

Ep #374: How to Stay Motivated



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Rachel Hart

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Welcome back, everybody. We are talking today about staying motivated when you're trying to change your drinking. I'll tell you this, motivation is such a misunderstood topic. I really didn't understand it myself for the longest time because I thought that motivation was something I had to go out into the world and find.

It was like, "Maybe if I read this book, or watch this video, or write out all the ways that drinking too much is bad for me, maybe then I will find the motivation I'm looking for." But the problem with this is really simple. The problem is the idea that you have to go looking for it. It creates this idea that motivation is generated by a force outside of you.

I have read my share of inspiring books and listened to amazing talks that have made me feel really excited and ready to tackle the world, but I know that motivation is created within me. And this is a very powerful mindset shift when you're doing the work to change the habit. How is it created within us?

One thing that I talk about are thoughts that have really changed my life. This was a thought that I remember reading over a decade ago in a book, and it really stopped me in my tracks. But it was, "You've not always been your best self, which makes you just like everyone else." I remember reading that line in a book, and it was just like, "Oh." Because I had so much shame about my drinking.

I had so much shame that my willpower was crap and that I really struggled to keep my commitment and I would wake up the day after drinking too much and just be like, "God, Rachel, why were you so stupid?" And I remember reading those words and it was like this seismic shift took place inside of me.

Now, how did that happen? It happened because I had a thought about the sentence that I read. I read the sentence, "You've not always been your

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best self, which makes you just like everyone else." And my thought was, "Oh, I think that's true. I believe this is true." Now, someone else could have read that same sentence and been like, "No, that's a load of crap. I've done horrible things. The things I've done are way worse than the average person. I'm not like everyone else. Something is wrong with me."

That sentence created a huge shift in how I viewed myself, but it just as easily could have fallen flat. Whether or not we feel motivated or inspired or changed by someone's words has to do with the meaning that our own brain assigns to what we're reading or what we're listening to.

This is a really important concept for you to understand because when you understand motivation this way, it reinforces the idea that you create your own motivation. It is not about finding it or getting it from some outside force. It is created within you. And I think that this is so powerful because so many people, when they start the process of trying to change, they start out really excited. And then it's like, "I don't know what happened. I just ran out of steam." And when you're in that cycle over and over again of, "This time's gonna be different". And then, just starting to feel like you've lost all motivation, it's all drained away from you. It can feel really hopeless to be in that cycle and you're just in this place like, "Oh God, I hope I find some more motivation soon. I hope something just happens that will help me feel motivated again."

When you think that motivation is produced by external forces, it puts you in a position of waiting for things to change, and that is not a great position to be in. Because when you're waiting, you can wait a really long time.

It has been really life changing, not only for me to have this realization, but for so many of the people that I work with to understand, "Okay. Motivation is not this thing that is bestowed upon me, it is created by me. Motivation is created by my mind. It's created by what I'm choosing to think and the meaning that I choose to apply to things."

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But here's the thing, I think a lot of you believe that you have a problem staying motivated when it comes to keeping a commitment or practicing the skills that I talk about. And your internal idea is, "I'm this person that I start out strong and then things just peter out."

I don't think it's a problem with motivation at all. I actually think a lot of people confuse a failure to stay motivated with a deeper problem about making mistakes. Here's what I want you to consider, when you break your commitment, when you give in to a craving, and then maybe you tell yourself like, "Ugh, I'll get back on track on Monday, or it's mid-month, I'm the first, I'll start again." When you have this some future date in mind that things are going to be different, I want you to consider that that's not a motivation problem. What's really going on here is a problem with making mistakes.

One of the things that will slow you down more than anything when you're trying to change your relationship with alcohol is an unwillingness to be anything but 100 percent perfect all of the time. Not a lack of motivation, that is what's really keeping most people stuck. When you're doing the work to not give into your cravings and to not immediately believe the excuses that you have to drink. When you're doing this work, you're learning a new skill, which means you can't do it perfectly right out of the gate. You're going to make mistakes, you're going to make up, even if everything you hear me say makes total logical sense. You listen to me explain these things and you're like, "Yes, I get it."

When the rubber hits the road, you may not yet have this neural pathway built. The neural pathway with your cravings right now, it may not be one of observation. It may be a pathway of giving in. The neural pathway that you have with your excuses. Right now, it may not be about curiosity and asking questions. It may just be about believing the excuse or getting into a wrestling match with it until you get exhausted and give in.

These are things that you have to build and develop. When you're trying to change a habit, when you're trying to implement what I'm teaching, you just

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cannot expect yourself to be perfect right away because that is not how the brain learns new skills.

You are going to have missteps, but if you think every single misstep is a problem, guess what's going to happen? You're immediately going to throw in the towel. Why? Because you made it mean that you did something wrong rather than making it mean, "Okay, that didn't work. I wonder why. I wonder what piece of the habit right now I can't yet see. I wonder what's going on. Let me look at the situation closer. Let me examine it from a position of a scientist rather than someone passing judgment."

It's this unwillingness to allow for mistakes that is a much bigger problem than a lack of motivation. When I'm doing this work with people, I'm always asking them, "What are you making your mistakes mean? Are you making it mean that you're never going to figure this out, that something is wrong with you, that change is hopeless?" Because that is the real underlying habit that needs to be addressed first. If you're going to figure out the habit of drinking.

When missteps turn into a referendum on your ability to succeed, You're hosed. You're going to feel hopeless and ashamed and resigned every time you stumble. But stumbling is part of the process. When you feel this way, you're going to tell yourself, "Oh God, screw it. I'll start again Monday or I'll start again next month or some future date." Not because you're lacking motivation, but because you're trying to drink over the feelings that you have about what happened. The feelings that you have that, "Hey, things didn't go the way I think they should have gone and that means that I'm the problem, that something is wrong with me, that I'll never be able to change." That's really why you're delaying doing the work. It's not a lack of motivation. It's trying to deal with all the negative emotions that bubble up.

This isn't a motivation problem. This is a problem with insisting that there is only one correct way to change, and that is to never make a mistake. If you think you're struggling with a lack of motivation, first, I want you to ask yourself, if you are hunting for motivation outside of yourself, do you think

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it's something that you have to find? Or do you have the mindset that it's something that you are able to generate for yourself? And then examine "Hey, is this really a problem with my motivation or is it a problem with any failure encountering any roadblock or obstacle or stumbling?" Because that's the bigger piece of the puzzle that most people have to work on, rather than thinking that it will all be solved once. I just find that magical amount of motivation.

All right, that's it for today, and we'll see you next week.