

Ep #410: Turning Dry January Failure Into Success



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #410: Turning Dry January Failure Into Success

If you have a Dry January goal and it didn't turn out the way that you wanted, then listen up. Maybe you never got it off the ground or you gave up after a week, or you got to mid-month and it just felt like the days were dragging by and you were tired of turning down invites. This is Episode 410, and I'm going to share a mindset shift that's going to turn any Dry January attempt, even those that didn't get off the ground, into a success.

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.

There's a quote that I came across recently from an abstract painter named Agnes Martin. And I think that it perfectly encapsulates the mindset shift that is needed when it comes to learning how to change your drinking and your relationship with alcohol. So the quote is this, "That which seems like a false step is just the next step."

And I was thinking about it a lot recently because of course, we're in the middle of January and so many of you out there are working on a Dry January or attempted a Dry January. And I will say this, research has shown that for all of those of you who have attempted a Dry January, more of you have failed. This is nothing to feel bad about.

There was a survey a couple of years ago that found that the average American only lasted about 10 days into a Dry January before giving up. And it can seem really daunting or maybe even depressing to hear that data because it might reinforce a story that you have that this is too hard and you're never gonna be able to do it.

But I think that the real reason why Dry January and Sober October and other times where you set a goal to abstain from alcohol for a certain period

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

Ep #410: Turning Dry January Failure Into Success

of time. I think the reason why they can feel so daunting is because we make the mistake of approaching these moments as if we are taking a pass-fail test.

So rather than approaching it, like the quote that I shared with you from Agnes Martin, "That which seems like a false step is just the next step," we approach it with this all-or-nothing mindset. But what I want you to consider is that if you were to just shift away from that pass-fail mindset into this idea that anything that seems like a false step is just your next step to figuring out how to change, figuring out how to have a new relationship, figuring out how not to give into your cravings, that would change everything.

Because no matter what happens, it would always be just the next step. You give in on day 10, that's just the next step. You stop by the wine shop because you had a crappy day at work, that's just the next step. You stop by the wine shop because you had a crappy day at work. That's just the next step. You say yes to a drink because your best friend is in town. Again, just the next step.

You threw in the towel because you got some unexpected bad news. Once again, just the next step. So you get the idea here. You can approach any moment that you're so sure is a moment of failure and see it as just the next step. And when you make that kind of shift, it really will change everything for you.

One of the things that I work with people so often, we don't do a Dry January in the membership, but I have a 30-day challenge that people can start at any time and people will do multiple times. And the thing that I really work on with people time and time again is changing how they approach any period of time where they're going to set a goal for themselves.

And the way that I want people to shift is to understand that you may have an idea of what this period of time is supposed to look like. But when you

Ep #410: Turning Dry January Failure Into Success

cling to this idea that you know what it's supposed to look like, and you're supposed to have this kind of unbroken streak of X's crossed out on the calendar for every day that you succeeded, every day that you met your goal and kept your commitment, that that idea is actually going to create a lot of unnecessary obstacles when it comes to success.

Because success is not about being perfect. It really isn't. Changing your relationship with alcohol is not a pass-fail test. People do not graduate from my program because they finally got to a point where they were 100% perfect all of the time.

People graduate when they know, when they trust themselves deep in their bones, they totally believe that something which on the surface appears like a false step, it's just the next step. It's just the next piece of information and data for them to use to help get to know the habit better and help get to know themselves better.

I was at a dinner party recently with some friends and Dry January came up and someone said, oh, you know, like this must be kind of like your time of the year, you must be really into it because of, you know, what you do and your line of work. And people were surprised to hear my reservations about this approach.

And listen, if you're in the middle of a Dry January, I am not suggesting that you stop. I'm not suggesting that all of your efforts to say no have been in vain. You know, someone at that party, you know, they shared their own experience taking a break during the month of January, the first time that they did it. And they talked about how it just really blew their mind. It radically changed their story about drinking and why they needed to drink and what circumstances required it.

I mean, it really can be transformative. And the name of this podcast is Take a Break. I deeply believe that time away from alcohol can be

Ep #410: Turning Dry January Failure Into Success

incredibly powerful and incredibly enlightening. And it can be also amazing for your body. It can do amazing things for your mind.

But I also believe that too often, we misuse these periods away from alcohol. Unknowingly, we don't mean to do this. But we approach things like Dry January and Sober October and those moments, you know, when you wake up and you tell yourself, oh, I'm never doing that again, or I'm never drinking again, we approach these moments with this all or nothing black and white thinking.

And when you're in that mindset, you will see every moment, every interaction as, okay, either I was 100% good and therefore I succeeded, or I was bad because I gave in and I failed. You can end up so fixated on being good or not making a mistake that you miss seeing that those moments, those moments where you gave in, what you think is a false step, is just the next step in your journey.

It is the moment where you are going to uncover something really, really important and valuable about how the habit works. And I will say on the flip side, I have watched many people, and I have done this myself as well, I have watched people kind of, you know, just grit their teeth and willpower their way through not drinking for a certain number of days.

And they do this either by avoiding triggering situations or avoiding certain people or making sure that they don't have any temptation around them. I mean, you can set up your world for short periods of time to make it so it will help you say no.

But when you're approaching these moments purely through gritting your teeth or avoidance or willpower, you can make it to the other side and get to day 31, and the next day, all of your desire is there. Your desire may not have changed at all because internally, you may just have been white-

Ep #410: Turning Dry January Failure Into Success

knuckling your way through it and just counting down the days until you could drink again.

And so even if you have that "perfect" Dry January, it may not give you the results that you want. Again, not because you've done something bad, but because we fall into this all-or-nothing approach. We treat it like a pass-fail test.

To me, if you give in during Dry January or Sober October or in my own 30 day challenge and my program, to me that moment is a gold mine. That moment has so much valuable data for you. It's going to teach you about your cravings. It's going to teach you about your drink archetypes. It's going to teach you about your triggers and your excuses. That moment has the potential to change everything, to help you understand your habit in a way that you didn't before it happened.

It can be such incredibly transformative and powerful to have this data. And I will tell you this, because I have watched thousands of people do this work. And I have watched so many people have the eye-opening, mind-blowing moment, not because they got to the other side being perfect, but the moment when they came to me and they said, "Oh my God, I don't understand. It's day four and I've already messed up." And we were able together to mine what was going on there and really learn something about how their desire, their cravings, their excuses, their drink archetypes were working at a deeper level.

And when they had that information, you can just watch. It's like everything clicks for them all of a sudden. All of a sudden, they see the habit and they see what happened in a completely different way. And that can be way more powerful than having a perfect streak.

Again, this is not to say, if you're currently riding a Dry January streak, this is not to say that you're somehow doing something wrong. It's just to

Ep #410: Turning Dry January Failure Into Success

remind you that the streak is not the point. The streak is not the goal. The goal is not to accumulate an unbroken line of Xs on a calendar. The goal is to reexamine the stories about why you drink and why you think it's necessary in certain situations and why saying no is hard and what you think will be difficult without it.

And listen, you can get an unbroken line of days crossed off a calendar and not look at any of that. But you can also get a calendar that has some days where you didn't manage to put that X down. And in that calendar, you can have a ton of data, a ton of a-ha's in the moments where your knee jerk is to assume that you failed.

And I will tell you this, if no one ever taught you how to do this, if no one ever taught you how to look at these moments that you assume are a false step and transform them into the next step? You're not alone. I spent most of my life trying to avoid mistakes and avoid failure because I thought all of these things were false steps. I didn't consider that they were just the next step on my journey.

So that's what I want you all to do. I want you to just embrace the concept, embrace this idea that when it comes to your drinking, but frankly, when it comes to most things, that which seems like a false step is just the next step. Try on that thought, and then consider what would change for you if you really believe that.

What would change for you about how you approached and understood the moment where you gave in? What would change for you in how you approached yourself and how you talked to yourself about this moment? What would change for you in how you saw your ability to change, in your belief that changing a relationship and reaching your goal was possible?

I'll give you a hint. Everything would change. Everything, when it came to this, would change for you. So I want you to do that. I want you to embrace

Ep #410: Turning Dry January Failure Into Success

this idea this year. Whatever you think is a false step on your journey to changing your relationship with alcohol, I want you to remind yourself that it's just the next step. All right, that's it for today. I'll see you 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.