

# Ep #376: When It's Not What It's Supposed to Be Like



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**Rachel Hart**

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You are listening to the Take a Break Podcast with Rachel Hart, Episode 376.

Hello, hello, everyone. We're going to talk about something today that I've been working on with a lot of people inside the membership recently. It is a thought that I have had many times in my own life, but is a thought that can come up when you're doing this work around trying to drink less, stop drinking, just change your relationship with alcohol.

And that thought is, "This is not what my life is supposed to look like." It is true. Many times in my own life, I have been knee deep in this thought. I had this vision of "This is what things are supposed to look like and things are not matching up. It does not look the way it's supposed to." I think this comes up for a lot of people who may have The Hourglass or The Release archetype.

These are two of the Drink Archetypes. The Hourglass is when the drink is really representing a way out of boredom or a way to entertain yourself. The Release is all about permission to be yourself, but it can come up really for any of the 8 different archetypes.

By the way, if you don't know what your drink archetype is, go to [drinktype.com](http://drinktype.com). Take the quiz. Getting the results and knowing your primary and secondary archetypes, that really is the first step to figuring out how to change your relationship with alcohol. Back to this thought, this idea that when you look at your life, it doesn't look the way that you think it should. It's not unique to The Drink Archetypes. It's not even unique to people who want to change their drinking. I think that this is a thought that a lot of people will wrestle with at some point and maybe during many points during their lives. There's that vision of how things should be, and then there's the reality of how things are. One of the reasons why I think it comes up with such frequency in the work that I do is because it's a pretty painful thought. The choice is, "I can either acknowledge that I don't like where I am in my life right now or I could have a drink."

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With this thought, the temptation to just have the drink, it's pretty strong. When you don't like how much you are drinking or you don't like your relationship with alcohol, you feel like you have this unhealthy relationship. There is a lot of reason to look at your life and think, "This is not going the way I think it should. This is not what it's supposed to look like."

But sometimes it's also knowing that maybe you're in an unhappy relationship with another person, or it's a lack of a relationship, or it's your financial situation or your career or your body. This thought can come up in many different areas of your life.

Now, of course, when it comes up, our immediate knee jerk is go-to, "What do I need to change? How do I change my life if it doesn't look the way that it's supposed to? I gotta do something different." And of course, there is a lot that you can do to change the direction of the life that you're currently in. You can start working on your relationship with alcohol. You can start drinking less. You can get on a dating app. You can go into couples therapy. You can change careers. You can make a plan to pay off your credit cards or get in shape. There's many things that you can start doing.

All of these things, they're all great but they miss the deeper meaning of what is behind this thought. And I really believe that you have to understand this piece of the puzzle. Otherwise, you're going to be in a situation like I was many times in my life where I would think, "This isn't the way my life is supposed to look." And I would go on these huge efforts to change things. Maybe I would feel better for a while, but invariably that thought would creep back in.

What you need to know is when you look at your life right now and you look at it just as it is, and you're having this thought, "This is not the life I'm meant to be living. This is not the life I'm supposed to have. This is not the way my life should look." Whatever your version of that thought is, the deeper meaning is how you are relating to yourself. It doesn't matter if you're telling yourself, "I shouldn't be drinking this much. I should be further along in my career. I should have more money. I should have less debt. I

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should have kids. I should be in a different relationship. I should have a relationship. I should be healthier."

When you are telling yourself, when you're thinking about all the things that you want to change, what I want you to do is imagine giving yourself this magic wand where you could immediately make that vision that you want true. Whatever it is, whether it's your drinking or your career or your relationship, whatever. You have this magic wand, you could immediately make that vision true. And then ask yourself, "How would I feel?"

Many times when this was coming up for me, this thought, the answer was often proud. I would tell myself, "Oh, if only this thing were different in my life, I could finally feel proud of myself." You might have a different answer. Maybe your answer is safe or loved or successful or free. It doesn't really matter what your answer is, it matters that you're tapping into how you believe you would feel if things were different, if your life looked different. Because your answer to that question, "How would I feel if I waved my magic wand and could immediately change the things in my life that I think are wrong?" Your answer to that question is showing you how you're feeling right now. When I had this thought that my life was not looking the way that it was supposed to, I could think about waving my magic wand and changing the things that didn't look right and then asking myself, "How would I feel?" And I would think, "Oh, I'd finally feel proud."

What that was showing me was, in that moment in my life, I was feeling disappointed in myself. Now, if your answer is, "I wave the magic wand and I finally feel safe", maybe right now you're feeling unsteady or insecure. If you wave the magic wand and your answer is, "I finally feel loved", maybe right now you're feeling unworthy. If you wave the wand and your answer is like, "Oh, I just finally feel free." Maybe right now you're feeling constrained, but you get the picture here.

The way that you answer the question about how you would be feeling if you would change whatever right now you think is the way your life is not supposed to look, is showing you how you're currently feeling. You have to

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get clear on this. You have to get clear on both the feeling that you're after, the one that you're seeking out, and this is where the Think, Feel, Act Cycle comes in, we're going to be using it backwards here. We're going to be starting with a desired feeling and then working backwards to ask ourselves what thought would make me feel that way.

But you're also getting very clear on, "Oh, this is like the current state of how I'm feeling." So often I think we get really wrapped up in how our life doesn't look the way that we want. And we're so fixated on changing the actions that we're really ignoring our emotional inner life. We're not paying a lot of attention to that. It's like if you finally figured out you're drinking and let's just hypothetically say you would feel proud, if we want to work that backwards, if we see that that's a desired feeling, what would you be thinking about yourself? What thought would you have different about yourself if you had figured out you're drinking? Or if you were in a different career or if you lost weight or if you're in a relationship, whatever it is. What would you be thinking differently about yourself? Now, in my case, I remember just believing if only I fixed all these things, in particular my drinking, that I could finally tell myself I was normal.

But asking yourself, "How do I think I would be feeling?" Understanding "My feelings don't just happen. They're created by what I'm thinking." You can then back up into, "What would I be thinking? How would I be thinking differently about myself or my life or how much money I have or my career or whatever? How would I be thinking differently about myself in this future where I've changed and I've stepped into the life that I want to have versus how I'm thinking about myself now?" Because that's really at the heart of this thought, "My life shouldn't look like this." At the heart of this thought is the idea that, "If only we change things, we would finally feel the way that we wanted to." This is where we have it backwards. We have to practice finding the feeling first. Whatever that feeling is that we desire, whether it is proud or loved or safe or worthy or free or safe, whatever it is, we have to figure out, "How do I find that feeling first in order to create the change that I want."

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We have to practice feeling, accessing these desired feelings now before anything changes. And I know that can be a challenging thing to wrap your brain around. It certainly was for me. I resisted this for so long because it seems totally backwards. I was really set on, "I just need to change myself first and then I'm going to feel good about myself." But there's a reason why this doesn't work. There's a reason why you may have had the experience in your life of getting the thing that you really wanted so maybe you got the relationship or you got the job or you lost the weight or you got the promotion, whatever. You got the thing you really wanted and maybe it felt good for a little bit, but then what happened? Your brain does what brains do. It went back to thinking thoughts that it has a lot of practice thinking. If you have a lot of practice thinking thoughts that make you feel like something is wrong with you, or make you feel like you're unworthy or that you're not good enough or that you're incapable of change. Guess what? That's not going to magically go away.

Your brain is going to default to the neural pathways that it has used over and over and over again, unless you start creating a new one. This is true for any change that you want to create in your life, but it is very true. If you want to change your drinking, you cannot shame yourself into a healthy relationship with alcohol.

For most of you listening this is true. If shaming yourself worked, you would have changed your drinking by now. You can't reject yourself into feeling normal. You can't label how much you drank last night or last weekend as the behavior of someone who should know better. Shame yourself that way and then magically get insight into what is really going on. You have to figure out, "How do I start having some of this desired feeling that I'm after? How do I start to access some of that now?" For me, this was a lot of like, "How do I start to find compassion? Right now, when I'm in the mess and I hate my drinking and I hate that it's been going on for so long and I hate that I can't figure it out, how do I start to have some compassion?" You have to do that before you can stop beating yourself up. You have to find the compassion first. We're not going to get to the magical place of, "Now I

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only have the amazing, supportive, wonderful thoughts about myself" without having done the work first to create them.

I had to do the work to see my struggle with drinking as normal. I did not see it as normal. I saw it as incredibly, incredibly abnormal. I had to start to do that work to chip away at these thoughts and to see there's actually something very shared in the human experience of struggling with temptation. And yeah, maybe everybody doesn't struggle with their drinking, but everybody struggles with some sort of temptation. I had to normalize that struggle and stop holding myself out as something that was different and wrong and abnormal so that I could stop being at the mercy of my cravings.

And the reason that it had to work that way is because every time I held myself out, it's like, "This is what's wrong with you and you're different and something's wrong with your brain and your brain is missing something." Every time I did that, all it did was create a lot of shame and a lot of hopelessness. Learning how to relate differently to your cravings is not going to happen when you're in a pool of shame and hopelessness. This is what you have to do when you're telling yourself, "This isn't what I want my life to look like or this isn't what it was supposed to look like or this isn't the life that I'm supposed to be living."

I understand for a lot of you listening, the temptation is like, "Oh God, that's a terrible thought to be with. No, thank you. I'll pass. Let's just have a drink." But you have to be willing to understand "The thing that I most desire is not this change. It's not changing my drinking. It's not changing my job. It's not changing a relationship. The thing that I most desire is a feeling that I want to have." And when you understand that piece of it, you can start to ask yourself, "Is there any part of me that is willing to start trying to figure out how to feel this feeling now, even if it feels impossible?"

And I know it will feel impossible. It felt impossible for me to believe that I was normal, that nothing was wrong with me, that I could love and respect myself and have compassion for myself when I was waking up being like,

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"God, why did you do that the night before?" But that truly is the path. That is how we start to change the brain. You don't have to go fully on into the space of like, "Oh, I just completely stepped into that feeling that I'm desiring." Even if all you can muster is like the tiniest little, "Oh, I can get a little crack into this encasement around me. Just all the negative thoughts and all the negative feelings. I can get that that little crack." Even if you can do that, that is huge because you're forcing yourself to challenge and question your mindset. You're forcing yourself in a small way to start practicing something new about you and something new about your struggle, something new about why it's hard for you to say no to temptation. And that is how you create new neural pathways.

I know how painful it feels to tell yourself and to truly believe when you look at your life, "This is not what it's supposed to look like." But I will also tell you this from my experience and my experience with working with so many people and my experience with myself is that every time my brain has offered up this thought and it's done it on multiple occasions. It's been an invitation for me to challenge my beliefs and actually move in the direction that I want to go in. It's been an invitation to start to change the mindset that is keeping me stuck and to feel more of how I want to feel and ultimately change what I want to change.

I encourage all of you, use this exercise, wave that magic wand. Start to see if you are willing to challenge some of the mindset and ask yourself, "Why can't you feel that right now? What would you need to think differently?" Are you willing to even just get a centimeter close to believing something different about yourself so you can feel something different, so you can create the change that you want?

All right, that's it for today. I'll see you all next week.