

Ep #414: How Zooming In Helps You Drink Less



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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If you've ever had too much to drink and woken up the next day and then thought to yourself, "Maybe I'm just someone who can't moderate or maybe I have an addictive personality," I will tell you for years I believe that this was true about me. This is episode 414 and I'm gonna help you understand why these explanations feel so true, but why they actually aren't.

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.

So my six-year-old is totally obsessed with chess. He plays with his dad and he plays on the iPad and he plays in a school club. And I do not know how to play chess. When I was a kid, someone tried to teach me how to play. And I remember them trying to explain all the different pieces and how they moved on the board. And I remember trying to play a game, but I kept moving the pieces incorrectly. I just couldn't figure it out. And I very quickly decided at a young age that this game was too confusing and it was too hard and it must only be for super smart people. So I never learned.

But I've been watching him play with his dad and I wanna be part of it. He loves it so much. So over the holidays, I asked my six-year-old if he would teach me how to play, and he did. Now listen, I am not very good. He almost always wins. The other day, he did get me in checkmate in three moves, which I did not enjoy at all. But I will tell you, I have been so amazed at how quickly I picked up the game, mainly because I spent four decades believing I'm just not smart enough to play chess.

I spent years and years holding onto this belief that because I was struggling to figure out how different pieces moved on the board, that meant something about who I was as a person and my intelligence. And I know you're not listening to this episode because you wanna learn about chess, but what happened to me is something that shows up all the time

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when I'm working with people, when I'm helping them learn how to drink less, learn how to change their relationship with alcohol. And I will tell you, it also happened in my own drinking and with my own relationship with alcohol.

So how many times have you turned your frustration about your drinking and how much you're drinking and the fact that you're struggling to say no to temptation - how many times have you turned that frustration into this sweeping declaration about who you are as a person?

So you look at your drinking and you look at the inability to stop yourself from going overboard, and what happens? You think, oh, I must have an addictive personality. I'm just not someone who can moderate. When it comes to alcohol, I just don't have any willpower.

Now I will tell you, I believed all three of these things and I had a lot of evidence supporting these beliefs accumulated over many, many, many years. And for a long time in my life, even though they were very painful to believe, I would have also insisted that they were true because I kept drinking too much. I kept promising myself only to have a couple drinks and then I would go really overboard or I kept swearing up and down that I was never gonna be that stupid again and I was gonna learn my lesson and then I would be that stupid again.

So the more I failed to control my drinking, the more ingrained these sweeping declarations that I had made about myself, the more ingrained they became. Here's the problem though. We see what we believe about ourselves.

So if you believe that you have an addictive personality, you will see your drinking as a reflection of that. If you believe that you have no willpower when it comes to alcohol, you will see reaching for another glass and another glass as evidence that this is true. If you believe that you're just

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someone who can't moderate, guess what? You will see your drinking and drinking too much as proof that this is true.

But if I were to zoom in with you on one specific moment, rather than kind of looking at all of the times that you had too much to drink. If I were to zoom in on one specific moment, a moment where you had a craving and then you acted on that craving, a moment where you had the desire for more and then you went and had more, what you would find would be very different.

One of the things that I'm always hammering home on this podcast is the idea that your body doesn't make a move without something first unfolding in your mind. This is the basis of the think-feel-act cycle. The think-feel-act cycle tells us that our drinking doesn't just happen. We don't have an action, we don't do anything without a thought and a feeling first.

So it's not this spontaneous thing. How much you drink is a thought of those thoughts and feelings. Now keep in mind that often they're happening at a very unconscious level, but they're still there.

So my question for you then is if we were to look really closely at one specific moment, not the sum total of all the times, but to just look at one specific moment where you said yes to a craving, one specific moment where you poured yourself another drink or you ordered yourself another, what would we see?

If you believe about yourself that you're someone who has an addictive personality, you don't see anything unfolding. You don't see that think-feel-act cycle. You just see a person who was cursed with losing the genetic lottery.

If you believe I just can't moderate, again, you won't see anything unfolding in that moment. You will just see someone who is different and somehow broken from other "normal" people.

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If you believe, I just don't have any willpower when it comes to alcohol, you won't see anything unfolding in that specific moment. You will just see alcohol as powerful and you as powerless. This is the real problem.

Now, listen, I am not suggesting that you walk around repeating to yourself, oh, I do have willpower, I am someone who can moderate, I don't have an addictive personality, and that doing that is just gonna magically fix your drinking.

What I'm suggesting is that if you're willing to zoom in on one specific moment, that you would see something very different from your current explanation as to why you're struggling with temptation, why you're struggling with your cravings, why you're struggling to drink less.

What would happen if you were willing to consider that there might actually be an alternative explanation for why your body made the move towards the drink that had nothing with these sweeping negative generalizations that we are so quick to make about ourselves when we don't like our behavior, but also when we don't understand it?

Because when you zoom in on that specific moment, I promise the only thing that you are ever, ever going to find is a thought connected to one of the eight drink archetypes, that's it. You would find a thought like, I deserve it because I had a really crappy day. Or who cares? Let's live a little. Or this won't be fun if I'm not drinking too.

Or a thought like, I'm bored. I just want to stop thinking. I just want to shut off my mind. I need a break. Or thoughts like, I don't want to feel like I'm sitting at the kids' table. I want this to be fancy. You would find a drink archetype. That's it. That's the only thing you're ever gonna find.

And guess what? These archetypes have nothing to do with you as a person. The archetypes are just a story that your brain unconsciously

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learned about alcohol. That's all it is. It's something that you learned, and it's something that you can unlearn.

That's what you're gonna find if you drill down into a specific moment. You're gonna find a thought connected to a drink archetype, not some sweeping generalization about who you are. That sweeping generalization about who you are, that all happens after the fact.

So I want you to consider that you were not taught how to manage impulsive or compulsive behaviors other than hearing people say, don't do that. Don't do that. That's the information that we're given. But if nobody ever explains why you did the thing you said you weren't going to do, or the thing that you later come to regret, what will happen if you're not careful is you will turn that into a reflection of who you are. You will be grasping for an explanation. And when nobody gives us a framework to understand our behaviors or understand our habits or how they form, well, we just come up with what we think is the next best thing, which is it must be me. I'm just someone who.

This is why it's so easy to end up knee-deep in shame about your drinking. And I will tell you this, you can shame yourself for a little while, but in the long run, shame is not a useful or productive tool for creating lasting change because it feels terrible. It feels terrible. And guess what? We have learned that drinking is a temporary escape from the emotions that we don't like to feel, including shame. Trust me, I know this from experience.

So if when you try to explain your drinking by telling yourself, well, maybe I have an addictive personality or maybe I'm someone who just can't moderate or maybe I just don't have any willpower when it comes to alcohol, I want you instead to see if you're willing to drill down to one specific moment.

It can be the last time that you gave into a craving or the last time you reached for another. Choose a specific moment and then ask yourself, why

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in that specific moment did my body make a move towards the drink? When you go there, when you ask yourself that question, you'll have to start engaging with what was I thinking? How was I feeling? And again, I promise the only thing you're ever gonna find is a thought connected to a drink archetype. And that is the very best news. Because what you're struggling with right now, it has nothing to do with you.

I know it feels like it does. I know it feels like it's a referendum on you, but truly it isn't. I really want you to try this out. And here's the best thing about everything that I'm teaching you guys. This tool to zoom in and get really specific, it's gonna help you not only figure out your drinking, but it's gonna help you in so many different areas of your life, because we don't just make negative, sweeping generalizations about ourselves in the realm of alcohol. Most people tend to do it in lots of different places.

So think about all the times you've thought to yourself, "I'm just someone who," or "I'm just not" fill in the blank, XYZ. Get curious about those places where instead of understanding, hey, what is actually going on in the moment, what is actually driving my behavior, you've turned it into an indictment about who you are as a person.

If you wanna drink less and change your relationship with alcohol, you need to be willing to zoom in on one specific moment and get curious there instead of making these sweeping negative generalizations about yourself.

All right, that's it for today. I will 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?

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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.