

Ep #395: What to Say When Someone Offers You a Drink



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, Episode 395.

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.

Hey, everybody, welcome back. We are talking today about what to say when someone offers you a drink. Now, this can apply in a lot of different situations. You may be taking the night off from drinking. You may be taking a more extended break from drinking. Or maybe you are drinking, you just don't want to go overboard.

So really, the technique that I'm going to teach you today, and I'm going to talk about why it's so important that you practice this, it really applies in pretty much any situation. I will tell you though, I used to have so much drama about this. So much drama about what exactly I should say or what to tell people or what sort of responses I need to prepare for if someone wanted to ask me why I wasn't drinking. I would just spin and spin and spin on these questions.

And you can imagine that I was often very weird about turning down drinks, because there was all of this internal drama that I was often wrestling with well before I even encountered the situation where someone was offering me a drink. It's very normal to have that drama.

In fact, the technique that I'm going to talk to you about today, and I want you all to practice, it helps actually bring that drama to the surface so that we can look at it and so that we can understand how it's getting in the way of habit change. I think so often we just want to make the drama go away. We just want to find that kind of silver bullet answer that is just going to

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make it so it's not weird, it's not awkward, nobody's going to have a follow-up question.

But when you're trying to find that perfect response, you're actually missing out on understanding why it truly is difficult for you to say no. Again, I'm going to talk about this practice. And it can be really useful, for example, for The Mask archetype, which is all about drinking to feel more confident in social situations. Or The Connector archetype. Or also The Upgrade archetype, which is about using alcohol to make things feel more special.

But really, it's great for all the archetypes. This exercise is helping you bring to the forefront what is happening beneath the surface. So what I want you to imagine, I want you to imagine someone offering you a drink and just saying, "No, thanks," and leaving it at that. So I want you to treat 'no thanks', like a complete sentence, right? It needs no explanation. It needs no justification.

When someone offers you a drink, it is perfectly fine to say, "No, thanks." And think of it as, the 'no thanks', that complete sentence. Think of it kind of like a boundary. It's an acknowledgement of what is right for you in that moment. It's an acknowledgement also that your needs matter.

But I will tell you, it is going to be something that requires practice, especially if you are convinced that you need a "good" reason to say no. Or if you have a lot of fear or a lot of worry about saying no, and how you believe it might mean something negative about you. Your goal is simply to practice saying "No, thanks," and then allow for there to be silence.

Practicing the silence piece really is the key to this. Because a lot of you are going to notice that you are tempted not only to offer much more of an explanation rather than just 'no thanks'. But if you say "No, thanks," and just treat it like a complete sentence, like it is, you may notice that you're tempted to follow up with an excuse for why you're not drinking.

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In many ways, we're kind of taught to do this. I find this a lot where there's advice out there on the internet about things to say, especially during the Dry January season. Things to say when you're not drinking and the excuses of, "Well, I'm not feeling well. I'm taking medication that doesn't mix with alcohol. I'm on a diet. I have a training run tomorrow."

I mean, so often a lot of the advice that I see, it's really about coming up with any sort of explanation other than, "This is Dry January for me." And I think it feeds into this idea that there's this magical kind of good excuse out there that will help you avoid the follow-up questions, or it will help you kind of silence pushy people.

But I'm going to tell you, in my experience, that's just not the case. So if there's no magical bulletproof excuse that you can have, that will help you avoid any follow-up question or help you silence pushy people, what you really need to do is use this moment to your advantage. Because a lot of times what almost happens with the excuses that we end up offering, what we end up doing are offering white lies.

So maybe even if you do have a training run tomorrow, is that the real reason why you're saying no to the drink? Probably not. And I will tell you, I was the queen of telling little white lies. I remember once telling some friends when I met up with them that I wasn't drinking because I was on antibiotics, which was not the case. I was not taking antibiotics.

It turned into this whole prolonged conversation with the people that I was with about how it was totally fine to drink, and how other people, they had been on antibiotics before and had alcohol and it wasn't a problem. I went down this whole crazy road. I can really remember this. I can picture exactly where we were. It was so crazy to me.

I went down this road of defending this lie that wasn't even the real reason why I didn't want to drink that night. The real reason is that I didn't want to. I

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wanted to go out. I wanted to see these people. I wanted to have fun. And I didn't want to drink. But there was no part of me that felt comfortable telling them that.

And so I spent so many years in this place of trying out different little white lies and seeing if one of them was just going to be the magical one that was finally going to work.

But the problem with white lies, it's that they foster disconnection with yourself. They reinforce the idea that the real reason that you're not drinking is a secret that you must hide from others. I want you to think about that. I want you to think about what that does for you on your journey.

When you are trying to change your relationship with alcohol, you're trying to drink less, you're trying to cut back, or you're trying to experiment with alcohol-free periods. Whatever your certain goal is, I want you to think about what it does for your psyche to hold onto this idea that the reason that you're saying no is a secret that must be hidden from others.

Now I can hear some of you saying, "But Rachel, there are certain people in my life, and they make a really big deal about it. They won't let it go. They give me a hard time." And yes, of course I believe it is nobody's business but your own whether or how much you drink, but white lies don't actually help you feel more comfortable in the decision that you're making.

They are a form of people pleasing. They end up eroding your integrity with yourself. And when you erode your integrity with yourself, guess what's going to happen? It's really easy to feel annoyed and resentful and blame others for why it's hard to say no, why it's hard for you to keep your commitment.

And if you've listened to me before on this podcast, you know that I do not think time blaming others is time well spent. You are better off spending

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your time and energy turning inward, focusing inward, understanding what's happening inside of you. Because no matter what, we're not going to be able to control other people.

I know we wish we could, but it doesn't work like that. So practicing treating 'no thanks' like a complete sentence that needs no explanation. It requires no justification. It helps you bring your focus inward and understand some of the aspects of the habit that you may not have full awareness on right now.

You say "No, thanks," and then you pay attention to what bubbles up next. Do you feel defensive? Do you feel secretive? Do you feel a little awkward? Do you feel a little guilty? Are you fixated on what the other person thinks of your choice rather than what you think of your choice? Whatever bubbles up is trying to reveal the thought patterns that are keeping you stuck.

It's showing you the real reason that it's hard to say no is a lot less about alcohol than you might think. It's a lot more about what your brain believes the drink represents, whether that is belonging or fun or connection, or just believing that that drink represents that you're normal.

That was a huge a-ha for me to recognize how much I was putting so much weight into the idea that I couldn't be normal if I didn't drink. That my weirdness would just be on display for everyone to see. And the only way that I could hide it was I had to be like everyone else, I had to be having a drink.

That was a huge piece of my own work that I had to do around my relationship with alcohol. And that was work, the kind of judgment that I had about myself. That was work that really had very little to do with alcohol, very little to do with my cravings. Saying "No, thanks," and then allowing there to be silence, it puts the ball in the other person's court.

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And here's the thing, their response will reveal so much about their relationship with alcohol. I will tell you this, I found that to be a very helpful switch early on when I had so much drama, to switch my attention to being fixated on me, to kind of getting curious and noticing, "Huh, I wonder what this is revealing? What this is showing me about the other person's relationship with alcohol?"

If I could get curious about that for a moment, sometimes just a split-second moment of curiosity, it just helped take that kind of fixation off myself. So pretty much without fail, when you say "No, thanks," and allow there to be silence, you're going to encounter one of four responses.

You're going to find people who genuinely do not care. They just don't, and they offer you something non-alcoholic. You will encounter people... this kind of blew my mind, right?... But you will encounter people who will also switch to something non-alcoholic when you say no, because they realize they have a fellow compatriot, right?

I was so sure; I was so living in this belief for the longest time that everyone just loves to drink. And I see now how so many people out there really don't like drinking all that much, but they feel like that's just what you do, right? Everyone does it. And the moment that they have a fellow compatriot, it's like, "Oh yeah, me too. I'll have one of those too. That mocktail sounds great. I'll get one too."

You'll also encounter people who are disappointed and may try persuasion or teasing to get you to change your mind. This is true, right? This is a fact. You will encounter some of these people.

You may also encounter people who are rude or judgmental or make snarky comments, right? There's nothing that we can do to set up the world, so you only encounter the first two groups of people. You will

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encounter all four. And in fact, learning how to feel comfortable, no matter which of these four responses you get, that is the key.

I will just add that people who are rude and judgmental or make snarky comments, and I've had my fair share of this as well... I think we just have to acknowledge internally that this is a little bit of a red flag, right? When someone is jumping to a place of being rude or making rude comments, it's an attempt to put the spotlight on you.

And I think that people do this because they're trying to deflect from their own insecurities around alcohol. Now, if someone really won't let it drop, and of course this will sometimes happen, my recommendation is just to stick with the truth, whatever the truth is for you. Again, right? Everybody's on different journeys here, right?

So the truth for you may be, "I'm trying to cut back on how much I drink." The truth for you may be, "I decided to stop drinking. I feel better drinking less alcohol. I'm just experimenting with not drinking for a while." The truth might be, "I didn't like how much I was drinking, so I'm deciding to take it easy for a while," right? You know what your own truth is.

You know what brought you here, why you're doing this work, and why you want to change your relationship with alcohol. But I want you to just notice if your tendency is to frame the reasons that brought you here, to frame that in kind of shame or brokenness, right? And if you notice yourself doing that, just bring it back to the facts. Just focus, right?

If we were to describe it in a really neutral, nonjudgmental way, how would you describe why it is that you're saying no? Remember, you don't have to give people a full explanation. But I think sometimes it really just helps. It helped me a lot to say, "I just feel better when I'm not drinking." That was really true for me.

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Was I feeling awkward sometimes? Sure. Was I feeling insecure sometimes? Sure. But overall, it was really true for me that I felt better when there was less alcohol in my life. Remember, your goal here is to use 'no thanks' as a boundary, to hold that boundary, allow there to be silence, and notice what that is like. Notice what comes up for you.

And you will find that the responses that you are most worried about getting from people, because of course we all imagine these scenarios, you will find that the responses you're most worried about, invariably they mirror your own worries, doubts, and judgments about your relationship with alcohol. That's why practicing this is so powerful. You need to see all of this if you actually want to create lasting change.

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

Hey guys, you already know that drinking less has plenty of health benefits. But did you know that the work you do to change your relationship with alcohol will help you become more of the person you want to be in every part of your life? Learning how to manage your brain and your cravings is an investment in your physical, emotional and personal wellbeing.

And that's exactly what's waiting for you when you join my membership *Take a Break*. Whether you want to drink less, drink rarely, or not at all, we'll help you figure out a relationship with alcohol that works for you. We'll show you why rules, drink plans, and Dry January so often fail, and give you the tools you need to feel in control and trust yourself.

So, head on over to RachelHart.com and sign up today, because changing the habit is so much easier when you stop trying to go it alone.

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