

TAKE A BREAK

— PODCAST WORKBOOK —



RACHEL HART

Master Certified Coach

THANKS FOR DOWNLOADING **THE TAKE A BREAK PODCAST WORKBOOK!**



This workbook contains special exercises developed for the most popular episodes of the podcast.



Each worksheet is labeled with the podcast episode to which it corresponds.



Listen to the episode before completing each worksheet. You'll find links to the episodes on each worksheet.

Make sure you subscribe to the podcast so that you don't miss another episode:

rachelhart.com/podcast

[Subscribe in iTunes](#)

[Listen in Stitcher](#)

[Grab the RSS feed](#)

[Stream on Spotify](#)

[Tune in on iHeartRadio](#)

[Subscribe on PlayerFM](#)



EPISODE #64
URGES 2.0



PLAY EPISODE

WHAT IS AN URGE?

An urge is simply the emotion of desire that has been habituated. You can develop urges around anything.

The intensity of an urge has everything to do with the reward your brain is expecting. Alcohol delivers an influx of dopamine that is more concentrated than many other rewards. Hence the urge to drink can feel urgent or intense.

The most important thing to remember is this: Nothing has gone wrong when you experience the urge to drink, and it's not a sign that you have a problem. It's just a sign that your brain is expecting a reward.

WHAT CREATED THE URGE TO DRINK?

You did and that's actually the good news! You unknowingly taught your brain to expect the reward that alcohol provides at various times of day, in certain situations, and with certain people.

Your brain learned to anticipate that it would be rewarded by a drink, and you can teach your brain how to un-learn this expectation.

“The intensity of an urge has everything to do with the reward your brain is expecting.”

WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN YOU FEEL THE URGE TO DRINK?

There are four different things you can do when an urge appears.

You can react: pour yourself a drink and say yes to the urge. You can resist: use your willpower (and a lot of energy) to fight the urge. You can distract: turn to another activity (like cleaning the house) or substitute with another reward (like eating something sweet). Or you can observe: simply watch the sensations you feel in your body and the thoughts that arise in your mind.

Only when you learn how to observe the urge to drink will you be able to sustainably change the habit cycle. Reacting will strengthen the habit, resisting will exhaust you, and distracting will blind you to the habit cycle.

HOW CAN YOU START RESPONDING TO THE URGE DIFFERENTLY?

Imagine that there's an adult and a toddler in your brain.

The adult is your prefrontal cortex. This part of your brain makes plans, sets goals, considers the future, and weighs the pros and cons. The prefrontal cortex helps you grow and evolve.

The toddler is your lower brain, a much more primitive structure. It cares only about finding pleasure (Hello, alcohol!), avoiding pain, and doing both these things as efficiently as possible. The lower brain wants to preserve the habit of drinking because habits are efficient and require very little energy.

Saying no to a drink is the easy part. What's challenging is dealing with the discomfort when you don't comply with the toddler's expectation that it is supposed to be rewarded.

You learn how to manage your desire to drink—and change the habit—by using the adult (your prefrontal cortex) to question and challenge the pleas, excuses, and justifications of the toddler (your lower brain).

Remember, you always have authority over the urge to drink. Because you have a prefrontal cortex (an internal adult), you are not at the mercy of your inner toddler.

EXERCISE: PRACTICE RESPONDING TO YOUR INNER TODDLER

Start tuning into the excuses and justifications that the lower brain uses when it wants a drink and decide how you want to question and challenge these thoughts.

1. Check off the pleas your inner toddler uses to justify drinking:

I want it.

It's been a stressful day.

It's been a long week.

I've had it up to here.

I need a break.

I just want to relax.

It will take the edge off.

It's 5 o'clock.

It's wine time.

It's Friday.

It's the weekend!

I've been so good.

I deserve it.

I want a reward.

Let's be bad.

Just this once.

It's just one sip.

It's only five ounces.

One glass won't hurt.

It's healthy.

I shouldn't waste it.

Who cares?

No one will know.

Why me?

It's not fair.

I want one too.

This won't be fun.

This is too hard.

I can't take it.

I'm so uncomfortable.

I need to loosen up.

It helps me socialize.

I'll feel better.

I want to join in.

It's a party!

It's a celebration!

It's my birthday!

It's a wedding!

It's free!

I can handle it.

I don't care.

Screw it.

Fuck it.

It doesn't matter.

I'll start tomorrow.

I'll start next week.

I'll start next month.

I hate saying no.

Everyone will notice.

It's awkward not to.

Everyone else is.

They'll be disappointed.

They'll ask questions.

What's the harm?

Why not?

Other: _____

2. Pick your three most common excuses and write them down below.

3. Imagine that a toddler is throwing a tantrum because she wants some candy. She's using the exact same excuses you listed above. Would you buy her reasoning? Would you let her run the show? Write down how you would respond to her.

4. Now imagine what you could say to your brain the next time it trots out the same justifications for you to drink. Write down how you want to respond to yourself.

5. Make a plan to practice the responses you came up with. Write them out. Put them on a post-it note on your fridge. Set an alarm on your phone that will remind you to practice your responses. Visualize yourself responding to your toddler's pleas with authority.

The more you practice responding differently to the urge to drink, the more quickly you will learn how to change the habit.



EPISODE #59
I DESERVE IT



PLAY EPISODE

WHAT IS A PERMISSION-GIVING THOUGHT?

Permission-giving thoughts are the excuses, justifications, reasoning, and pleas that your brain uses that leave you feeling entitled to drink. The thought, “I deserve it,” is usually right at the top of most people’s lists.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU BELIEVE THE THOUGHT, “I DESERVE IT”?

The more you listen and obey the thought “I deserve it” when it comes to drinking, the more entrenched the habit becomes. “I deserve it” becomes fuel to perpetuate the habit cycle.

WHAT IS THE “IT” IN “I DESERVE IT”?

What are you really talking about when you tell yourself, “I deserve it”? What does the “it” stand for? Is it really a drink, or are you after something deeper? Don’t let yourself off the hook by saying, “I don’t know.” Get specific.

What are you really after when you think this thought? Is it relief from how you feel, something to cover up stress or numb pain? Is it happiness and pleasure? Is it fun and laughter? Is it confidence and ease? Is it connection and community?



“I deserve it” becomes fuel to perpetuate the habit cycle.

WHAT DO YOU DESERVE IN LIFE?

If the reward from a drink is all you keep telling yourself you deserve in life, you will never go after the things that you truly deserve.

You deserve love. You deserve kindness and compassion. You deserve curiosity. You deserve to go after your dreams. You deserve time to rest.

If you felt as strongly about being deserving of love, kindness, compassion, curiosity, pursuing your dreams, and time to truly rest, you would not habitually look to a drink to give yourself what you deserve. That's the truth.

If left unchecked, the permission-giving thought, "I deserve it" will only keep fueling the habit of drinking. It gets stronger and more compelling every time you think this thought and then reward your brain with alcohol.

Your challenge is to find out what you really deserve in life and go after that.



If the reward from a drink is all you keep telling yourself you deserve in life, you will never go after the things that you truly deserve.

EXERCISE: DEFINE WHAT YOU DESERVE

You are going to define what “I deserve it” really means to you. If you’re using this thought as permission to drink, you might as well give yourself the benefit of knowing what the “it” really stands for.

- 1. What do you think you deserve from others? (love, compassion, understanding, support, encouragement, curiosity, etc.)**
- 2. How do you provide these things to yourself? If you don’t, why is that?**
- 3. What do you believe you deserve in life? (learning, growth, companionship, a home you love, a job that fulfills you, passions, security, etc.)**
- 4. In what ways are you going after these things right now?**
- 5. Define the “it” in the permission-giving thought “I deserve it.” Are you really talking about a drink, or are you after something else? (ease, relaxation, celebration, relief from a negative emotion, etc.)**
- 6. Do you know how to give yourself what you’re really after, or are you dependent on the reward from a drink to give you what you think you deserve?**



EPISODE #39
THE VENEER OF ALCOHOL



PLAY EPISODE

WHAT IS A VENEER?

A veneer is a covering that disguises the true nature of something. It doesn't change what's underneath. A veneer gives you the impression that something is better than what it really is.

HOW DOES ALCOHOL ACT AS A VENEER ON YOUR LIFE?

The buzz you get from drinking disguises the quality of your life. It makes you think that what you are doing is better than reality. Alcohol can act as a veneer for almost anything: friends, strangers, potential partners, current partners, your free time, celebrations, dinners, emotions, etc.

Once you start drinking, it's easy to think that your life is better than it really is.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU STRIP AWAY THE VENEER OF ALCOHOL?

You might discover that the places you go and the people you spend time with are not as great as you thought they were.

At this point, you might believe that you only have two choices: 1. Go back to drinking and trick your brain into thinking these things are better than they really are or 2. Stay stuck in a life where you feel unhappy, bored, and uninspired.

There is a third option: upgrade the quality of your life. You don't need the veneer of alcohol to make you think your life is better than it really is; you just need to create a life that is better than you ever imagined.

EXERCISE: CREATE POSSIBILITY BY WANTING

In order to create a life that you really want, one that doesn't require the veneer of alcohol, you have to know what it is that you desire.

Below you'll write down 25 things that you want. They can be big or small; tangible (like a house) or intangible (like more excitement). You can list things you already have (my partner) or things that you want in the future (an advanced degree). Just make sure you list 25 things. Don't stop at 10 or 15. Let your brain go big.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

15. _____

16. _____

17. _____

18. _____

19. _____

20. _____

21. _____

22. _____

23. _____

24. _____

25. _____



EPISODE #49
SETTLING WHEN IT COMES
TO YOUR HEALTH



PLAY EPISODE

HOW DOES YOUR DRINKING AFFECT YOU?

When most people think about the negative effects of alcohol, they focus on next-day regrets and hangovers. But even “light” drinking can take a toll on your body that you may be totally unaware of.

WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR BODY WHEN YOU DRINK?

Your body views alcohol as a toxin. As soon as you consume it, your body immediately recognizes it as a problem that it needs to get rid of. The body goes into “fire-drill” mode and puts all other regular physical processes on hold in order to metabolize the alcohol.

Consider this. If you drink most nights, or most weekends, your body is in fire-drill mode that whole time. All other physical processes are stopped. Being in fire-drill mode becomes your body’s new norm, and that often takes an unseen toll on your physical and emotional health.



Your body views alcohol as a toxin.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SUBTLER WAYS THAT DRINKING CAN AFFECT YOUR HEALTH?

The everyday, mild side effects of drinking include (but are not limited to):

Fitful sleep. Alcohol blocks REM sleep, disrupts wake/sleep hormones, may lead to waking up more often to use the bathroom or drink water, and can make you prone to snoring.

Disturbed mood. Alcohol lowers serotonin levels which regulate mood. It also causes drops in blood sugar which can lead to feeling anxious or nervous the next day.

Worsened digestion. Alcohol increases stomach acid, can allow for the overgrowth of unwelcome gut bacteria, and impairs nutrient absorption by irritating your GI tract.

Unattractive skin. The dehydrating effects of alcohol can lead to next-day puffiness and skin that wrinkles more quickly. Alcohol also robs the body of vitamin A which is critical for cell renewal.

Weight gain. Alcohol is purely empty calories (i.e., there is no nutritional value). Because the body prioritizes metabolizing alcohol, you're more likely to store fat and sugar when you're drinking.



If you drink most nights, or most weekends, your body is in fire-drill mode that whole time.

EXERCISE: HOW MIGHT ALCOHOL AFFECT YOUR HEALTH?

- 1. How would you describe your sleep?**
- 2. How do you feel when you wake up in the morning?**
- 3. How often do you complain about low-level fatigue during the day?**
- 4. How would you rate your overall well-being?**
- 5. How often do you suffer from blues or anxiety?**
- 6. What is your digestion like?**
- 7. How common is it that you look in the mirror or step on the scale and dislike what you see?**
- 8. How often do you chalk up how you feel to getting older?**
- 9. Could you be settling when it comes to your physical and emotional health and accepting a norm that isn't actually normal?**



EPISODE #50
CHOOSING DISCOMFORT



PLAY EPISODE

WHY ARE YOU AVOIDING CHANGE?

The #1 reason people don't change is because they are trying to avoid discomfort. This includes not wanting to change the habit of drinking and dealing with the discomfort of saying no to an urge.

You might think that discomfort is a problem and that you just want to be always be content and feel fine, but discomfort is a given. It's a part of life and a necessary ingredient to change and grow.

WHY IS DISCOMFORT NECESSARY?

You are here to evolve, grow and create. All of those things not only need discomfort in order to happen; discomfort is actually a requirement.

You cannot evolve, grow, and create unless you are a little unsure and uneasy. These things can only happen when you are willing to step outside of your comfort zone.

“You cannot evolve, grow, and create unless you are a little unsure and uneasy.”

HOW DOES ALCOHOL FACTOR INTO AVOIDING DISCOMFORT?

You may have unconsciously learned to drink in order to take the edge off of how you feel. For example, how many times have you turned to a drink at the end of the day to relieve stress or anxiety around your work or your relationships?

Maybe you think you drink more in response to having a good time, the desire to celebrate, or just because you like the taste? If so, it's important to ask yourself: in these situations, how would you feel if you didn't have a drink in your hand? If your answer is deprived, outside the group, bored, then are you using a drink to manage discomfort.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE DISCOMFORT OF GROWING AND THE DISCOMFORT OF STAGNATING?

Stepping outside your comfort zone in order to grow will feel uncomfortable. You might be uncertain, unsteady or nervous. That kind of discomfort is helpful. It challenges you to stretch beyond what you previously thought was possible.

But there is also the discomfort you feel when you stagnate.

The opposite of not moving forward is not staying still. You move backwards. With each day that passes when nothing changes, the habit of drinking grows stronger. You regress. As a result, the discomfort of stagnating is different: you'll feel hopeless, powerless, ashamed, and incapable.

Discomfort is a given. You can either choose the discomfort of growing and evolving or the discomfort of stagnating and regressing. It's your choice!

EXERCISE: CHOOSING YOUR DISCOMFORT

1. Where have you been standing still in life?

2. What discomfort have you been trying to avoid?

3. Who do you want to be and what do you want to achieve over the next year, and what will it take to get there?

4. Are you willing to feel the discomfort of growing?