Ep #486: Using the people you love as motivation to drink less

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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It's really common to find that you're motivated to drink less because you want to be a better parent or a better role model for your kids or a better partner for your significant other or just so that your loved ones will stop worrying about you and your drinking. And it makes a lot of sense because we want to show up as the best version of ourselves for the people that we love. But I will tell you, having worked with so many people, when we use our loved ones as our main motivation to change, it can create problems that a lot of people don't anticipate.

This is episode 486 and I'm going to explain how doing this work for someone else can create an invisible scorecard that sometimes leads to giving in. And I'll explain how to use the people you care about as motivation in a way that doesn't backfire.

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.

I was working with someone recently on his goal of drinking less. And he was telling me all about how a big part of why he wanted to work with me, why he's doing this work, was for his family. He talked about his wife, he talked about his kids, he talked about how his drinking has impacted them and how he wants to be a better dad and a better husband and just show up better for the people that he loves. And I will tell you, those are all amazing reasons to change, but during our conversation, I flagged something for him that most people really never see coming because the people in your life can truly be a very powerfully motivating force when it comes to drinking less, when it comes to changing your relationship with alcohol.

Maybe you don't want your kids to see you walk in the house at the end of the day and immediately pour a drink. Or you don't want them to see you

drunk. Maybe your drinking has created tension or fights in your relationship with your partner and you want to improve that. Maybe you just want to be more present with your family or rebuild trust or simply have the people who love you stop worrying about you so much. And so these can be very meaningful and powerful reasons to change, but I will tell you this: doing this work for yourself has to be equally important. Because here's what I see happen all too often.

So someone in your life really wants you to stop drinking or they want you to cut back. Maybe your partner's upset, your kids are worried, people are concerned. And that feels awful. Maybe that creates a lot of guilt and shame for you. Maybe you feel like you've let people down. Maybe you just feel like you haven't been the spouse or the parent or the friend that you want to be. And so doing this work, cutting back on your drinking, maybe taking a break from alcohol for a while, whatever you're doing to change your relationship with alcohol, it feels like it's a way to make things right.

And so maybe you think to yourself, you know, I'm going to do it for them. I'm going to show them that I care. I'm going to prove that I'm taking this seriously. I'm going to prove that they can trust me. I'm going to show them that they don't have to worry about me. And again, none of those reasons sound particularly problematic. But what do we know about our closest relationships? Every relationship, no matter how good it is, every relationship has ups and downs. We can love people immensely and still have moments of feeling really annoyed or frustrated or angry or even resentful towards them. And then ask yourself, what happens when you feel this way towards the very people who are your motivation to change?

When you're having that same fight with your partner about the laundry or when the kids are pushing every single button that you have, when the people that you care about most in the world also happen to be the people that are driving you crazy, this is where an invisible scorecard can start to appear and it can sound like this. It can sound like, I am doing so much to

make them happy. I am working so hard to cut back, to change my drinking. I am drinking less. I'm doing all of this work for them and look what I'm getting in return.

Now, suddenly you can feel resentful about all of the effort that you've been putting in. And guess what? When resentment creeps in, what happens next? Maybe you start thinking, why am I working this hard when they don't appreciate it? Why am I denying myself when no one really seems to care? Why am I the only person in this relationship who has to change? Why am I making all these sacrifices? When that invisible scorecard starts, it's really easy to get into this place of just saying, F it. Having a drink and shelving this work in that moment can just feel really appealing. Not because you don't care about your goal, but because part of you is thinking, you know what? I'm not getting what I want out of this. So screw it.

Drinking can all of a sudden become a way for you to push back or to rebel or to just even out the score. Like you've been working so hard for everyone else and now you're going to do something for yourself. And this is the piece that I want you to pay attention if you have used the people in your life as motivation to change your drinking. When your reasons for change are primarily about someone else, someone you love, but someone else, your commitment and motivation has a tendency to rise and fall based on how you feel about that person on any given day. When you feel close to your partner, when your kids are being loving and sweet, when you feel appreciated and connected, your reasons for saying no, for riding the wave of the urge, for not listening to your justifications, they can feel incredibly compelling.

But what about when your relationship feels strained? What about when you feel disappointed or frustrated? Suddenly it becomes so much harder to remember, like why am I even bothering? What's happened is that you've tied your desire to change to someone else's behavior. And that's something that you can't control. Now listen, that doesn't mean that you

shouldn't care about how your drinking affects the people closest to you or the people that you love the most in your life. You can use wanting to be a better dad or a better mom or a better partner or a better son or daughter, you can use all of these reasons as motivation to change. You can want to change because you know that drinking less will improve your marriage. You can want to, you know, say no to a drink every night because you want to be a better role model for your kids and show them that there are other ways to handle stress. You can have the motivation of wanting to be more present with your family. You can do this work in part because you're trying to rebuild trust with those same people.

Other people don't need to disappear from your reasons, but you do need to correct any lopsidedness if you notice that so much of your motivation is about other people. Changing your drinking also needs to be about improving your relationship with yourself. It has to also be something that you want for you and not just for other people. So you can start thinking about this by just asking yourself the question, why would I want to make this change even if nobody noticed? Nobody thanked me, nobody congratulated me. Even if nobody except myself said, you know what? I'm really proud of you.

Why do you want to not give into your cravings or believe your excuses or justifications even when your partner is annoying, even when the kids are pushing every button that you have. And if you're not sure because so much of your motivation has been about other people, I want you to ask yourself, what would changing your relationship with alcohol, what would drinking less, make possible for you?

Maybe it would mean that you could trust yourself more. Maybe it would be feeling secure that you know how to access the fun, easygoing version of yourself, even if you don't have a drink in your hand. Maybe it would be the sense that you feel like you are truly capable of navigating all the tough moments in life without opening a bottle of wine. Maybe it would just mean

more years on this planet with better health. Maybe it's just about no longer feeling like you're always on autopilot when it comes to your drinking.

Whatever your answers are, they matter and they should matter to you. Because you can want to change for your loved ones, but you also need to be part of the equation. Otherwise, when your motivation is totally lopsided, those moments when the relationship feels tricky, that can be a moment where it's so easy to just say, why am I even bothering doing this?

So if you notice that most of your reasons for changing your drinking are about other people, they're about the people you love, ask yourself, how committed do you feel to change when these same people are driving you nuts? You have to use this motivation that you have to find reasons that belong to you as well. Use it to find the reasons that this work matters for you even if nobody noticed. Because when you know that part of you is doing this not just for the people you care about, but for yourself, you will always have a motivation and a reason to come back to, no matter what is happening in your life, no matter what is happening with everyone around you.

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