

## Ep #418: Numbing the Noise Won't Work



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #418: Numbing the Noise Won't Work

If you are like most people, you've probably had the experience of feeling so overwhelmed by your emotions that you would do anything to forget what is bothering you, which makes it very tempting to pour a drink and then another and then another. This is episode 418, and I'm talking about the three overlooked ways to manage these moments without trying to drown your sorrows.

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. Today, we are talking about the Escape archetype and how it impacts your drinking, why it makes it hard to cut back, and most importantly, how to address it. The Escape is a very common archetype. It shows up for a lot of people. It often can show up unexpectedly. So it may not have been an archetype that you kind of more consistently deal with, maybe like the Mask or the Connector or the Upgrade.

The Escape can show up in those moments where it just seems like life is not working. Things are not going the way that you want. If you were to write the story of how this week, this month, this year should be looking, it's not adhering to that story.

So what happens with the Escape archetype, and if you want, you can go to my website, [rachelhart.com](http://rachelhart.com), and I have breakdowns of all of the archetypes there, so you can learn more about the archetype there, but what happens with the Escape archetype is that your brain starts to associate alcohol with a way to forget what's bothering you.

So I talk a lot with the archetypes. It's not just that you love your favorite drink, it's about what the drink represents. So your brain is seeing something more than, oh, like I'm just, you know, for me it was like, I just really love a gin and tonic.

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Sometimes when I'd be looking at that gin and tonic, I would be seeing something more than that. Sometimes it would be the Escape. Sometimes it would be the Mask. Sometimes it would be the Upgrade. It would really depend on the situation. But that's what I want you to understand. There's that kind of unspoken or more unconscious piece of your desire.

And the Escape, like I said, it commonly appears when you're feeling besieged by your emotions, when life throws you a curveball. Maybe you're a new parent and you're feeling really overwhelmed trying to juggle work and family, or maybe you're just feeling really overwhelmed trying to be a parent.

Maybe you're reading the headlines and you're really worried about the future and you just have a hard time not obsessing about it and not kind of clicking refresh and going back, you know, to your news sources again and again or scrolling through social media, reading about all the terrible things that are happening.

Maybe you're dealing with interpersonal struggles in your family or in your relationship. Maybe you're going through loss or grief. There's no kind of one scenario in which the Escape shows up. It's really just about those moments when your emotions feel so big, so overwhelming, and very difficult to manage and handle on your own.

So the idea behind this archetype is that you start to use a drink as a way to numb how you feel. So maybe you just wanna not feel how you're feeling. Maybe, sometimes people will describe it as, I just wanna turn my brain off. I just wanna stop myself from the constant catastrophizing or ruminating or all of the worries.

I will tell you this, if you have been really exploring the archetypes, I will say that the Reward and the Escape are one that often appear together and sometimes the Reward can kind of turn into the Escape. Sometimes those kind of like daily stressors can turn into this kind of constant worrying or the

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constant catastrophizing, right? So I see that as the Reward can sometimes progress into the Escape.

But what happens is you feel caught in this bind. So you want to cut back. Maybe you want to stop drinking, but you just know that you're drinking right now, even though you really don't wanna feel the way that you feel, there's a part of you that understands this is not helping, this is not serving me, I don't like this, I don't like a lot of the consequences, I just also, you know, maybe you just like don't like, you know, I remember times in my life that it was just like, okay, well, how many nights am I just going to polish off a bottle of wine?

So there's that piece of you that wants to change, and then there's that piece of you that's like, nope. I get it. It's not great, but now is not the right time. Things are too much, they're too hard, they're too overwhelming. This is not the time to change. And so what I see happen a lot, I witness this with myself at times in my life. I see this with so many people that I work with. I've witnessed this with friends and family and it doesn't have to just be around drinking.

But what will happen is you will get to this point where you will say, now is not the right time. I'm going to address my drinking later. And again, this doesn't have to happen just around the consumption of alcohol. People will say, like, you know, now is not the right time to prioritize my health, right? Or to get into shape or to prioritize rest, or it's all of the ways that we know something in our life, something that we are doing is not serving us, but we also are convincing ourselves that now is not the right time because there's just too much.

I think a lot of times what is actually happening beneath the surface is the fear of losing that security blanket, losing that wubby, losing that comfort that you will get from, okay, so this is how I just don't have to feel how I'm feeling. Now, of course, that comfort is short-lived. You're not doing anything to address what's going on. And as I will talk about it, you're

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actually decreasing the very thing that you want more of, which is to feel resilient in the face of life's challenges.

But I just want to acknowledge it is very, very common to really desire to change, and then also to feel so sure that now is not the right time. And you are gonna tackle this when life comes down. You know this, because I'm sure that this has played out in your own life. I'm sure that you've watched this with other people.

When you tell yourself, I'm gonna tackle this issue when things come down or life comes down, what you know is that something new always comes up. There's another problem, another disaster, another bit of bad news, another crisis. There's always something.

And so the problem with this bind that you are caught in is, yes, you are drinking too much. You are drinking too much, maybe you're drinking more frequently. Your consumption is not great. It's not doing good things for your body. But the bigger problem is what your brain is learning.

This is a really key thing that all of the archetypes, they really help you focus on this bit. What is my brain learning? And when you understand that piece, it really helps you take wherever you are right now and understand your drinking, not purely from a level of, yes, yes, I know, you know, consuming this quantity isn't good for my health, to really understand, actually my brain is learning something here that I would argue is even more problematic than how much you're drinking.

Your brain is always learning in relation to your drinking. This is a big, big piece that you need to pay attention to and focus on. And when we are talking about the Escape in particular, what your brain is learning, and of course we inadvertently teach ourselves this, we're not meaning to do this, but what the brain is learning is, hey, listen, when there's a big emotion, you can't handle it. It's too big for you.

And when you have that unconscious belief about some of your emotions, that they're too big for you, and that you cannot handle them, and that they

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are not tolerable unless you attempt to drink over them, what will end up happening is you will feel so much less resilient when these emotions appear. Because over and over you've reinforced this message, hey, this is too much for me, this is too big, right? I can't handle this, I gotta find a way to escape.

So what I want you to know is the belief that we can't handle our emotions is very normal, but it's also a very big problem. One of the things that I talk about and I work with people on is really reframing the experience of the emotion and choosing on purpose what we want to believe about our emotions, what we want to tell ourselves.

Because I don't think anyone consciously chooses, hey, you know what? I want to go through life believing that my emotions, some of my emotions are just too big for me. They're just too much for me to handle, right? We don't consciously choose that belief system. We unconsciously adopt it.

And we adopt it from our conditioning and from what we see the adults around us doing and how they're behaving with their emotions growing up and the messages that we get, and you know, we unconsciously absorb so many messages that you know actually we can't handle it.

So it's really important to decide on purpose, well what do I want to think about these really big, intense, uncomfortable human emotions? And one of the thoughts that I offer people is your body was built to experience, feel, and process every human emotion.

Now, I wanna be really clear with this. That doesn't mean that it should be a walk in the park and that it's gonna be comfortable. And it also doesn't mean that you shouldn't need help. The human body, it was designed to feel and experience and process all of these emotions.

That doesn't mean that, you know what, I may need help outside of myself, whether that is family or community or therapeutic help, but there's a very big difference between, I can't handle this emotion, it's too strong, it's too intense, it's too much, I need to escape, versus, okay, even emotions that

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feel strong or intense or unyielding, I can remind myself that they're normal, I can remind myself that they're part of the human experience.

And at the same time, I can acknowledge I may need help from people outside of me. I may need help navigating this, but the help that I'm searching for, it's not found in alcohol. It's not found in food. It's not found in any of the things that we kind of try to use, alcohol and drugs and food or other things to kind of anesthetize how we feel.

And this I think is a really big piece of the puzzle that is so often overlooked. We can get really curious about just starting that internal conversation of, what do I actually need when I'm feeling these really big emotions? Now listen, the knee jerk, when I'm working with people and I offer that question, you know, what do you actually need right now? The knee jerk is I need the emotion to go away. I need to stop feeling this way and I need for it to never come back. I have had that thought too.

But it really becomes this very important internal conversation that you have to start to have with yourself to figure out, what do I actually need? Now, when I tell people, we can't do that. Unfortunately, that is not on the table to just delete certain emotions from our experience. They are part of the human experience, so we're taking that off the table.

Then what do you need? And that is the point where a lot of people will just say, I don't know. And that's very normal that you don't know, because I think for most of us, we've never actually engaged with that question.

We've engaged with how do I make it stop immediately? How do I make it go away? How do I stop feeling it? How do I forget what's bothering me? How do I drown my sorrows? Rather than what do I actually need that will help me manage this without putting me in a place where I feel at the mercy of my emotions? I feel that they are too big, too much, I can't handle them.

One of the places that I often start out with people is, you know what, you're probably not normalizing the emotion. I certainly wasn't. That was a



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big process in my own journey to understand that just a step of normalizing what was going on can be incredibly important.

Because when you don't normalize your emotions, guess what happens? You become more fearful of them, right? You start to have the fear of fear. And that sounds kind of wild, but I realized in my own life, God, the fear of fear was a huge thing for me, right? It wasn't that I didn't like feeling afraid, it was that I was afraid of feeling afraid.

So there's that normalizing piece. You're probably not creating safety with these sorts of emotions. Again, the safety comes with rethinking, reframing how you talk about emotions rather than I gotta make this go away immediately, reminding yourself there's no emotion that the human body wasn't meant to handle. My body was designed to handle these emotions.

How do I know? What happens when I experience an emotion? Right? My brain sends a message to the rest of my body and I experience different changes in my body. My heart rate may speed up, it may slow down. My breathing may do the same. It may deepen or it may become more shallow.

My temperature may change. I might feel hot, I might feel cold, I might start sweating. I might be flushed in different places. I may notice kind of sensations in my gut and my intestines, but all of these things are happening. I might have certain parts of my body that are tightening or clenching.

And when you break it down that way, you see, okay, well, all of those things, my body's meant to handle that. It's meant to have the ability to elevate and then decrease my heart rate. I'm meant to have the ability to tense and relax certain muscles. I'm meant to feel temperature fluctuations.

You know, the other thing that's happening in addition to the work of normalizing and starting to create safety, the other thing that's not happening is addressing how catastrophizing or all-or-nothing thinking or black-and-white thinking may be intensifying what you're going through. This really comes back to what I'm talking about with the fear of fear, right?



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When you're feeling afraid, and then you're telling yourself, I can't handle this, or you are telling yourself, I'm never gonna feel any better, everything is ruined, or what if XYZ happens? To be clear, I have had all of these thoughts myself. It's like you are creating additional emotion around whatever initially happened, around whatever emotion was kind of the starting point.

So I was listening to a podcast recently and someone said something that really, really just I so connected with. They said, you know, the moment that you label something as bad you'll never be able to understand it. And I think about how deeply true that was for my own drinking and my relationship with alcohol.

I spent years and years and years fixated on how it was bad and trying to remind myself of the negative consequences. And it wasn't until the moment when I considered that maybe my drinking was good, maybe it was trying to help me solve a problem, maybe it actually had benefits. There were benefits, even though I was suffering a lot of consequences.

It was also creating a bunch of negative things in my life that I didn't like, but to just shift into that place of, instead of how my drinking was bad for me and harming me and everything that was wrong about it, to understand how it was possibly benefiting me and helping me and seeing that it was in many ways helping me solve a problem that I felt like I didn't have another solution for.

But when I made that shift, it really kind of just like blew open my perspective and my understanding because suddenly I had this place from which to truly understand what was going on. And it wasn't that, you know, for years and years and years, I thought, well, Rachel just can't learn her lesson.

And suddenly, you know, what happened for me in that moment, even though at that time I didn't have the language for it, is I saw my archetypes. I started to understand, oh, there's something going on here beyond just I

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just really like to drink, but I like it too much and that's the problem. You know, I don't know when to say when.

Taking all of this to start to see, even with something like the Escape archetype, people often, when I'm teaching this work inside Take a Break, inside my program, I sometimes will find that people want to understand which are the good archetypes and which are the bad archetypes, and it's really not about that.

None of them are good or bad. They really are just different ways that your brain has learned to use alcohol and different beliefs that then have been associated and built in and around the habit that you are trying to change and you have to start to really work at challenging and questioning those beliefs so that you can ultimately change your behaviors.

But when you look at something like the Escape archetype, to understand, well, what do I need to do then? Now, if you have The Ultimate Guide to Drinking Less, I really go into the Escape archetype. I go into all of the archetypes, but for all of them I have different key exercises that you can be working on when this archetype appears so that you aren't feeling like there's no other choice but to give in to temptation or give in to the craving.

But there are some key things that I wanna share with you all today to help you understand your starting point for what you need to do. The very first thing that you can do when you understand, you have the awareness that I think that this is the Escape, I think that's what's going on here with my craving. The first thing that you can do is develop curiosity about your negative emotions.

Now, notice that this is gonna be the exact opposite of what you wanna do, because of course, if we just wanna forget what's bothering us, if we just wanna not feel it, if we wanna numb it, if we wanna make it go away, right, all of those things, when you look at them together, you're saying, oh, okay, so all of those things are telling me that how I am feeling is bad. It is wrong. I shouldn't be feeling this way. And it's very challenging to develop curiosity

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with something that you either hate or that you're afraid of. And that's why it's so powerful to have the ability to do that.

Now, the curiosity can start from a place of curiosity of what does this emotion actually feel like in my body if I were to describe it in a very clinical way? This piece on a very clinical way is so important because when you ask someone what an emotion feels like, you're going to get a lot of very intense adjectives.

And the problem with that is that probably will ratchet up some of the intensity, right? When you're like, what does it feel like? It feels awful, right? It feels like I'm gonna die. It feels like the worst pain I've ever experienced in my entire life.

This is not going to help you because what that is doing is, you know, you understand how the think-feel-act-cycle works and you start to see that when we're describing our emotions in that way, we're creating more negative emotion about the emotion, right? The thoughts that we have about our emotions, all of our emotions, but in particular around our negative emotions, then create more negative emotion on top of it.

You can get really curious about, if I were to describe these sensations to an alien, or if I were to try to describe it as if I was a scientist, how would I describe this in a really clinical way? That's one of the things, to develop curiosity around your negative emotions. You may never have tried this. I remember the very first time that I did this, it really was so intensely transformative.

It was like all of a sudden I was just with my body and with the experience that was happening in my body, it was like I was separate from all of the story, all of my thoughts, all of the narrative that I was used to being kind of, I don't know, wrapped up in, I guess. So I had that moment of seeing like, oh, I guess this could be separate. Like my thoughts about my emotions and my experience of the emotion are not the same thing. So developing curiosity can be really key.

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The second thing that you can do is consider what you actually need when you are in the midst of whatever, fear, shame, grief, overwhelm. Like I said before, that knee jerk is, well, what I need in that moment is for the feeling to go away. But when you start to consider, okay, that's not a possibility for me, it's not a possibility for anyone, and in fact, when I try to go about life, getting rid of certain emotions, that's when I create many more problems for myself.

But when you can go to that place of, okay, if that's not a possibility for me, then what do I actually need? How do I actually support myself in these moments? Now, interestingly, we often support other people in these moments, but when it comes to, well, how do I then support myself? That's what usually has people kind of stumped.

But again, it's going to be a very personal answer for you, but the question is kind of like, do I need comfort right now? Do I need to be close to people or do I actually need separation from people? Do I need to be with myself? Do I need community or do I need to be out in nature? Do I need to move my body? Do I need to be outside? Do I need to know that I'm not alone?

I mean, there's no kind of one right answer here. This really is a question that only you can answer for yourself. But doing that work of just starting the conversation, which is probably a conversation that you've never had before with yourself, is what do I actually need when I'm feeling this? Right, because what you've had before is just that knee jerk of, I need not to feel this, I need to make it go away as quickly as possible.

So the third thing that you can do is that you can start to do the work of what I call kind of like turning down the volume on the unnecessary negative emotions that we attach to that initial starting point emotion. So you can think of it, I've talked about it before, like layering emotions on top of each other.

And what so often happens is that we may be feeling a negative emotion and then what we unconsciously do and unknowingly do is we layer on top

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either anxiety about that emotion or shame about the emotion or hopelessness about the emotion.

So maybe you have this initial fear, you're feeling afraid of something, and then you might have the thought like, this is silly, like I shouldn't be afraid of this. So you've got that initial fear, but then that secondary thought is gonna create shame for you. Maybe you are experiencing loss, maybe you're grieving, and you have a thought like, I should be over this by now, or you have a thought like, I'm never gonna feel better.

Each of those thoughts will create different emotions. One might be shame, one might be hopelessness, but when I talk about kind of turning down the volume on these secondary emotions, what I'm talking about is kind of having a more just kind of pure or clean experience of that first emotion without all the negative judgment layered on top.

And people are really, really amazed when they do that to see how effective it can be, because it's kind of like, yeah, but I'm still gonna be afraid, or I'm still gonna be grieving, or I'm still gonna be overwhelmed, and that's not going away. But what you will start to see is that underlying emotion is more tolerable when you have a more pure experience of it, when you're not also saddling it with additional and unnecessary anxiety or shame or hopelessness or any of these other kind of add-on emotions that just make our suffering worse.

So really those three things are curiosity, starting this internal conversation with yourself about what you actually need, what would actually be helpful. And again, this is gonna be a conversation that you have to have. It's gonna be something that you have to test out.

And then noticing the thought patterns that actually add kind of fuel to the fire, that increase suffering for you, and see if you can start to move and shift those and just experience whatever you are feeling without all the added judgment. But ultimately, what everyone is searching for with this

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escape archetype is simply for resilience. What we're searching for is the belief that you can find a way forward no matter what.

And so maybe that means telling yourself that you don't know what the solution is right now, but you believe that a solution exists, or that you don't have a plan, but you trust that you can figure things out as you go, or reminding yourself that despite, despite everything that you are telling yourself right now, you are so much more capable than your thoughts would have you believe or your thoughts would give you credit for. Because that truly is the deeper desire of the Escape. It is resilience.

And without resilience, what will happen is we will spend our lives looking for some sort of escape hatch. And that escape hatch can take lots of different forms. But I promise you that when you're always in the place of, I just need to forget what's bothering me, you will be in a place of actually decreasing your resilience.

When you keep trying to drink over how you feel, not only will your emotional life, your emotions, not only will you regard those as too big, too messy, too painful, but the actual underlying issue, you won't be able to find any resolution. Things will just feel thornier the more that you avoid them.

And you will keep telling yourself, I just gotta wait. I'm gonna get my drinking under control. I'm gonna cut back when life calms down, when things are less crazy, when I'm not feeling so awful. But like I said, what happens is it's just the next thing and the next thing and the next thing.

But the Escape is such a powerful archetype because it really helps you tap into this resilience that everybody wants. We all want to feel more resilient. And so if the Escape is coming up for you, I hope that you will start to try these three things. If you want more specific exercises, check out [The Ultimate Guide to Drinking Less](#). I go into more specific exercises there, and of course, you can always work with me inside of [Take a Break](#).

All right, everyone, I hope that gave you a new perspective, a new way to think about those moments when you're just like, ugh, I just want to stop

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feeling how I'm feeling and understand what your brain is learning and how to tackle it. This really will be the key to cutting back.

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](https://RachelHart.com) and sign up today, because changing the habit is so much easier when you stop trying to go it alone.