

## Ep #211: Knowledge vs. Know-How



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## **Ep #211: Knowledge vs. Know-How**

You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 211.

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 everyone. Welcome back to another episode. We are talking today about the difference between knowledge and know-how. I see so many of my clients in the 30-day challenge and even beyond, some of those that continue on with the advanced work get really tripped up by the difference between knowledge and know-how. And when you're trying to change the habit of drinking, but really when you're trying to change any habit you must understand the difference.

I say over, and over, and over again on the podcast no one ever taught you about your brain. No one ever sat you down and said, "Hey here's how your brain works, and how habits are formed, and how to change these habits, and how alcohol interacts with your brain and with the habit cycle. No one teaches us this, I think it's something that we should all learn in school but it doesn't happen.

No one teaches us about the think, feel, act cycle, this idea that your actions, the decision to pick up a drink doesn't just happen. It's driven by how you feel. So when you feel desire you say yes. When you feel entitled you reach for that drink. When you feel anxious you might find yourself heading to the bar. And you will respond to these feelings in an automatic manner by reaching for a drink unless you learn how to intervene which requires learning what your actions are connected to. They're connected to your thoughts and your feelings.

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And your feelings don't just come out of nowhere. They are created by what you are thinking, the sentences running in your mind. So when you're thinking to yourself I want it. I deserve a drink. It will help me take the edge off. It will make me feel better. It will relax me. These thoughts are part of the habit. The feelings are part of the habit. The habit is not just reaching for a drink. It's the entire think, feel, act cycle. So no one teaches us about this and most people will be blind to the thoughts and the feelings at first because that's how habits work.

Habits are fast, they're automatic. They're your brain's way of trying to save energy. So a habit doesn't want you to contemplate, hey, what am I thinking about right now? How am I feeling right now? It just wants you to act, contemplation, and observation, and inquiry takes time, and energy, two things that the habit does not like expending. It just wants you to act and get the reward from the drink.

And this is why people will say so often, "I don't even know why I said yes to the drink. I didn't even think I was going to tonight. I don't even know what happened. I just found myself in the liquor store. I just heard myself ordering a drink at the bar." It never just happens but it can sure feel that way.

And I will just tell you as an aside, I remember in my own journey being so frustrated about the fact that it did just feel sometimes like my drinking just happened, in particular it felt sometimes like well, how come sometimes I go out and I have a drink or two with friends and it's no big deal? And other times I just get wasted, what is going on there? To me there was no rhyme or reason to it which made me, not just feel frustrated, I felt very hopeless about it. Why can't I figure this out? Why is it so confusing for me? Why doesn't it make any sense?

And I will tell you that as I first started learning about the think, feel, act cycle as I was learning about it I started to realize wait a minute, there is an explanation. There was an explanation for why some nights I would go

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home after the second drink and some nights I would get really drunk. Because on the nights where I would get really drunk I realized once I started observing and trying to bring awareness to my thoughts and my feelings, there was always a moment where I said to myself, fuck it, always.

That thought was always there on those nights, it was always working behind the scenes. But you know what? Because no one had taught me about my brain, no one had taught me about the think, feel, act cycle, no one had taught me how habits worked, no one had taught me that my actions were connected to what I was thinking and how I was feeling, I was blind to that thought for almost 15 years. 15 years, it's a really long time, but it was there all along underneath the surface driving the habit. I just couldn't see it because it was part of the unconscious nature of the habit.

So, listen, I will spend a lot of time talking to all of you about, look, we're not given this information and it's information that you need. Your brain is this incredibly powerful tool that no one gives you an instruction manual for. So when you don't have an instruction manual for it, it's pretty frustrating. I didn't feel like I had a powerful tool between my ears. I felt like I had this brain that was trying to sabotage me, that was working against what I wanted. So this is something I will remind you all the time, no one teaches us this information.

And I will tell you that a lot of you will hear this and at first it will be a relief. It will be a relief to finally feel like you're not just kind of staring into this blackness, this area trying to understand, hey, what's going on here, all of a sudden you have a framework. All of a sudden someone's finally explaining how your drinking works, and how habits work, and how your brain works. I know for me it was such a moment to suddenly just feel like I don't have to be in the dark anymore. It was like someone had given me a flashlight. And that flashlight was huge.

But here's the problem, this is what I watch happen with people over and over again. They start to learn, they start to get the knowledge about

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everything and they use that knowledge against themselves. They use that information to say, “Okay, well, now I listened to the podcast, and I’ve read the book, and I know about the brain, and I know about habits and the think, feel, act cycle. And I’m listening all the time so I should know better.” They use knowledge to beat themselves up when they aren’t creating the change they want with the habit.

And if you listen you know around here we don’t beat ourselves up. I don’t care how much you drunk last night, I don’t care how much you ate, I don’t care about the things that you did while you were drunk. We draw a line in the sand when it comes to beating ourselves up and we don’t do it, not because we’re trying to be nice to ourselves. I don’t really care if you’re nice to yourself. I care that you can learn how to change the habit. And you know what? You can’t learn how to change the habit when you’re beating yourself up because it sends you backwards.

When you tell yourself things like I should know better and then you feel guilt and you feel shame, guess what? You end up hiding. And many times what does that hiding look like? It looks like going deeper into the habit. I remember in my own case thinking well, okay, I know better now, now I have this information. And I’m still not making better choices. So that must mean that I really am a hopeless case. And if I’m hopeless, well, then I might as well give up. I might as well polish off the bottle. I might as well binge on whatever I want to eat.

Beating myself up, telling myself I should know better because I have this information, created hopelessness for me. And when I felt hopeless I went even deeper into the habit. So, no, we don’t beat ourselves up around here no matter what because it’s not helpful. What you did last night is not the problem. How much you drank last night, last month, last year, it’s not the problem.

The problem that you are facing is the subject of this episode. The problem is the difference between knowledge and know-how because these two

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things are not one and the same. Knowledge is what I give you in the podcast. Know-how is what you give yourself. Many people have this mixed up. They think that knowledge is the solution when really it's just the beginning. It's the beginning of your journey.

So I like to just define these two words to start to understand them differently. Knowledge is the theoretical understanding of a subject. Know-how is the practical skill or expertise. I really want you to pay attention to the difference. The theoretical understanding of a subject, that's knowledge and the practical skill or expertise, that's know-how. It's the difference between theory and practice. And the fact of the matter is you can have a ton of theoretical knowledge and zero know-how.

So I use this example all the time when I'm coaching people. You can watch 1,000 videos on YouTube about how to ride a bike and it will make a lot of sense. It will talk about the handlebar, and the pedals, and the two wheels, and the seat. But listen, you can't actually learn, you can't have the skill or the expertise of how to ride a bike without getting your butt in the seat, and feeling nervous, and wobbly, and falling over. I don't care how many YouTube videos you watch; theoretical knowledge is not going to get you to know-how.

Now, the flipside of this is that you can have a lot of practical know-how without theoretical understanding. So for example, you can be really accomplished at something. Maybe you're an incredible dancer. That doesn't mean you can teach dance. It doesn't mean that you understand the theory behind dancing, or that you can explain how the mind and the body execute a series of movements, or that you can recreate it, or show someone else how to recreate it. Knowledge and know-how are not the same thing.

And in order to change your relationship with alcohol, and to change your drinking habits you have to have both. You have to have both, knowledge, the theoretical understanding of hey, what's happening in my mind? How

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do habits work? Why do I take this action? What's going on with the think, feel, act cycle? You've got to have all of that but you also have to have know-how. You have to have practical skill and that's why I say all the time, don't just sit back and passively listen to this podcast.

When I present you with questions or exercises, start by writing it down. Don't just listen to me talk about the think, feel, act cycle, don't just listen to me talk about the thought I want it, or I deserve it, or it will take the edge off. Get it on paper, what does it look like for you in your unique situation. Writing it down will be challenging at first. That's what everyone says when they start the 30-day challenge because that's one of the skills that we work on.

People get really frustrated at first, I'm not sure if I'm writing this down correctly. Is this right? They'll have all these questions. Is this a thought? Is this a feeling? I'm not even sure what I'm feeling. It's all so beautiful, it's supposed to be what's happening. You're supposed to be feeling really wobbly. The question is, are you making space for it? But writing down the habit and the think, feel, act cycle, it's not the only skill that you need but it is the beginning of turning knowledge into know-how. You're developing the skill of inquiry and awareness, curiosity.

And the fact of the matter is that most people brush these skills off. Most people say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, I get it, I get it. It makes sense." But it's not enough to just understand it in your head. It doesn't work that way. If you can't learn to ride a bike in your head or tap dance in your head then you can't learn how to show up differently with alcohol in your head. You've got to feel wobbly. You have got to practice. You've got to be uncomfortable. Well, listen, don't get me wrong, I think that visualizing can be tremendously important but it's not everything.

You need real world practice and experience. And that practice, just so I'm really clear here, that practice is not the practice of saying no. That is what most people think. I just have to practice saying no. Listen, to some degree



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do you have to say no? Sure. But this approach is too simplistic. Just saying no doesn't get at what's going on beneath the surface. It doesn't help you answer the question, why am I saying yes. And that is a question that you really need to answer.

Most people when they start to really dig and they don't just get stopped at, well, just because I love the taste. When they start to really bring curiosity to this question, well, why am I saying yes, they start to discover it's because I'm always automatically responding to the urge for more or because I hate feeling deprived. Or I find it especially difficult to feel deprived if I'm tired, or stressed, or bored, or lonely. I'm saying yes because I don't want to feel uncomfortable.

I am saying yes because I have this whole story about what this drink in front of me or what the bottle of wine in the fridge is going to do for me and how it's going to make things better. You have to be willing to start to cultivate that kind of curiosity because know-how cannot be created and just say no. We already know this. We already know that just say no doesn't work. It's too simplistic. It's such a superficial understanding of the habit because all it's focusing on is the action, just say no don't drink. All it's saying is okay, don't take that action.

But what I talk to you about all the time is that our actions don't just exist in a vacuum. They are connected to thoughts and feelings. We have to see the entire picture. You have to really understand the yes, why am I saying yes. What is the thought? What is the feeling? What's the excuse that I'm making? What's the justification? If you have any hope of being able to say no in a way that lasts.

And when I say that I mean sure, you can say no for a while by gritting your teeth, but you know what happens? You will pick right back up where the habit left off. You will get exhausted. You will feel worn out. You will have a week where you just say, "Screw it, it's too hard. I've been so good. I



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deserve to be bad.” And you will pick right up where you left off. You have to go to the deeper level. You have to go to know-how.

And you know what? Learning how to do this, this is true if you’re at a point in your life where you’re like, you know what? I’ve just had it up to here with alcohol. I’m done with it. I’m just ready to be done with this part of my life. But you know what? It’s also true if you want to keep drinking but you don’t want to drink as much or as often as you have been. You have to in both cases go deeper than just say no and start to understand your yes. That’s where you start to discover the skills that you need to practice and develop. That’s where you start to discover this is the know-how that I need.

This is why when people take the 30-day break or they decide, you know what? I’m going to do it longer. I want to do 60 days, or 90 days, or even a year. I’m constantly saying, “It’s not about the calendar.” Because saying no for a given number of days, it will not get you the know-how that you need to make lasting change. You have to learn the skill of how do I allow an urge without acting on it. How do I let the urge be there and not go to war with it, not resist it, not grit my teeth?

But how do I also let the urge be there and not feel like I need to distract myself, or occupy myself, go for a walk, take a bath, read a magazine? You have to practice learning how to allow the urge. And you do that for two reasons. You do that so you can teach your brain that hey, urges are no big deal, really they’re not a big deal. They will go away on their own. But also urges are powerless without your consent.

I was talking about this on a coaching call recently inside the challenge. Someone who’s brand new was saying, “I can’t believe how quickly my urges go away. I can’t believe that they’re really just not a big deal.” It is mind blowing to really learn that you can just be with it. And I was telling her, “Sometimes it’s a little bit like peace and pain at the same time.” You feel peaceful because you know the urge really isn’t a problem. And it really

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doesn't feel that bad. It's really not that uncomfortable. You might have a lot of mind drama about it. But in reality it's not that big of a deal.

So you feel kind of peace in it but it is also pain in the sense that you're learning how to deal with restlessness. You're learning how to deal with whatever else you might be noticing in your life. How do I get through cooking dinner? How do I deal with screaming kids without a drink?

What do I do when I feel bored, when I feel lonely when my partner is drinking, when my friends are drinking? That can feel uncomfortable at first but you start to see both can exist at the same time. That is such a tremendous skill to develop, to see that yeah, you can feel a little uncomfortable as you're learning something new, just like you can be on the bike and feeling wobbly and nervous, but you can also experience peace in that moment.

And we do this, we learn how to allow urge as a skill so that we can collect data on the habit. Again, it's not just, just say no, just say no. I want you to understand what the habit looks like in your unique situation. You can do this every time you practice allowing an urge. Just ask yourself what's happening right now in my mind? What's happening right now in my body? See if you can describe those two things without all of the drama. Instead of like it feels terrible, what's actually going on? Do you feel some tightness in your chest? Do you feel an elevated heart rate?

Notice the excuses, the justifications, notice the time of day, who you're with, what you're doing, how you're feeling. Notice if there are objects, or smells, or sounds, or emotions that seem to be connected with your desire. You have to record this data. You have to be a scientist about how your own habit works so that you can create your own roadmap for change. And it's not just about collecting data, it's about learning how to write down the think, feel, act cycle. And learning how to shift your mindset and practice a new thought.

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That is one of the skills, learning how to shift your mindset that can for most people be – it feels like it's the most delusive, how can I possibly learn to think a new thought? But I will tell you having been on both sides of this thinking like I don't know, this is just what I think, I can't change it, it just feels false. To now knowing I have a process for how to change my thinking in a believable way, it's everything.

And that's why I say that this work is such a meta skill. It's not just about learning how to change the habit of drinking and your relationship with alcohol, it's learning skills that you can apply to everything in your life. Think about how your mindset holds you back in so many other areas, all the things that you tell yourself, I don't know if I'm going to be good at it. I'm not sure I can do it. I'm not sure if I'm ready. It's probably not going to work out. This is such an important skill. Know-how is learning the process, learning the skill of how do I shift my mindset.

So I talk about this, there's an idea called bridge thoughts, this is something that we practice inside the 30-day challenge. It's something I've talked about in this podcast, I think it's episode 75 that I talk all about bridge thoughts. Because you have to learn how to do it step-by-step, it is not believable to go from I want a drink to I have no desire to drink. Your brain's just going to reject that, I don't believe what you're saying, of course you have desire. You can't go from I deserve a drink to I deserve not to drink. Again, your brain's like, no, I'm not buying it lady.

You can't go from the place of a drink is going to help me take the edge off to I know how to take the edge off on my own. Now, listen, all of these thoughts are places that you can get to. But you have to learn the skill of how do I start to slowly shift and change my thoughts to head in the direction that I want to go. Because if you're not doing it in a believable way, it's just positive thinking and it doesn't work, it doesn't stick because your brain knows that you're lying to yourself. It's like trying to force a square peg into a round hole, it doesn't work.

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Know-how means that you're exercising your mind. You're exercising this muscle that we just assume, it should just work. My mind should just work. Now, we never look at another part of our body, we never look at our abs and think I should just have a six pack. We think you have to work out for that. You have to engage in effort and challenge yourself in order to get a six pack. But we kind of do that with the mind.

We kind of walk around assuming that my mind should just be helpful and it should think only helpful positive supportive thoughts. I know that I thought that. And you know what? I was very disappointed when it did not follow through on what I thought it should be doing. But here's the thing, your brain didn't evolve to think positive helpful supportive thoughts. It evolved to prioritize the negative. It evolved to spot danger. And unless you start to practice skills to circumvent that and work around that you will keep having a brain and thoughts that are not so helpful.

This is know-how. It's one thing to hear me talk about okay, my brain evolved to prioritize the negative, it's another thing to start to practice challenging those negative thoughts. I really want you to think about this. Your brain can become the most helpful amazing tool in your arsenal but not without practice. And I don't know about you but my brain needed a lot of practice.

First I spent the first 30 years of my life not exercising it at all in this arena. It was super critical and super judgmental of everything that I did. And it was very good at beating me up and it had every excuse under the book to eat and drink my way into what I thought was feeling better, which of course was really just feeling worse. So yeah, I needed a lot of practice to build know-how but you know what? Then you get to that point where you're like I just know how to ride a bike. The same thing happens here. It's like you would learn it and then you can't lose it.

The way to do this is to be curious about the progress you are making. And remembering that you're always making progress even when you break

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your commitment not to drink, even when you said you were only going to have a glass and you polished off the bottle. You are actually making progress in these moments because these moments are here to teach you something. They're a moment for you to learn and grow, and build new awareness of something that you didn't yet have the skill around.

Most people don't think of it that way, they just think I just failed again. I just went back on my word again. No, that moment, that moment where things did not go as planned, it's a moment trying to reveal to you the skill that you need, the skill that you're lacking right now, but that you can learn. Think about it, if every time you fell off a bike you made it mean that learning how to ride a bike was impossible you would never learn, you would give up.

But that's what most people make it mean, every time they drink when they said that they wouldn't or they said they'd only have a glass, they end up blocking the skill building and the know-how because of what they're making it mean. Instead of realizing every time that happens I'm still making progress. The question is am I willing to ask the question, what can I learn from this? What can't I yet see around the habit? What am I currently blind to?

So listen, if you have caught yourself thinking, I've been listening to this podcast, or I've read the book, I should know better, you have to start to question that thought. Because I'm here to tell you that knowledge is only going to take you so far. And I love that you're here gaining knowledge but you cannot skip the know-how. How much are you practicing allowing urges? How much are you collecting data? How much are you writing out the think, feel, act cycle? How much are you practicing shifting your thoughts to more believable ones?

How much are you learning from your mistakes? How much are you learning from how much you drank last night instead of beating yourself up? How much know-how are you really giving yourself or are you trying a couple of times and when it doesn't click right away, deciding that you can't

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do it and going back to just consuming knowledge? It has to be a combination of both because really that is the lie that you can't do it, of course you can. Of course you can.

I have no doubt that you can change the habit of drinking and you can change your relationship with alcohol. I have no doubt in my mind because everyone can. Everyone has this potential. Everyone can question the habit and bring curiosity to it and inquiry. The thing to consider is how much work are you willing to put in? How much know-how are you willing to develop? Or are you just relying on knowledge? Because knowledge will always be safer, it will always be safer to sit here and just listen to me talk. But only know-how, only practice can create the change that you are looking for.

So please never ever again, if you listen to this podcast and you tell yourself I should know better, I know all these things now, why am I not changing, it's simply because you have the knowledge and the next step is for you to start building more of the know-how. And you can do it.

Alright everyone, that's it for today. I will see you 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 truly powered to take it or leave it. Head on over to [RachelHart.com/join](https://RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.