconscious patterns that are behind your drinking. It doesn't matter how motivated you are to change or how many good reasons you have to cut back or to stop drinking, it's gonna be hard to resist temptation. You will very likely be frustrated that your attempts to change are hit or miss unless you are able to identify what's happening beneath the surface of the habit and work on that piece of the puzzle as well. That's where The Drink Archetypes come in.

You need to know which archetypes apply to you so that you can really understand what's behind this desire to drink. Yes, you like to drink. Yes, you like the taste. But over time, your brain also learned that the drink represents something more than just a reward for the lower brain. It came to symbolize something. That's what The Drink Archetypes are all about, helping you to do the deeper work of understanding what the drink symbolizes so that you can work on this piece of the puzzle and create the change that you want.

So far on the podcast, I've covered a lot of different archetypes. We've talked about The Upgrade, The Connector, The Reward, The Escape, The Mask. Today, we're going to be talking about The Hourglass. If you're sitting here wondering like, "Oh my gosh, like which ones apply to me?"

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You can take the free quiz that I created and get your full report at FindYourDrinkType.com. But today it's all about The Hourglass.

Now this archetype can be a little tricky because it often shows up in connection with The Escape archetype, which is all about managing your brain when you're feeling really overwhelmed by life. Because lots of time, our overwhelm tends to show up when your brain doesn't have a lot of distractions, right? When there's not a lot to do, you start thinking about all the problems in your life. But while The Hourglass and The Escape are often connected, they don't have to be. Sometimes The Hourglass really is just your brain saying like, "This is my entertainment. This is what I do. This helps me pass the time." I will tell you at this point in my life, I've got two little boys, one is five, one is 18 months, I feel lucky to get a moment to myself. But I remember there being periods of my life where I felt like I had these huge expanses of time in front of me. I was just like, "What am I going to do? How am I going to fill this time?" It sounds like such a luxury right now, but I promise you it did not feel like a luxury back then.

The Hourglass, it can show up in so many different kinds of situations. You might be a new parent, right? You no longer have the flexibility of how you spend your free time in the evenings. Maybe the baby finally is sleeping, which, "Oh God, thank God," right? But then at some point you fall into this trap of like, "Okay, the baby's sleeping but we can't go anywhere. What are we going to do?" So you turn on the TV and you open a bottle of wine. It can show up for empty nesters who are adjusting to all of a sudden not having children at home and suddenly it's like, "What am I supposed to do with myself? Aren't there people who need me? Aren't there like problems that I need to be solving?" The Hourglass can appear for people who are transitioning. It might mean you're on temporary leave. It might mean you're suffering from job loss. It might mean you just started retirement and all of a sudden you have a lot more time on your hands. It can show up for people who set aside their career ambitions to support a child or a spouse. The Hourglass can appear for people who feel like they've hit a plateau in their

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work or in their professional life or those people who are frequently on the road for work.

This happened for me quite a bit in one of my jobs where I was traveling all the time and so I had a lot of time in airports and in hotels and just on my own in foreign countries. It can also appear when you feel stuck where you live. I've worked with a lot of people who live in very rural settings and they're like, "Listen, Rachel, there's nothing to do around here. What do you want me to do?" The Hourglass can also show up after relocating. Maybe you move somewhere new and maybe there's a language or a cultural barrier that keeps you from socializing.

But really, The Hourglass is just all about feeling like you have all this time on your hands that you don't know what to do with it and you get in the habit of filling that time with a drink. So what happens? You're facing down the prospect of another boring night at home, so you have a drink. So often people will say to me, "I don't know, I just rather drink than be bored." Which I can relate to. I used to feel this way a lot like, "Okay, boredom? No, thank you. I don't want to feel bored."

By the way, I will say, for those of you who are thinking, "Yeah, this archetype sounds like it might be me." I have a whole podcast, Episode 113, that is a deep dive into boredom that is a great supplement to this podcast because it really helps you reframe the purpose of boredom.

Back to The Hourglass. Now, when you have this archetype, it will be difficult to keep your commitment to drink less or to not drink. Not because there's something wrong with you or your brain, but because of how you've been socialized to view boredom as a problem. I want you to hear that. You and me and everyone, we've all been socialized to view boredom as a problem. You can have a lot of good reasons why you should cut back on your drinking or you should stop drinking. But saying no is going to be hard when The Hourglass archetype is present and you're not dealing with it, right?

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We're taught to believe that the purpose of boredom is to find ways to avoid it. I remember hearing this all the time as a kid. My parents telling me like, "Rachel, you are too smart to be bored." And frankly, so much of our world is set up to help us avoid boredom at all costs so you don't need to be bored. Just pull out your phone, do something. We are losing our tolerance as a society to handle a lack of neural stimulation in the brain and this is the problem with The Hourglass, right? Because at first, unscheduled open time can pair really nicely with a drink because there's nothing to do. So why not fix a drink? Let's open a bottle of wine. But what happens if you have a lot of unscheduled time on your hands? I'm going to tell you, you may slowly start to notice that your drinking is creeping up because the brain learns, not only is alcohol a form of entertainment, it's a way out of boredom, except there's a catch because there always is. Your brain adapts to the effects of alcohol, which means that the more you drink to entertain yourself, the more you'll need to drink in order to stay entertained. This is why people say to me, "I don't understand how I'm drinking this much." I used to just have one glass of wine at night and it was this nice ritual and now I'm polishing off the bottle. Often what happened was simply your brain adapting to the effects of alcohol and you needed more and more to stay entertained.

This is why you can't overcome The Hourglass archetype by setting rules or swearing off booze for the rest of your life, which by the way, as you've heard me say, this does not work with any of the archetypes. Because you may have a rock solid commitment in the morning, but as soon as that archetype is activated, your commitment is going to get very wobbly. And the solution also for The Hourglass, it's not erasing boredom from your life because, good luck with that, right? The more you try to keep yourself always entertained, the quicker you feel bored. Not only that, but the less you start to like how you spend your time. I've done this before, right? You look at your screen time tally on your phone and you're like, "Oh God, like how did I spend that much time staring at this tiny screen?" It doesn't feel good. It feels gross. The solution is not eradicating boredom from your life.

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It's about learning to look inside these moments that you feel bored with curiosity.

Because this is the thing, here we are, we're alive on this planet, we had to overcome incredible odds just to exist as a human, and we are surrounded by the potential for so much awe and mystery and wonder. All of that can feel so far away. You get stuck in a routine, life starts to feel stale, you're not sure what to do with all this time, and you decide that a drink sounds good. But alcohol has a way of giving your brain tunnel vision.

This is really the big problem of the lower brain. It is very prone to tunnel vision. So again and again, the lower brain is just going to keep bringing your attention back to the drink. It's like, "Hey, think about the drink. Did you think about the drink? Are we getting a drink? Let's have a drink. Let's have another." Yet to feel engaged by the world, you have to get rid of this tunnel vision. You have to open your eyes to the full expanse of everything around you. You have to break free of just all this chatter about drinking. You have to look at yourself and your surroundings with new eyes. While the effects of alcohol can temporarily transport you out of yourself, it rarely is going to fill you with a sense of wonder and awe. In fact, the opposite happens. The world becomes less interesting, right? The more you drink, the less interesting everything seems without it. Think about it. The number of times in my life in the past where it was like, "Oh, that restaurant sounds nice. Oh, they don't have their liquor license yet. Uh, no, thank you." Right? Everything just seems less interesting without it because your lower brain has this tunnel vision.

The superpower here for The Hourglass archetype, it's about engaging with the world and engaging with yourself in a new way. It's about viewing the times you feel bored as not a problem at all, but an intelligence that is trying to help you. It's about using boredom as a compass to figure out how you want to use your time here on Earth.

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I have spoken about her on this podcast before, but I love, love, love the poet Mary Oliver and to paraphrase a very famous line in one of her poems. "What do you plan on doing with your one wild and precious life?"

No one's answer is, "I want to fill my time with more drinking, or more time on my phone, or more time watching YouTube." When you learn how to work with The Hourglass archetype, boredom can be a compass that can help you tap into something greater inside yourself. But in order to do that, you must learn how to explore the moments you would normally just drink over. When you learn how to do this, the choice to drink will no longer feel like a foregone conclusion when there's nothing to do. It can actually be a window into something deeper and an opportunity to get to know yourself better.

That's really the goal with this archetype. You can use The Hourglass to help harness your time and energy to go after the life you want, because your time and energy are precious resources.

The habit of drinking can siphon away these resources really quickly. The Hourglass archetype is about showing you that the desire that you're using right now, to just go after wine or cookies or Netflix or Amazon. It's not meant for any of those things. Your desire is here to help you go after the life that you want. It's here to help you explore and discover and create and grow because there is nothing, there's nothing more pleasurable than creating something out of nothing or finding out what you're capable of. Reaching for a drink in your moments of open, unscheduled time. It's never going to deliver you the kind of satisfaction that you deeply crave. That's what The Hourglass archetype is all about. It's trying to help you direct your time and energy towards a life you deeply crave.

Okay, that's it for today. Next week, I'll be back talking about another Drink Archetype, The Release. See you then.