

## Ep #19: Understanding Your Actions



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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## Ep #19: Understanding Your Actions

You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 19.

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.

Hello everyone, welcome back. I have a question for you, what have you done today? What have you spent your day doing? When did you get out of bed? What did you eat? Did you go to work? Did you exercise? Did you spend time on your phone, on Facebook? Did you watch TV? What did you do today? Think about this, because today we're talking all about our actions. It's the third episode of the think-feel-act cycle and actions is the third part, so that's what we're going to be talking about today.

So think about what did you do? I want you to keep that in mind today while you're listening to today's episode. The think-feel-act cycle is the cycle you have to master if you want to change your drinking, or really, if you want to change anything in your life. Learning how to tell the difference between the different parts of the cycle is key if you want to understand why you drink more than you want, why you feel like you rely on a drink in certain situations or when you feel certain ways, and it's really crucial if you want to understand why it sometimes can feel difficult to cut back and how to actually unlearn your desire.

So just to recap, in episode 17, I talked all about the first part of the cycle, your thoughts. And just as a reminder, a thought is just a sentence in your mind. It's the language that is running through your head that you use to assess and judge yourself and the world around you, your past, your future, whatever. Now here's the thing, most of us don't question or challenge our thoughts. We just take all of them at face value. So if you haven't listened to that episode, if you're not clear on what your thoughts are or why you need to pay attention, go back and listen to episode 17.

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In episode 18, I talked all about the second part of the think-feel-act cycle, your feelings. Now, your feelings are separate from your thoughts, although most of us don't treat them that way. They are a single word, happy, sad, angry, anxious, awkward, whatever feeling state you can imagine. Now, feelings are located in your body. Every emotion is going to produce a different set of physical sensations. Your heart rate is going to change, your breathing may speed up or slow down, your muscles might tense or relax, the list will go on, and you'll be surprised how much you notice is happening in your body when you start to pay attention to what your emotions feel like.

And now, the reason you want to do this, the reason that you want to focus on what an emotion feels like in your body is to create a little distance. Think about how many times when you're experiencing a negative emotion, you'll often just feel like overcome with it. It will feel so strong and that there's sort of nothing you can do to rid yourself of it. So you want to create a little distance because that distance allows you to be curious about the emotion. It allows you to be curious about what exactly you're feeling.

That's not what most of us do. Most of us feel anxious or stressed or awkward or lonely and we immediately decide that we have to change how we feel, and when that doesn't work, when we can't immediately change how we feel, then we start looking to our external environment to find things to try to cover up how we feel. So really understanding your emotions in a new way, understanding how they are different from your thoughts, how they manifest in your body, that is going to help you so much if you want to unlearn the desire to drink.

Let me tell you, all of your feelings are way more tolerable than you think. So you can go back and listen to episode 18 if you want to brush up on that. But today, we are talking about the third part of the think-feel-act cycle, we're talking about your actions. So in other words, why do you do the things that you do in your life?

Look, the cycle is always at work in the background of your mind, and most of us have no idea. I'll tell you that for years, I thought I felt crappy and

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anxious all the time for two main reasons: one, I wasn't satisfied with who I was as a person, and because of this I was in this constant battle to fix myself and to improve myself and to make myself better, and two, I thought that I felt crappy and anxious all the time because of everything that was happening in the world around me. So my job was too stressful and my relationship was up and down and I was struggling with money, I had all these reasons that I could point to in my external environment for why I felt the way I did.

But once you learn this cycle, you'll realize it doesn't work like this. Who you are as a person or who you think you aren't, the things you need to fix or improve, they are not the things that are causing you to feel the way you do, nor are the things that are happening in your life. And let me just tell you, thank god, because if these things were what cause us to feel the way we do, then we would have to run around trying to perfect ourselves so that we could feel better and trying to get everything and everyone in our world to behave exactly the way we wanted them to, so that we could feel better.

But the think-feel-act cycle tells us something different. It tells us that we never feel anything until we think a thought first, right? Our thoughts are what create how we feel, not who we are, not what's happening around us, and also that we never take an action, we never do things before we feel an emotion.

Alright, so let's dive in. Now, I know that if you're listening, you probably just want to know why you sometimes drink more than you want. But here's the thing, if you're truly going to understand the cycle, you need to realize this: drinking too much or drinking more than you want is not the only action in your life that sometimes feels like a mystery.

I want you to think about this, think about all the times in your life you have done something or said something and immediately thought, "Why did I do that? Why did I wait to the last minute to work on a big presentation? Why did I just snap at my partner? Why did I eat so much at dinner? Why did I just hit send on that text message? Why didn't I apply for that job? Why

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didn't I go to the gym this morning when I promised myself that I would? Why didn't I turn off the TV last night and go to bed at a reasonable time?"

It's really, really important to remind yourself of this. There are lots of things that you do in your life, lots of actions and inactions, not just your drinking, that can at times feel explicable. And reminding yourself of this is so important because if you want to change your drinking, you are probably beating yourself up for not having changed it by now. You might even tell yourself that because you are struggling, because you can't just snap your fingers and do it immediately, that there's something wrong with you.

So many of us use our struggle as a sign that there is something wrong with us fundamentally as a person, and I know because I did this for so long. So I want to be really clear, there is nothing wrong with you if you don't understand why sometimes you drink too much. There is nothing wrong. The only thing that is wrong is that society has drilled this message into our heads that struggle connected to your drinking is completely separate from any other struggle that you face in any other part of your life.

So if you're skipping the gym or if you're eating too much or if you can't put down your phone or if you can't stop procrastinating, you get the message, yes, it's kind of hard to change your habits, but if you struggle putting down a glass of wine, if you struggle saying no to another beer, the message you get is totally different. The message you get then is, something might be really wrong with you, something might be really wrong with your brain, and by the way, here's a label that you might want to wear for the rest of your life.

It's such a disservice, it really is. All of us, myself included for a very long time, bought into this idea, this false dichotomy between the world being separated into normal drinkers and alcoholics, and there being nothing in between. But it doesn't make any sense, especially when you learn the think-feel-act cycle, and especially when you learn how that cycle applies to everything in your life, including skipping the gym, eating too much, procrastinating, and yes, drinking more than you want.

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So if you're beating yourself up right now, if you're telling yourself that the fact that you aren't able to do this, you aren't able to change your drinking by snapping your fingers, let me just tell you, it just means you haven't yet learned how to apply and understand this cycle.

The real problem is that no one, no one ever explains to us why we do anything in our life. No one sits us down and says, okay, now that you're old enough to understand and to make decisions and to think on your own, I'm just going to explain to you that there's a really simple reason for why you do or don't do everything in your life, and it's called the think-feel-act cycle, right? That doesn't happen. No one gets that. No one that I know was sat down and had that conversation. So in absence of this information, we decide that the things we do or don't do are some sort of indication, a representation of who we are or our worth as a person, and really nothing could be further from the truth.

The good news is this: the reason you do or don't do everything in your life is truly very, very simple. The reason you take any action is how you felt at the time. Anything you do or don't do is because of a feeling you have in your body, and this includes the action of drinking.

So I want to give you an example that came up recently when I was working with one of my clients. So we were talking about going out with friends for happy hour. Now, you may have been in this situation as well, maybe you promised yourself that you wouldn't drink, maybe you were taking a break, maybe it was just a Tuesday night and you had a lot going on the next day. Whatever it was, if you've been in this situation before, you're going out with friends, you want to hang out with people, everybody's heading to happy hour but you promised yourself, you know what, I'm not going to drink tonight. But as soon as you get there, you start thinking well, you know, it's been a long day, I was really stressed, I just want to take the edge off, and you think to yourself, I deserve a treat. And so instead of asking the bartender for a club soda, you order a margarita.

And what might happen is that after that first drink, maybe there's a second, maybe there's a third, maybe even a fourth and then before you

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know it, you wake up the next morning, you've got a hangover but not only that, you're wondering to yourself, why did I drink? Why did I even have that first drink when I promised myself that I was going to hang out with people but I wasn't going to drink tonight.

So here's what would happen for me: I would say to myself when that would happen, well, I drank because I was out with my friends and they were all drinking, or I was at a bar and so I was surrounded by alcohol, or the margaritas looked really tasty and they were hard to resist, and you probably can relate to this. You attribute the action of drinking to the circumstance in your life, and then what happens is that when we decide that maybe we want to take a break or we just want to cut back, we tell ourselves, okay, well I need to get away from these circumstances that could potentially make me drink. I need to stop hanging out with my friends, I need to stop going to happy hours, I need to sequester myself away from alcohol.

And I did this for a really long time, I thought that alright, I have all this desire that I don't know what to do with and it's desire that I truly thought was created by my environment, so if I wanted to take a break, if I wanted to cut back, I needed to get away from the situations that create my desire, but it was kind of terrible, because here's the thing: I didn't want to stop socializing with my friends, I didn't want to stop going to parties, I didn't want to stop and say no to every happy hour, I didn't want to walk through the world and have this focus all the time of making sure that I was never around a drink, because god forbid, it could create all this desire inside of me.

I didn't want that to be my life, and here's the thing, it doesn't need to be. But I didn't understand this until I understood the think-feel-act cycle, and once you understand it, you'll see that nothing in your environment causes you to take the action of drinking. Your actions are not created by your environment, they're created by this cycle. You have a thought, which creates a feeling, which drives your action.

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So the reason you decided to drink wasn't because you were out with your friends, it wasn't because you were at a bar, it wasn't because there was a happy hour special on margaritas. The reason you took the action of drinking was because you had a thought. A thought like, I deserve a treat, and when you think that thought, it creates a feeling inside of you, it creates the feeling of desire and when you feel desire in your body, you're prompted to act. You're prompted to head to the bar and order that margarita instead of a club soda.

Now think about this, because it wasn't maybe just that one drink. The reason you had another drink was because you had another thought. a thought like, one more won't hurt or who cares, or screw it, I'll start again tomorrow. We have these thoughts that create desire inside of us and so many of us have gotten in the habit of responding to our desire with the action of saying yes to a drink. But this isn't what we tell ourselves. We tell ourselves that we made the decision because it was too hard to resist our desire, or we blame our desire on our friends or the bar or the drinks or the setting, not realizing the role of our thoughts in all of this, not realizing how our thoughts create our desire in the first place.

Not only that, we have no idea why we drink way more than we wanted because we're not paying attention to all the additional thoughts. The additional thoughts like, one more won't hurt, who cares, screw it, I'll start again tomorrow, it doesn't matter. Now, for some of you listening, I know that you may be thinking, yes this makes sense, like I understand what you're saying, but I don't even notice my thinking. I'm not even noticing that there's a thought there, and for some of you, you might have that experience of feeling like you went and got that third drink and you don't even know how that happened.

The only reason is because you're not yet practiced at noticing your thoughts. You're not yet practicing at noticing how your thinking creates how you feel and how your feelings drive your actions. But I'll tell you, once you start paying attention, once you start noticing the think-feel-act cycle at



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work, you will start to get a new awareness about why you do the things you do and I promise it will change everything.

I'm tell you, this cycle, the think-feel-act cycle, it really blew my mind. In large part because I couldn't believe that it could possibly be this simple. I had been so focused on figuring out what is wrong with me, right? What is wrong with me that I seem to have this big desire? What is wrong with me that I keep seeming to say yes all the time? What is wrong with me that my drinking is so unpredictable? And I kept looking for that answer, I kept looking for the reason, the kind of fundamental flaw, the explanation for why I was doing these things that I didn't want to do. And all I had to do was start paying attention to what I was thinking.

But here's the other thing, yes, learning this blew my mind, but you know what? I was also kind of frustrated. I really was, because when I finally understood the role of my thinking and how my thinking created my desire in the first place and how that desire then drove my actions, when I understood how simple it was, I was also kind of frustrated that it took me 15 years of struggling for someone to explain this to me.

I had spent so much time thinking there was something wrong with me or that I was just born with too much desire or that I just lacked will power or discipline, and meanwhile no one ever told me that I was the one creating my desire to drink. I was unconsciously doing that with my thinking, and that I could change it. That if I created my desire with thoughts that for the most part were unconscious and thoughts that I didn't notice until I started paying attention, that if I started noticing my thinking and I started consciously practicing and changing my thoughts that I could actually change my desire, and that I didn't need to sequester myself away from alcohol, I didn't need to not go to happy hour and not go to bars and not hang out with friends and avoid parties, I just needed to pay attention to my thinking in these situations to understand how it was motivating my actions. My desire to drink didn't bubble up from some deep dark recess inside of me, it was created by what I was thinking about.

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Okay, so now you can see how the action of drinking doesn't materialize out of thin air, you always feel desire in your body, desire that is created by what you are thinking. So you understand how that works but I want you to also see how the think-feel-act cycle applies to every action you take in your life, not just the action of drinking. So you procrastinated on that presentation because you were feeling overwhelmed, you snapped at your partner because you were feeling angry, you ate too much at dinner because you were feeling deprived, you hit send on that text message too soon because you were feeling impatient, you didn't apply for that job you wanted because you were feeling insecure, you didn't go to the gym this morning because you were feeling defeated. You have to notice the emotions that are driving your actions.

If you can notice the feeling that is driving an action, then you can find the thought that is creating how you feel, and when you think about it this way, it's just using the cycle in reverse. You're noticing the action first, what action are you taking, and then asking yourself how was I feeling in the moment? What emotion drove that action? And if you can identify the emotion, then you can start to identify what you were thinking that created the emotion in the first place and touched off the cycle.

So here's what I want you to do: I want you to really practice noticing what you are doing or not doing with everything in your life, not just drinking. And then ask yourself how you're feeling in that moment. Can you pinpoint what is the feeling that is driving the action? Pay attention to these actions, pay attention to how you're feeling before and understand that no matter what you feel, no matter what emotion it is, you can always look for the thought that is creating it.

This is going to help you understand everything in your life so much better, but more importantly, it's really going to help you finally feel like some of those actions, some of the things you do that feel mysterious and that you can't solve, it feels like you can't understand, they're going to start to make sense, but you have to have this framework of the think-feel-act cycle in order to make sense of it and in order to finally change it.

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Alright, so before I go, I want to share with you a new free resource that I put together. If you are struggling to change your drinking, I created a worksheet; it's called Your Complete Picture, that I promise will completely change your perspective. I always tell people, if you only ever do one exercise about your drinking, do this one. It is that powerful, it is the exercise that changed everything for me. If you want to go grab it all you need to do is go to [rachelhart.com/picture](http://rachelhart.com/picture) and download it now.

Okay, so I love hearing from you guys, I would love to hear from you how this is going. Once you start paying attention to your actions, what are you noticing? What are you noticing the feelings that are driving these actions? Are you noticing any thoughts that you're having? What's coming up for you? If you want to share this with me, you can always send me an email at [podcast@rachelhart.com](mailto:podcast@rachelhart.com) and thank you so much for listening this week. I love this topic, this is the framework that changes everything, and I hope that it is starting to be something that not only you're understanding but that you can apply in your life as well. Alright, I'll 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](http://RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.

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