

Ep #417: Why Your Rules Aren't Working



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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Have you ever set rules for yourself around drinking? So maybe you decided you were gonna drink less or just take some time away from alcohol and you had all of these good intentions. You set the rule, but it didn't work. Well, this is episode 417, and I'm going to explain the real reason your rules aren't working and what you need to do instead.

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 the other day, I had this interaction with my two and a half year old that got me thinking about the drink archetype. So I will tell you that in my family, we drink a lot of La Croix, I mean a lot. And the other day my husband got home from work and the two of us were in the kitchen talking, I was cooking, he was telling me about his day and my boys were already home and my littlest came wandering into the kitchen and he started kind of rifling through the pantry.

I didn't think much about it because I was caught up talking to my husband, not really paying attention to what he was doing. And then my two-year-old kind of popped around the corner and he says with this big smile on his face, it was so cute, he says, for mama. And in his outstretched hand, he's holding a can of grapefruit La Croix. And I was like, oh, that's kind of funny and cute, thank you.

And then he goes over to his father and from behind his back, he hands him a can. He says, for Papa. And he has a can of lime La Croix for my husband. And my husband and I just stood there for a moment, kind of flabbergasted, like, what is going on here? Did our two-year-old just deliver us our correct drink order without either of us asking?

So we hadn't asked our toddler to go to the pantry and get us La Croix, yet he knew our preferences, and he also knew the correct time to deliver them. We often start drinking La Croix in the evening while we are kind of

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unwinding from the day, my husband's getting home, I'm working on dinner, but we never sat down our son and said, listen, it's really important that you know that mama only drinks grapefruit La Croix and papa only drinks lime La Croix.

And by the way, we don't really start drinking them until around 4, 4:30 in the day. We didn't need to have those conversations because he has been studying us so closely. He's been paying attention to what we do and when we do it, and he's absorbing all of that information without either of us ever saying anything to him about our preferences.

And that's what I wanna talk to you guys about today. I wanna talk to you about socialization. I wanna talk to you about implicit and explicit messages that you get around alcohol. And the reason I wanna talk to you about this is because most people pay little to no attention to this piece of the puzzle when they are trying to change.

So you may decide, you know what, I really need to drink less, or I really want some time away from alcohol. And what happens is that your focus is all about devising rules. So I got to set a rule and then I got to follow the rule. And if you are like most people, your efforts are going to be hit or miss when it comes to following rules.

And unfortunately, what will happen next is that because you're struggling to follow the rules and you don't understand why, you will start believing, hey, maybe I'm the problem. Maybe there's something wrong with me. Maybe there's something wrong with my brain. Maybe I'm just someone who, insert whatever kind of negative story that you might have about you when it comes to your ability to change.

Now, I will tell you, I was in this cycle for, I don't know, like 10 plus years of my life. I decided that I needed to do something about my drinking and I would set so many rules, so many rules, and I would try really, really hard to follow them. And I had tons and tons of good reasons why this was important to me and why this mattered to me, but it never worked, right? Or it would work for a little bit, and then eventually I would cave and I would

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drink way too much and I'd wake up the next day wondering like, God, Rachel, what the heck is wrong with you? I have all of these kind of logical, well-intentioned rules, but that didn't matter.

And the reason why it didn't matter was not because there was something kind of inherently wrong or different or broken about me, and there's nothing inherently wrong or different or broken about you. The reason why they didn't work is because rules were no match for my drink archetypes. They were no match for all of the socialization, all of the implicit messaging that I had received around alcohol and drinking and what it means to drink and what it means not to drink and what it means to struggle with your drinking.

And so what I want you to consider is that your relationship with alcohol started forming well before you ever had your first drink. And what I mean by relationship is simply all of your conscious and unconscious beliefs about alcohol, right? So I know that it's kind of wild to think about it this way, to think about a relationship with alcohol forming before you ever had a drink, but it really is the case. That is what happens.

I did not understand this. I assumed for a very, very long time that before I started drinking, I was pretty much a blank slate when it came to alcohol because I had no direct experience with it. So what did I know?

But my brain actually believed that it knew a lot because I lived and I grew up in a world where people drink, where I would see my parents drink and my relatives drink. And I saw it in stores and I saw ads and I heard people talk about it and I heard about it in songs and I watched people get drunk in movies and I heard stories from friends.

So I didn't have direct experience. I didn't know what it tasted like. I didn't know what it felt like to be drunk for a very long time, but I had a lot of indirect information about all of these things. This is what I want you to consider, that you learn so much about your environment simply by being exposed to it, simply by observing. This is true with everything, and it is true with alcohol. It is true with drinking. And you have to consider this piece of

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the puzzle when you're trying to change. You are learning all the time simply through exposure to your environment.

Now, sure, at some point an adult may have sat you down and said, okay, you know what? You really shouldn't start drinking until you're of age or you really should be careful with alcohol because you know, grandpa was an alcoholic.

You may have gotten some explicit messages, but you got way more implicit messages, way more messaging that was conveyed indirectly by just observing, by just watching what was happening around you. And I would argue, and what I want you to consider, is that what you learned implicitly has a lot more influence than the things that you were taught explicitly about alcohol.

And this implicit education, we don't realize that it's happening to us, but it is why you're in this cycle of setting rules and then breaking rules and then wondering what's wrong with you and why can't I just do what's good for me? It's why you feel stuck right now. There's nothing wrong with you. You're just not addressing the root cause of why you're saying yes to the craving and why you're reaching for another.

Rules will never get at what is happening beneath the surface. They are a superficial fix that generally doesn't work very well. And if they do work, they don't work for very long.

So growing up, you learned tons about alcohol implicitly or indirectly, and you did learn a little bit explicitly, but I want you to think about that for a moment. Think about the times where someone sat you down and said, okay, listen, it's time for you to learn about alcohol. I want you to learn about the brain and how habits form and how to manage impulsive and compulsive behaviors. Most of us are not getting that education.

Now, maybe your parents had the talk with you about underage drinking. Maybe they explicitly said, you really got to be careful. Or if you're going to drink, I want you to do it under my roof. Or don't drink and drive. Or don't get in a car with anyone who is drunk. And I promise, you know, I'll pick you

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up and I won't be mad at you. Or they may have said very explicitly, alcoholism and drug abuse, it runs in our family, so you need to be careful.

Now, what I want you to consider is that these aren't so much educational lessons, they're just really warnings. Meanwhile, you may have gotten implicit messages every day or every week of your life growing up by watching your parents or watching other adults in your life drink and watching and observing the environment around you. And guess what's gonna make more of an impression?

A warning that you got once or twice, or years and years of watching behavior and getting all of these messages. Now, you may have also learned about alcohol and health class in school. I remember learning about the dangers of underage drinking. I think they covered it in 10th grade health class, but it was probably altogether only a couple hours of instruction. And again, it was all warning. There was no information on how to manage behaviors that feel either impulsive or compulsive or both.

And yet, I was learning about alcohol all the time through what I saw in the world around me, through watching people and watching movies and noticing how alcohol was portrayed. I'm sure I'm dating myself with this, but I really vividly remember watching movies like *Sixteen Candles*. And I was like, oh, okay, like this is what drinking looks like. This is what you're supposed to be doing in high school. This is funny. This is fun.

I was learning about it through music and books and ads and news and marketing and TV shows. And you were too. And I want you to consider that all of this implicit education that happened, all of this socialization that happened, it is influencing you way more than you understand right now. And it is really a big piece of what is making it hard for you to say no to temptation. It is a big piece of why you keep going back for more.

Because your brain isn't looking at the drink and just like, okay, well, here we go. We have one oxygen and two carbon and six hydrogen atoms. It sees like a whole story. It has this whole idea of what the drink represents,

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which means that the beginnings of the drink archetypes, the beginnings of the archetypes take hold long before your first drink.

So maybe you saw champagne brought out for special occasions. Okay, so the beginnings of the Upgrade are starting to take root. Or maybe you were hearing song lyrics that would link drinking and having fun and crazy nights out.

Maybe the beginnings of the Connector or the Release were starting to take root. Maybe you watched adults in your life go straight to the fridge and get a beer after a bad day or drink more during particularly stressful periods. Okay, so the beginnings of the Escape archetype were starting to form.

So your relationship with alcohol starts well before you ever drink, well before alcohol becomes a part of your life, and well before you get to the point where you decide, you know what, this relationship that I have, it's not serving me, something needs to change. And all of that is to say that your well-intentioned rules aren't working because they're just surface-level attempts at change.

They aren't addressing the archetypes. They aren't addressing what your brain thinks the drink represents. They're just telling you, hey, you shouldn't do this. Hey, you should be saying no. And that's why your rules aren't working. Not because there's something wrong with you, but because you are not working with the complete picture of the habit.

So I will tell you this, we now have on the website, on rachelhart.com, you can now go there and you can read about all of the eight archetypes and really start to understand them more in depth. I've talked about them on the podcast before, I've done a lot of episodes, but that is a great place if you're just starting, you know, you're new to this, to dive in there.

You can also take the quiz at drinktype.com. If you don't know your primary and secondary drink archetypes, I really encourage you to take the quiz and find out. Now, I will also say that a lot of times people will say, oh my

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gosh, I identify with so many of the archetypes, much more than one or two.

That's also very, very normal. But you wanna have your primary and secondary archetypes because you wanna know, where do I need to focus my attention first. It will help you understand not only what your brain is learning from drinking, not only the kind of implicit messages that are getting reinforced, but it'll help you start to see, hey, this is what I need to do to change. It's not just about setting rules. I actually have to start working to dismantle this archetype.

And then if you wanna dive even deeper, *The Ultimate Guide to Drinking Less* is really your next step. It not only goes into the archetypes much more in depth, but it really starts to give you a framework for how to change without just focusing on setting rules.

I don't want you to be stuck in the place where I was for so long, which was I just kept telling myself that I needed to land on the right rule. Like I just kept devising different iterations of rules and hoping that one would stick and every time it didn't work, feeling worse and worse about myself.

But *The Ultimate Guide* will really give you concrete exercises and tools to start to dismantle the archetypes and start to work on the habit at the deeper level and address these implicit messages and the socialization, right? Because all of that affects not only your cravings, not only the moments that you feel tempted, all of that affects your commitment.

This is a piece of the puzzle that you have been missing. And when you start working with your archetypes, not only is your drinking gonna make so much more sense, but you're also going to have an avenue to work on that's gonna help get you to where you wanna go faster.

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

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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.