

Ep #165: Why You aren't Doing the Work to Change the Habit



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With Your Host

Rachel Hart

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 165.

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.

Well hello everybody. We are going to talk about doing the work to change your drinking. This is so important because a lot of you are listening to the work but you're not doing it. And if you don't the actual work to change not just your drinking but any habit, you're never going to get the result that you want.

So I've done 165 episodes of this podcast. There is a whole lot that you can listen to. But listening to what I teach and doing the work are not the same thing. Listening to me explain how the think-feel-act cycle unfolds in your brain and how it is really what is behind every single habit, and understanding how different parts of your brain work and how alcohol impacts, not just the buzz that you feel, but how alcohol impacts your brain and impacts habit formation, listening to all of this is so important.

In fact, it was incredibly important for me to finally understand what was going on. But listening is not doing the work. You have to take what you are hearing me talk about and you have to start putting it into practice. And if you're not doing that, that's okay. We're not going to beat you up. This isn't about shaming you, but let's understand why.

Now, you guys hear me say all the time that you cannot do the think-feel-act cycle in your head. I know you think you can, and I know this because I thought this too. I really did. I thought, "Yeah, it makes sense, all of a sudden I get it. My thoughts create my feelings and my feelings drive those

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actions. Alcohol just sits there. The drink just sits here. It doesn't will me to pick it up. I have a thought and I have a feeling that leads to that action."

It made so much sense to me. And sometimes that is the danger. When something can make a lot of sense, we'll tell ourselves, "Oh, I get it. I don't need to write it out. I got it. That's just extra." But really, the act of getting it onto paper is the act of getting the habit out of your mind and onto a piece of paper so you can see it, so that you can change it.

Because that's what you want to do. You want to learn how to change the think-feel-act cycle in a believable way. And listen, if you are resistant to writing it out, that's okay. I was too. You just got to figure out why. I promise that that resistance, it's just a thought. But until you find it, you can't change it.

That really is what you have to pay attention to here because understanding a concept and knowing how to use it, knowing how to wield the think-feel-act cycle as a tool in your life that is actually going to help you change this habit, those are two very different things. It's like understanding how a bow and arrow work. You can picture it, right?

You understand how it works. You have a bow, there's a string, there's an arrow, there's a target. You can visualize all of this in your head. I think about this. Give me a bow, give me an arrow, give me a target. If you give me all these things, am I going to start hitting the bull's eye with any regularity right now? No.

I am not. Because just because I understand how a bow and arrow works and I understand where the arrow is supposed to go and I understand that I'm supposed to pull the string back, I've seen it done, my brain has an image of what it's supposed to look like, but that doesn't mean that my mind and my body know how to actually do it in a way that will create success.

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That really is the difference between turning knowledge into know-how. You guys are getting a lot of knowledge on this podcast, but you have to turn that knowledge into know-how. You have to start practicing relaxing on your own without a drink. If the habit is just about wanting more and more is better, you have to practice having that urge be there and allowing it, not resisting it, not fighting it, allowing it to be there and not acting on it.

It sounds so simple. It's challenging in practice. Understanding is simply agreeing with what you're hearing me say. It's agreeing with the concept. But so much of what I talk to you guys about is that the desire to drink is created by your mind. It's created by what you're thinking. How you're thinking about the drink that you'll have later tonight or how you're thinking about the glass of wine that's sitting in front of you.

And when you understand this concept, there is a part of you that's like, yeah, it makes sense. That drink, it doesn't will me to do anything. It's not tempting me, it's just sitting there. But knowing this is true without a shadow of a doubt, knowing that you are always, always, always the creator of your desire, that the wine is never tempting you, the chocolate on your coworker's desk is never tempting you, knowing these things to be true, that desire is just created by a sentence in your mind, knowing that in your bones, that's only ever going to be the result of doing the work.

What I mean is you feel the urge for whatever and you start to map it out on paper. You start to understand it as part of the think-feel-act cycle. You write it down. You pinpoint that thought. You practice allowing and observing the urge, and notice all the thoughts that tell you you can't, that you should just willpower it away, that you don't have time for it, that it feels terrible.

You welcome the fact that your primitive brain is calling out for a reward because you know that that urge isn't an emergency. It's not a big deal. You know that you have authority over it. Now listen, sometimes you might

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stumble. You might say yes. But you have to keep doing the work. You have to figure out what it was that you were believing in that moment that led to you saying, "Oh screw it, who cares? I'm going to have a drink."

You can't hide and bury your head. This is what it looks like. It really requires a pencil and paper. It truly does. I cannot overstate this. I came across this amazing quote, the author Bell Hooks. She has written about women and men and love and feminism and society. I think she has something like over 30 books, and she has this quote that I love so much called "working with the work."

So I went back and I found this interview where I first encountered her saying it and she said, "If someone comes up to me and they have one of my books and it's abused and battered and every page is underlined and dog-eared, I know they have been working with the work."

And the reason why I love that quote so much, it's so brilliant because that is exactly my experience and what I see also with my clients. You can read a lot of books about the brain and alcohol and self-help and how to change habits, but there's reading a book and then there's working with the work. And working with the work means you're not just trying to understand what you're reading. You're trying to put it into action. You're trying to live what you are reading.

And that's why the books end up underlined and dog-eared and abused and battered because you're going back to them over and over again. Because reading it on the page and having it make sense does not mean that the first time you put it into practice, the first time that you say no and you say, "Okay, Rachel says you got to allow the urge and not resist it with willpower," it doesn't mean you're going to be able to do that automatically.

You have to go back and re-listen and try to understand what you're learning in a new way. Because that's what happens when you're working

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with the work. It's doing the process over and over and allowing for there to be many, many attempts before you actually get to mastery.

So that's the first piece that you guys have to understand, but I know for a lot of you, it's not that you aren't working with the work. It's that you're not doing the work at all. I watch this happen sometimes with clients. So someone will decide, "Okay, I'm going to do it. I'm going to invest in myself. I'm so sick and tired of thinking about my drinking and worrying about my drinking. This is it. I'm going to create some change."

And they sign up to do the work with me, and then I don't hear from them. They disappear. Sometimes they never come back. Sometimes they reach out and they'll say, "Rachel, I haven't done a thing. It's been a month. I haven't asked any questions, I haven't participated, I haven't watched a video, I haven't used your tools. What the heck is wrong with me?"

And I always tell them, "Nothing. Nothing is wrong with you. You're just not doing the work." But we can understand why that is because we have this amazing tool at our disposal. We have the think-feel-act cycle, which explains why you do and don't do everything in the world.

And then we can understand the real reason, and guess what? That's where the magic always kicks in. Think about how many times you've done the same thing to yourself. How many times have you signed up for a program or a course or bought a book or signed up for a gym membership and you have all this promise. You have all this intention that you're going to change yourself, you're going to do the work, and then you don't.

You don't watch it, you don't read it, you don't go, you don't attend. What on earth is going on? This is something that used to drive me nuts because I would do it over and over and over again. I was the queen of signing up for things and then not following through.

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Now here's the thing; I did for a long time what most people do. I made it mean the following. Something must be wrong with me. I think I'm just kind of lazy, or I lack follow-through, or I just don't have enough commitment. It must not matter enough to me, which of course was a lie. Because anything that you want to change in your life, it does matter to you because you're thinking about it.

It's something that you're spending brain energy on, so of course it matters to you. And if you're not making the fact that you aren't doing the work or showing up to the gym or following through on the program, if you're not making it mean that something is wrong with you, you might be making it mean that something is wrong with your life.

I'm too busy, I've got too much going on, I've got too much to do, too many responsibilities, someone got sick, something came up. There's always an excuse, right? I tell this to people all the time when people are hesitating whether or not to start working with me, whether or not to do the 30-day challenge.

And they'll say, "I'm not sure Rachel, I've got a lot going on." Listen, if you can't do this work, if you can't learn how to allow your urges in real life, it's never going to work. If you're waiting for some magical moment to appear in your calendar, some magical period of time when you have no deadlines and nothing is pressing and nobody's sick, nothing is due, even if that period comes, you're learning all of these tools in a bubble. You're not going to be able to apply them in real life.

Don't make it mean that you have too much going on, that there's something wrong with your life right now that you need to wait for the clouds to part and magical space to appear. So people will do that, or they will make it mean that something is wrong with the material itself.

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I see this happen a lot, and I used to do this too. "This book is too long; I can't get through it. Or it's too short, I need more explanation. It's too simple, it's too complicated, it's too much, it's too little." We're so good at blaming ourselves and our life and the work itself for why it is that we're not showing up and practicing.

But the only reason that you aren't doing the work right now is because of a thought and feeling. That's it. 100%. So all you need to do is find that thought getting in the way. And honestly, that thought is usually based in fear. Underneath all of it is the thought, "I don't know if I'm going to succeed. This is going to be too uncomfortable. I don't want to have this conversation with my friends or my family that I'm taking a break."

It's so often just fear. Fear that is leading you to blame yourself or blame your life or blame the work. Because I'll tell you this; if you were envisioning an amazing future for yourself, if you were envisioning an amazing future where you never had to worry about drinking anymore, you didn't have all this desire, you didn't feel like you were being run by your lower primitive brain and all your urges, if you believed that that was possible for you, then you'd be like, hey, let's get to work.

It's because your brain is doing the opposite right now, it's because your brain is catastrophizing. It's thinking how it won't work for you and there's something wrong with you, you won't be able to figure it out. That's why you're coming up with all these excuses.

And listen, of course it is. Of course, your brain is catastrophizing. That primitive brain of yours wants you to be afraid. Not only is it the job of the primitive brain to have you always on the lookout for danger. It thinks that fear is helpful, but also knows this; that if you stay afraid, you're going to keep up with the habit. You're going to keep coming home and uncorking the bottle of wine.

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And if you do that, you'll get a reward. That lower brain will get the reward that it's after because it thinks that the reward from alcohol is the most important thing. It thinks that of all rewards. That's all the primitive brain knows. It doesn't have all the advanced knowledge that your higher prefrontal cortex has.

It really is like when people say, "Really every day it works." I remember the first time I hear someone say that and I was like, what are you talking about? That is incorrect. I was so sure that it couldn't be true. You had to find the right diet if you wanted to lose weight.

But really, all diets are pretty much the same thing. Change how you're eating right now and change how you move your body right now. Listen, if you do that, if you change what you put in your body and you change how you move your body, you're going to get a result. And it will work if you keep at it, if you persist.

But of course, most people don't keep at it. I didn't use to keep at it. I would start all gung-ho and then it could get too hard. Or I would be really motivated and I would follow my plan, and then I'd step on the scale and I wouldn't like the number I would see, and I would be frustrated and I would quit.

So often what ends up happening is we only kind of half-try something out. We don't give it our all, or we're trying out something and as soon as we don't like the result that we get, we throw in the towel, instead of understanding, hey listen, I don't care what it is in the world that you are trying to accomplish. It's never going to be just one success after another after another after another.

There is going to be failure. And if you aren't willing to embrace that and accept that, then you're in a boatload of trouble. And I think the same thing is true when it comes to drinking and changing this habit. I don't have the

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only approach out there that's going to help you change the habit. I personally think I have the best one, but it's not the only one out there.

And obviously we know this is true because other people have stopped drinking or learned how to drink less with other methods. My podcast hasn't been around forever. If you follow a program, it will work. So do other programs work if you follow it? Of course, they do. But I'm going to tell you this; I think a lot of them are kind of a crapshoot.

Because a lot of them are just trying to convince you of their approach, convince you of their method. And sometimes you are convinced and then it works. But what happens for a lot of people is they don't get it. It's not clicking, or they run into an obstacle.

And instead of teaching you about the brain, instead of teaching you about the think-feel-act cycle, we think, "Oh, I'm not getting it, or I'm not doing it, or it doesn't make sense, or I just had a setback." We think that that is evidence that the work itself, the program doesn't work.

When really, once you understand the think-feel-act cycle, you always have the key to figuring out why something isn't clicking. Why something isn't persuasive, why you aren't convinced. You always have the key. Because then you can just find the sentence in your mind and suddenly, it really is like, oh, that's why I haven't been doing the work. That's why I haven't been getting it.

Learning how to manage your mind is the key. It is the most important thing. If you don't learn how to do this, your brain is always just going to stay on autopilot instead of looking at why it is that you're not doing the work, why it is that you're telling yourself it won't work for you, why it is that you say that you have too much going on in your life right now.

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Find that sentence. Because none of those reasons, none of the excuses, none of them are responsible for why it is that you're not showing up with yourself right now, why it is that you're not practicing, why it is that you're not taking what you learned and actually implementing it, why it is that you're not writing out the think-feel-act cycle.

Because the work you do to change a habit, that's an action, which means you just need to find the thought and you just need to find the feeling leading to it. So that really is my challenge for you guys today. What is the habit that you want to change? It can be your drinking, it can be overeating, it can be spending money, it can be how much TV you watch at night or how much time you spend on your phone. It really can be anything.

But take a moment and really think about how long have you wanted to change it? How long have you had that little nagging voice inside of you that's like, hey, we got to do something about this. This is not really how we want to spend our time. This is not really giving us the results that we want in life.

How many podcasts and books and articles and Google searches have you done, have you read, have you checked out? Think about all of that. What you want to change, how long you've been thinking about it, what you have researched, and then ask yourself, why haven't you solved it yet? Why are you stuck? What is that answer for you?

Because I will tell you, whatever that answer is is the obstacle that is keeping you exactly where you are right now. It's the obstacle that's keeping you on autopilot. It's not that there's anything wrong with you. That's not why you haven't yet figured out the habit of drinking. It's not because you have too much going on in your life. It's not because everything is too complicated or too simple.

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It's just because you're believing a thought. That's it. That's what is keeping you, not just from doing the work, but from creating the life that you want. Because the only thing that's holding you back from the life that you want is learning how to manage your mind.

I know that you can change anything in your life that you want to. Your drinking, your eating, your spending, whatever habit it is that you want to change, you have the power to do it. It does not matter the habit. I watch my clients do this over and over and over again, and I've watched it in my own life. And I'll tell you, I'm not special, they're not special. We all just showed up and did the work and you can do that too.

So please, don't just listen. Do the work. Practice. Work with the work. And if you don't know how to do these things, if you're feeling stuck, then of course, that's the time to reach out and get help and get support. Come work with me. Don't work with me, find somebody else. I don't care who it is. I just want you not to be saddled by a habit that isn't serving you anymore.

When you free yourself from the habit of drinking, I promise you, everything, everything, everything will open up for you, and that's the life I want for you. Alright, that's it for today. I will see you guys next week.

Okay, listen up, changing your drinking is so much easier than you think. Whether you want to drink less or not at all, you don't need more rules or willpower. You need a logical framework that helps you understand and, more importantly, change the habit from the inside out. It starts with my 30-day challenge. Besides the obvious health benefits, taking a break from drinking is the fastest way to figure out what's really behind your desire. This radically different approach helps you succeed by dropping the perfectionism and judgment that blocks change. Decide what works best for you when it comes to drinking. Discover how to trust yourself and feel

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truly powered to take it or leave it. Head on over to RachelHart.com/join and start your transformation today.