

Ep #383: Caught in a Contradiction



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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Hey everybody, welcome back. I wanted to talk to you about a question that I got recently from someone and they basically said to me, "Every time I drink, I drink way more than I intend." And they were telling me how they've had years of trying to cut back without much success and they really were at a point where they felt powerless. They told me, you know, "At this point, I believe that stopping at one or two glasses is just not possible for me." And their question for me was, "Should I just stop drinking?"

I want to talk about this on today's episode because I think it's really important and powerful to look at this question, "Should I just stop drinking?" through a different lens. Because the conventional answer is, "Yes, of course." If you have all this evidence that you can't moderate, if it's creating problems in your life, why would you continue to drink? Drinking's not doing, you know, any favors for your body. It's not creating great outcomes so like, of course, just stop drinking.

But there's a reason why I didn't say to them, "Yes, of course, in my opinion, you should obviously stop." The reason is because I think telling people what to do when it comes to drinking, more often than not, a great disservice to them. Now, I know a lot of people out there may not agree with me on this. I hope if you are one of those people that you will at least listen through to the end of the episode to understand my position and where I'm coming from.

Telling people not to drink, it sets up this power dynamic of, "I know what's best for you." And this power dynamic can lead to either people withdrawing from seeking help or simply just rebelling because now they have someone to rebel against. But more importantly, when you tell

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someone what to do, it will shut down their own curiosity about why they are drinking and why they keep going back for more because there is a very powerful contradiction at play that needs to be explored.

On the one hand, someone is saying, "I don't believe it's possible for me to moderate." And on the other hand, the person is still drinking. Now, a lot of people, you know, we can chalk this up to the fact that alcohol is an addictive substance that makes some people powerless and just end the story there. That's just the fact of the matter. But that explanation, when we rely on that explanation, that alcohol is just addictive, and for some people, they are just powerless when they drink. What happens is that it takes away the opportunity for us to explore the contradiction embedded in the behavior.

We basically boil it down to, "This is just a matter of someone having a disease. This is just a matter of someone's brain being unable to handle alcohol." I want you to think about it. Why would someone, who thinks that they're unable to moderate, keep attempting to drink? Isn't there something curious about that contradiction? What is going on inside of them? And I will just tell you, this can be a really intimidating question to tackle if you aren't shown how to examine your contradictions without shame and blame. And by the way, all of us. All humans walk around with contradictions. All the time. It's like, "I want to lose weight, but I keep eating the junk food. I want to save money, but I keep buying things that I can't afford. I want to spend my time wisely, but then I keep endlessly scrolling through my phone. I want to be in a relationship, but I refuse to put myself out there." Contradictions are just part of the human experience. We all have them. They're just a part of being alive.

But we're not taught how to be curious about our contradictions because so often we fall into this place of the contradiction itself. Its existence is either something wrong with me, or a character defect, or just kind of illogical. So

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most people rarely explore these contradictions. We just want to make them go away. Because we're so sure that the very existence of the contradiction is a sign that something inside of us is broken. So think about it. Why would you cling to alcohol when you see that it's not serving you? Why would you attempt to moderate when you don't believe that you can?

When you get curious about this, most people will find themselves in this place of like, "I don't know, I just can't learn my lesson. I just keep being stupid." They will come back to this conclusion that something must be wrong with them. But you really have to learn how to explore your contradictions without shaming and blaming yourself.

And that's what I encourage this person to do. Instead of saying, "Yeah, I mean, obviously just stop drinking." I encourage them to get curious and to ask themselves why. If you really believe that you can't stop, then why are you still drinking? Can we look at this question without shaming and blaming yourself? Without making your behavior or turning your behavior into a sign that something is wrong with you or something is wrong with your brain. Can we just get curious about it and explore, "What is actually going on for me? How am I feeling? What am I thinking when I give into that craving?" What I want to suggest is that when you are caught in a contradiction, it's because part of you is convinced that even though the behavior that you're engaged in isn't serving you, the alternative is worse.

The alternative to say no, to not drink at all, to stop after one. Part of you believes in that moment that that alternative is worse. Why do you believe that it's a worse alternative? Because of your Drink Archetypes. Whatever Drink Archetype is activated for you in that moment, whether it's The Escape, The Reward, The Remedy, The Mask, The Connector, The Upgrade, The Hourglass, or The Release, whatever Archetype is activated, that Archetype has taught your brain that the alternative to saying no, of not giving into a craving, is a worse choice.

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It's like, "On the one hand, I could drink or I could not drink and not have a good time. I could drink or I could not drink and then sit with the belief that not drinking means that something is wrong with me or means that I'm not normal and I'm not like other people. I could drink or I could not drink and feel anxious and disconnected. I could drink or I could not drink and feel all this overwhelm or stress or just be unable to relax or unwind." I mean, the list goes on.

The point is that whatever Archetype is activated has you believing that the alternative is a worse fate. And when you get curious about why the contradiction is there, when you look at the Archetype, you move away from shame and blame and move toward understanding the associations your brain has made with drinking, what it has learned.

You have to get curious why you're clinging to something that isn't serving you, or why you keep trying to moderate when at the same time you're like, but I don't actually believe that I can do it. I'm encouraging you to get curious, not because then of course you will come to the conclusion yourself that you should stop, but because then you will understand the real reason why you're giving in.

And you'll actually have a meaningful and powerful place from which to begin the work of changing your relationship with alcohol. That is where your real power lies. Your willingness to bring curiosity to the question and the contradiction. So sure, I could have just told this person, "Yes, just stop drinking." Maybe they would have listened. Maybe they would have been like, "Okay, well, Rachel said I can't drink, so I guess I have to listen to her."

But think about how many people get that message from their doctors and still drink. Think about how many people read, you know, on prescription labels, "Hey, don't mix this with alcohol, and they still pour the glass of

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wine, or they still open the beer." Telling someone what to do robs them of the potential to have that moment of insight, that moment of, "Oh, wait, this is what's really going on? This is what my drinking is really about? I thought this was all, you know, I'm just someone who loves wine, but now I see, there's this other thing that's happening beneath the surface."

You cannot underestimate how incredibly powerful having that kind of insight is for people who feel so stuck. For us to just sit back and decide "Well, I think you know, your drinking is bad or it just doesn't make any sense. Obviously you shouldn't do it at all." I don't think that leaves the person who is caught in the contradiction in a better place. Lots and lots of people, I'm sure, looked at my drinking for years and thought, "She drinks too much. She should probably just stop." But I too was in this tug of war, feeling like moderation was impossible and being deeply unwilling to stop drinking entirely. I too was caught in this contradiction. For me, you know, back then it was often The Mask and The Release Archetypes that were activated.

But of course, I didn't know it at the time. I just went always to shame and blame and, "Why do I keep making these dumb decisions?" Still clinging on so tightly because I didn't understand what the contradiction was really about. It wasn't until I understood that the contradiction existed for a very logical reason that everything started to change for me and the same is true for you too.

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

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