

Ep #421: Why Your Good Intentions Fail



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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Do you wake up in the morning with the best of intentions about your drinking, only to have those intentions fall apart later in the day? Not only is this super normal, but it is a very clear sign that you are relying too much on a particular belief about how to create change. This is episode 421, and I'm going to explain why this happens and the one thing that you're overlooking when it comes to making your good intentions last.

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.

Okay, so this is the million-dollar question. How do I make the good intentions that I have about my drinking when I wake up in the morning? How do I make them last all day? I can't tell you the number of times that I was stuck in this cycle of waking up and telling myself, Rachel, today is going to be different. You know, you're not going to drink after work today, or I'm going to limit myself. I'm going to have one glass, two tops. I had so many good intentions.

But then, if you are like me, what happens? They fall apart. The further you get from the morning, the more those good intentions start to waver. The shakier your commitment around them becomes because you have that little voice inside of you that starts to question the promise that you made and things came up and something unexpected happened and you're really stressed out, or you weren't expecting someone to invite you for drinks. So all of that starts to chip away.

And then what happens is that little thought, you know what? I'll be good tomorrow. I didn't know that today was going to go sideways. I didn't know that something unexpected was going to happen. I didn't know that I was going to see a deal on my favorite bottle of wine at the grocery store. I'll be good tomorrow.

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So you get to the end of the day and all of those good intentions that you really cared about, you felt deeply committed to, they just evaporate. Now, I will tell you this, in all of my years of helping people drink less, and it's been a decade now, I have never encountered a single person who didn't struggle with their good intentions falling apart later in the day.

I know that might be hard for you to believe because we're so sure that the problem is us, right? I must be the problem. It must be that I'm just lacking willpower, I'm lacking discipline. The problem is me. But I promise you, I have never encountered a single person who didn't struggle with this. It happens to everybody. There's no need to make it mean that something is wrong with you because nothing is wrong with you.

What's happening is that you're waking up with these good intentions, and these good intentions are real. But they are just a vision without a plan. You haven't told your brain how exactly you're going to follow through on these good intentions. This is the real problem. You are not the problem.

What I want you to consider is that making a rule for yourself, so waking up and telling yourself, you know what, I'm not going to drink today, or I'm going to stop after two. Making a rule for yourself is not telling your brain how to follow through. You are not giving your brain the specifics of how, what is missing.

So telling yourself that you're not going to drink tonight, okay, what's the how for the brain? How are you going to do this if you are used to every day coming home, ending your day, and having a drink? Telling yourself that you know what, you're going to stop after two glasses. Well, how are you going to do that? If you're used to, you know what, actually I open up the bottle and I have the best intentions, but I always end up finishing everything that's in the bottle. How are you going to do this?

Creating a rule for yourself is completely separate from the how. So I like to think of it as, you know, we can put up stop signs at every intersection on the road. But if someone doesn't understand the mechanics of how do I

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actually get the car to stop? How does my brake work? Then those signs, they're not very useful.

Now, what I want you to consider, because, you know, whenever I explain this concept to people, it makes a lot of sense. It's like, oh, okay. I just had a vision, but I didn't have a plan. You know, maybe I made a rule for myself, but I didn't explain to my brain, well, how exactly am I going to make good on it?

And so it seems so obvious, but it's really not obvious in the moment. It was not obvious to me for years because I would do this over and over and over again. And then I would look at my just massive failures, so many failures of following through on my good intention, and I would just think, there's got to be something wrong with Rachel. I mean, why else? Why else am I not able to keep these good intentions that I have?

But what I want you to consider, what is going on? What is blocking you right now? The reason why you are stuck in the cycle, the reason why you're not making a plan to follow through is because you're telling yourself that you should just know better.

So think about it. If you know right now that you don't like your drinking, you don't feel good about your relationship with alcohol, you don't like how you feel after drinking too much, you know that it's not good for you. You can use all of that knowing and distill it down into this belief of I should know better.

I should know better. How many times have you woken up and just had that exact thought? I should know better. When am I going to learn my lesson? Right? I should know by now. But what I want you to consider is knowing that you don't like the consequences of your drinking is not the same as knowing how to say no to your cravings or your triggers or your excuses.

These are two totally separate things. And this is part of the problem, is that we've jumbled this all up to tell ourselves that, well, if I know that I don't like

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the consequences, then I should just know better. I have these good intentions, so I should know better and I should follow my good intentions.

But I want you to really ask yourself, if you end your day stressed out, and the way in the past that you have managed that end-of-day stress is to drink, well, how exactly today, with your good intentions, how exactly are you going to manage that stress without drinking? Or if you hate when somebody is disappointed when you're not joining them for another round? Well, how are you going to manage the feelings that bubble up inside of you or the discomfort inside of you in that moment when someone says, Hey, you want another drink?

How are you going to manage it? What are you going to do? If you feel like your cravings won't leave you alone, that they just keep coming back and coming back and coming back. Well, how exactly are you going to manage them? Telling yourself that you should know better, it has no there. It has no instructions on what exactly you're supposed to be doing.

In fact, it's indicating that you shouldn't need instructions, that instructions are not necessary because we know that we don't like this and we should know better by now. And so we should just do the thing. But telling yourself that you should know better is actually preventing you from devising a plan. Notice that I am talking about devising a plan. That's very different than setting a rule for yourself.

You have to be able to have concrete steps. What am I going to do in the moment? How am I going to show my brain to follow this good intention when it is used to doing the opposite? It is used to giving in. It is used to listening to the excuse.

Telling yourself that you should know better, what's happening, it's making the moments that your good intentions from the morning disappear. It's making these moments that much worse. Because not only did you fail to give yourself a plan, but then what happens when you don't make good on your commitment?

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Oh, well, then the next day we wake up, and then we feel bad about ourselves, and we beat ourselves up, and we berate ourselves for our lack of discipline, and we wonder why it's so hard for us and easier for other people. And we start to make it mean that well, maybe there's just something different about me and wrong about my brain, and maybe I can't change. And you stay in this cycle of blaming yourself and creating all of this shame.

And having this belief that maybe something is just different and wrong about you. And guess what? You're not coming up with a plan. You're not giving your brain the instructions for how. You will keep having good intentions in the future. You will keep having this vision of who you want to be and how you want to show up later on, but you will not have given your brain any instructions for how to follow through.

Instead, you will just be accumulating more and more shame and feeling worse about yourself. And guess what? This is why shame is so destructive when it comes to habit change, especially changing our behaviors around things that we consume in order to feel better. Right? You get to a point where you're like, oh, God, I just don't want to feel this way. Your brain is like, well, I know how we can stop feeling this way. We just drink over our feelings. Right? Let's just have a drink, then I won't feel so bad. So you end up fueling the very cycle that you're hoping to interrupt.

So remember that it is normal for your good intentions to fall apart later on in the day. It happens to everyone. It is not a sign that something is wrong with you. It is a sign that you're relying too much on the belief, I should know better to create change. And that belief is not helping. Believing that you should know better is not a plan for how to do better.

What I want you to take away from this episode is that your good intentions, the good intentions that you have in the morning, are just a starting point. Yes, they are a vision for how you want to show up later, but in order to take that vision and turn it into reality, you need a plan. And that plan has to be something beyond just say no. Just don't do it.

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This is really why I wrote *The Ultimate Guide to Drinking Less*. Why I broke it out and broke it down into so many concrete, very simple exercises that you could start doing because what you're missing right now are just the precise instructions of what to do when a craving appears, and what to do when you're around your triggers, and what to do when faced with excuses.

In these moments, it is not about knowing better. It is not about avoiding temptation. That's only going to work for a little while. It's not about developing kind of, you know, unshakable willpower because again, willpower is a finite resource. It's not going to be something that you can rely on forever. It's about giving your brain the exact steps that you need to start to show up differently.

Giving your brain the plan and the tools and the steps, and letting go of this idea that because you should know better, that's all the information you need. Alright, next week, I'm going to be getting into more concrete steps for what to do when that craving appears.

But just remember, your good intentions are just a vision without a plan. That's what you're missing. And if you want to read more about these tools and learn more about this, you can check out *The Ultimate Guide to Drinking Less* at RachelHart.com/guide. Alright, 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.

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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.