

## Ep #461: One won't hurt [Thought Swap]



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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One won't hurt. It sounds so reasonable, right? You're just going to have one drink. But if you're like me, one often turned into two, and then three, and then probably a lot more. Yet despite breaking my promise again and again that I was only going to have one drink, when I told myself in the moment that one won't hurt, it just felt so true and believable. This is episode 461 and today I'm going to give you three ways to start questioning this thought, not by scaring yourself or focusing on all the downsides of drinking, but by looking at what this thought leaves out because that's the key. It's not that one won't hurt is completely wrong. It's just that it's incomplete.

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.

All right, today we're going to do another thought swap episode. It's all about poking holes in the beliefs that lead to drinking more than you want. And today we're talking about a really common excuse that sounds so reasonable when your brain offers it up. It's that thought, one won't hurt. Now, before we go any further, I just want to zoom out on this thought for a second because people don't just use it with alcohol. We use it in lots of situations. We tell ourselves, one cookie won't hurt, one missed workout won't hurt, adding one more thing to my cart won't hurt.

And here's what I think is really interesting. We don't use this thought for things that we don't feel conflicted about. Most people don't sit there saying, one glass of water won't hurt or one trip to the bathroom won't hurt. We use the thought, one won't hurt in areas where we feel tension.

Right, when your brain offers this justification to you, it's not a neutral observation. It's a point of conflict. Part of you wants something, and another part of you is not so sure. And acknowledging that tension, that conflict, that feeling or that need to negotiate with yourself can be really,

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really powerful. What this thought does in the moment is actually really clever. It says, let's just zoom in on this one specific moment. Forget about the past, forget about the future, forget about the bigger pattern. Don't think about where this thought usually leads, just think about this one isolated moment in time. And when you zoom in like this, of course, it's really easy to say yes to a drink because in isolation, one of anything usually doesn't hurt. One drink, one cookie, one missed workout, one extra thing in your cart. That one thing alone is usually not a big deal.

But that one thing is part of a bigger pattern. That's what this thought is leaving out. So I want to give you three ways to start seeing that bigger picture when you start noticing that you're telling yourself, one drink won't hurt. Now, remember, these thought swaps are about giving you ideas for how to counter this justification in a believable, non-judgmental way. You may need to slightly alter how I say them or play with it so it really works for you. The key is that it has to be believable.

If you want to drink less, you already know that focusing on all the shoulds or how it's bad for you or the consequences of drinking too much, you already know that isn't working, right? What you need to do is to find ways to challenge the deeper story that is driving the habit. So here's swap number one. If one won't hurt, why does not having it feel like it will? Right? So if one drink is truly no big deal, then saying no to it should also be no big deal. But that's not how it usually feels in the moment, right? When you're telling yourself that one won't hurt, not having the drink can feel really disappointing. It can feel too restrictive. It can feel like you're missing out. And that tells you something important. It tells you that this isn't a neutral choice. Your brain is invested.

And we know that because your brain keeps bringing it up. It keeps coming back to that drink. We don't negotiate over things that don't matter. We don't go back and forth about things that feel neutral to us. So, acknowledge that there is a contradiction here. On the one hand, your brain is saying, one won't hurt, it's not a big deal. And on the other hand, part of

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you believes that not having a drink is indeed a big deal, is indeed something that you need to spend time thinking about and negotiating with yourself.

In that moment, the drink does not feel like it doesn't matter. It doesn't feel like no big deal. It doesn't feel like something that you're neutral about. It feels like something worth negotiating over. And that is worth paying attention to. Because maybe the truth isn't that this one drink is no big deal and won't matter. Maybe the truth is, I'm trying to pretend like this decision feels small, but it actually, inside, feels like it carries a lot of weight.

All right, swap number two. One won't hurt is about the moment, but I'm living in a pattern. Right? So again, this thought zooms in on that single instance of saying yes, right? The one drink, the one decision, the one moment of saying, "Sure, I'll have this drink." And in isolation, that one moment probably doesn't hurt. But you're not deciding in isolation. You're deciding inside of a pattern. And that pattern is a drink archetype that's activated in that moment. Now, I have a lot of episodes on the different archetypes. I'm not going to go into them here. But understanding the archetype that is activated, understanding what your brain is learning, understanding this bigger pattern and the bigger picture, it really is key.

If you want to learn more about the archetypes, search my episodes where I talk about them. You can also take the quiz at [FindYourDrinkType.com](http://FindYourDrinkType.com). That will show you how the eight archetypes show up for you and your primary and secondary ones, which is a really great place when you're starting out on this journey of drinking less to have that information. The key here is that every time you believe the thought that one won't hurt, it's not about this one moment in isolation, it's reinforcing this bigger script. It's practicing this bigger pattern around your archetype. You're teaching your brain two things. Not only what you do when the urge or the craving appears, right? What we do is we say yes to it. But you're also teaching your brain, hey, we need this drink in this moment for this reason.

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And again, the specifics there will depend on what drink archetype is activated, but understanding this piece is key. So instead of arguing about how one won't hurt, you can just slow down and pause and consider and just ask yourself, what bigger pattern am I strengthening right now by saying yes? Because from a habit perspective, it's never just this one moment in isolation. It's the repeated pattern that is strengthening that archetype, strengthening that neural pathway. And understanding that this decision is living inside of a bigger pattern can be really helpful.

Finally, swap number three. If I'm not willing to say no to the urge to drink before I start drinking, why would I be more willing to say no to the urge for more once I've started drinking? I think this really is the deepest layer because one won't hurt, it carries the promise, the unspoken promise of, okay, after one drink, I'm going to be good. I'm not going to want more. It's kind of telling you, don't worry. We're going to have this one drink. It's going to take the edge off. It's going to make this moment easier. It's just going to settle me. And at least for me, that was never my experience. The first drink didn't end the urge, it extended it. I finished one drink and then I started a new conversation. Should I have another? Why stop now? One more won't hurt. So then the question becomes, if I'm not willing to sit with the discomfort of wanting a drink before I've said yes to the first one, why would that suddenly become easier for me after I've just said yes to the urge or the craving?

And I want to be really careful how you are hearing me talk about this because I'm not saying, okay, so you start drinking alcohol and then you become powerless, right? Alcohol takes over. I'm not suggesting that once you start drinking, you can't stop, or that one serving of alcohol completely takes away your decision making process and your ability to say no. It's not that one drink makes stopping impossible. It's that built into this excuse that one won't hurt is the assumption that you're not going to want more. We're not really articulating that piece of it to ourselves.

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But just ask yourself, is that assumption true that I'm not going to want more? Or do I have a lot of evidence that once I say yes to that first drink, I have urges and cravings to keep going? And if that is the case that I'm going to have more urges, more cravings, right? I'm going to want more, then why do I think that I'm going to be better or more capable of saying no at this point after I've had that one drink? Again, I'm not saying that one drink makes stopping impossible. I'm saying that having one drink doesn't erase all future urges and it doesn't make saying no to those future urges any easier. What makes saying no easier, what makes it easier to stop, right, is the willingness to practice being with the discomfort of unanswered desire. But that's the exact thing that you're not practicing when you're believing the justification that one won't hurt.

Right? So when your brain offers the thought, one won't hurt, you don't have to argue with it. You can just get curious. You can ask yourself, listen, if saying yes to this drink isn't a big deal, why does saying no feel like one? You can ask yourself, what pattern am I reinforcing right now? Just reminding yourself that yes, one won't hurt, pretends, it wants you to focus just on this one specific moment, but you are living inside a bigger pattern. You can also ask, you know, am I telling myself that by saying yes to this one drink, I'm not going to want more later? And is that true?

You can get curious by questioning, am I actually making things easier for myself in this moment by saying yes to this one drink because it won't hurt, or am I keeping the loop going where I'm giving into my urges because I don't want to feel the discomfort of saying no? Because once you start seeing what the thought, one won't hurt leaves out, you create a little space. And in that space, you can start to poke holes at the belief that is really fueling the decision to say yes. You're interrupting that habit. In this space is where things start to shift.

Now, if you want help practicing this work in real time, learning how to catch these thoughts and respond to them in a way that actually sticks, you can

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join me inside Take a Break. Head on over to RachelHart.com and learn more. But that is it for today and I will see you all next week.

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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.