

## Ep #110: Why “I Should Know Better” Is a Lie



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

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You are listening to the *Take A Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 110.

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.

Hey everybody. Now listen, before I get started today, I'm doing a new segment where I'm going to answer your questions. So if you have any questions at all, anything about the topic of drinking, anything you hear me talk about on the podcast, anything you're struggling with, just send me your questions at [podcast@rachelhart.com](mailto:podcast@rachelhart.com).

Alright, so let's dive into today's topic. So last week we were talking about learning and how learning can actually be a trap. It is so mind-blowing to understand that this is possible. If you haven't listened to that episode, episode 109, I want to make sure you go back and check it out.

The reason why learning can be a trap is because you're not taking action. It feels so virtuous. You just keep learning and learning and learning, but you're not actually going out there and doing anything different because you tell yourself, oh, I just need a little bit more information before I figure this out.

So here is the thing; I want to talk about what happens when you start taking action. So you get out of that learning trap, you start taking action, but then the action you take does not go as you hoped it would. Okay, so let's say you committed to taking a break. Maybe it was for a day or a week or a month or a year. Whatever it was you committed to taking a break, and then you made the decision to drink during that break. What then?

Here's what I hear from my clients and what I used to say to myself all the time. "I should have known better." This especially starts to come up when people start learning about the brain and the habit and how it works. So

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you're doing all the work of gathering information, you're doing all the work of expanding your mind, but you're not yet seeing that information and the learning translate into knowhow.

So you take an action, it doesn't go the way that you intended, you tell yourself I should have known better, I should know better, and then what do you do? What does that thought create for you? Well guess what, shame. You start beating yourself up. You just keep focusing on how I had all this information and I know now, I should know better, but I still made the decision. So what's wrong with me?

We go into this whole shame spiral. I want to show you today why this thought, I should know better, it's also a trap. You have to drop this line of thinking because I promise, it is never useful.

You know, I recently received an email from a listener about this and she was telling me, I'm doing all this work, I'm working so hard, I'm listening to the podcast every day, I'm making progress, I'm not drinking, I'm taking notes on my thoughts and emotions, doing all the work, and then bam, I was stressed out one day, I had a massive to-do list, and what did I do?

I decided to drink. I told myself I needed a drink to take the edge off and to get myself through my workload. And now I'm just telling myself I should have known better and all the work I'm done, it feels like it doesn't count. I want you to think about how many times this has happened to you. I know that this used to be a really regular pattern for my own brain.

But I want to just take a second to see how this unfolds in the think-feel-act cycle. Now remember, what is creating how you feel are your thoughts. However you are interpreting what happened, whatever judgment you are attaching to it. Because the neutral circumstance, and it really is neutral, guys, is a decision to drink.

That doesn't cause you to feel anything. That does not create a feeling until you attach meaning to it, until you have a thought about that decision. And for so many of us, it's the thought, I should know better. When you think

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that, you create the feeling of shame and guess what we do when we feel shame? Not only do we beat ourselves up, but we start hiding. We bury our head in the sand. We don't want to look. We don't want to ask for help. We don't want to reach out.

And in fact, the brain starts going on a hunt for evidence that you'll never be able to figure this out. So you start looking back into history, looking back into your past and finding evidence of other attempts where you tried and you failed. So you start collecting this kind of logbook of see, see, I'll never figure this out.

And then what is your result? Your result of course is that you literally don't know better because you aren't using your brain, you aren't using what you know to meaningfully change the habit. You're not learning, you're not growing, you're not problem solving. You're beating yourself up. You're hiding. You're looking for evidence that you can't do it.

Remember, this is the really important piece of the think-feel-act cycle. Your results that you create will reinforce that original thought. So if are you telling yourself that the decision to drink means I should know better, you will create results proving that true. In this case, literally creating an environment, creating actions where you don't know better because you aren't using what happened to grow or to learn or to change the habit. You're just using it to flog yourself.

When you beat yourself up, whenever you beat yourself up, you aren't understanding a habit better. You aren't identifying the permission-giving thoughts that you had that you could then subsequently change. You aren't identifying any of the cues that were connected to the urge to drink. You're not even examining how you responded, what was your automatic response when the urge appeared.

All of that information is lost to you because instead what you're doing is taking what happened and inserting this narrative of see, see, I'll never figure it out. I have all this information, I've been listening to this podcast,

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I've been really doing all the work, I've been trying to be introspective, and still I can't do it.

That's what you're doing instead. You are creating a self-fulfilling prophecy for you that you should have known better and then your result is that you don't know better because you didn't use what happened to actually collect data that could help you on your journey.

When you do this, you are just creating more harm against yourself because what do we do? What really is the logical extension of I should know better? It starts to sound a lot like I must really be screwed up. Because how could I have all this information and not change how I'm showing up, not change my actions? Something must really be wrong with me if I'm listening and trying to learn and still not following, still not making decisions that I like. That is where we end up, and that is a terrible place to be.

But here's the thing; why do you repeat old habits even when you have new information? Let's talk about that. Why does that happen? There is one simple reason and it's not because something is wrong with you. It is literally only because your brain at this moment has not yet overwritten the old habit with the new one.

Remember, your brain is able to do this. You have a human brain, which means are you blessed with neuroplasticity, and all that means is that you can change your brain. You can have habits that don't serve you and overwrite them with new ones.

Now, if that hasn't happened yet, it's not a problem. You're just not there yet. It literally can only happen by practicing a new action over and over and over again and this is why action matters so much and I don't want you to get stuck in just trying to learn. You got to go out and you got to practice not drinking.

You have to practice not drinking when you feel stressed or you feel awkward. You have to practice not drinking when your brain is saying we'll

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start tomorrow, you deserve it, everybody else is. You have to practice not drinking when you're out at dinner and everybody's ordering wine or when you're at a party and everybody is drinking.

You have to practice in these moments and you have to do it over and over again. That is how you literally overwrite an old habit with a new one. And most importantly, you just have to practice having that urge to drink appear and not automatically answering it. Habits are created through repetition. You created the habit of overdrinking through repetition. You just didn't realize you were creating a habit at the time. You did that unconsciously.

You have got to now create a new habit consciously. And the thing that will get in the way of repetition time and time again is beating yourself up, going into a shame spiral, hiding, burying your head in the sand. The blame game that your brain is operating under right now is literally slowing down the process of change.

I love thinking about it that way because then not beating myself up isn't about oh, you should be nice to yourself. It's literally, oh, this is just slowing down the process of change. I should know better, that thought is preventing you from creating a new habit.

Because here's the thing; what do you need when you don't honor a commitment that you made? What do you need when you tell yourself, I'm not going to drink and then you drink? The only thing you need is to start problem solving. That's it, to strategize, to figure out how to approach the situation differently next time. You do not need beating yourself up. In fact, beating yourself up serves no useful purpose.

I say this to my clients all the time. Are you willing to put on the hat of a scientist? Are you willing to look at last night or last weekend as just data points? Not good or bad, not right or wrong, just data points. And are those data points taking me closer to the ultimate result that I want or further away?

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And if it's taking you further away, can you learn from that? Can you just look at how much did I drink, what excuses did I make, what was I telling myself about the urge, what was I telling myself about the desire? Can you gather all that information and observe it from a place of a scientist where you're just looking for data? You're not bringing a lot of judgment to it.

That ability to do that is so powerful because once you have all that data, you can decide how you want to proceed, what you want to do differently next time, what it's going to take to show up differently and make a different decision. But you cannot do that if you are basically in a vacuum of information, which is what happens when you beat yourself up.

Listen, the thought I should know better, it really is BS. You will do things differently when your brain has created a new habit. And if you're not doing things differently yet, if you're drinking when you tell yourself that you won't, if you're drinking more than you want, it just means you haven't created a new habit. That's not a problem. It just means that you need more practice, and are you willing to sign up for that? Are you willing to sign up for more practice?

The reason why most people don't want to is because they think that practice is going to feel terrible because if I don't do it perfectly, of course then I'll just hate myself. But that is not the automatic outcome of practicing something and failing. That only happens when you make it mean something really negative about who you are and your future, and your ability to change.

Because here's how you will know when the brain has created a new habit. And I'll tell you, I've watched this happen in so many areas of my life and it stills blows my mind and I watch it happen with my clients and I am always so excited for them when I start to see this change. You will know when you have created a new habit because you will see that kind of excuse come up, I deserve it, who cares, why not, screw it, and you will immediately have an additional thought come up, oh, I know what this is going to lead to.



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Like, you'll be onto yourself, which is amazing to go from a place of just obeying whatever permission-giving thoughts you're having to actually being onto them and understanding where they're going to take you. Or you'll have an urge appear and you'll just say like, hi, I know you, I've seen you before, it's okay, and you'll move on.

I love watching my clients do this. When they watch urges appear and all of a sudden it goes from like, I hate it, it's terrible, urges are the worst, to oh hey, of course you're here I have practiced drinking in this situation or drinking when I feel this way over and over again. Of course you're here. Not a big deal.

Or you'll know that you have a new habit when a negative emotion will crop up. It can be anything. Stress, anxiety, awkwardness, insecurity, loneliness, whatever it is, and your brain will have that desire, I should have a drink, and then all of a sudden, this new thought will appear and it will remind you opening a bottle of wine will literally only help you pretend that you feel better. It will not help you in the long run.

It seems kind of crazy. I know this. It seems kind of crazy when you are not yet in this place to think that your brain will actually be able to do this, it will actually be able to intervene with the thoughts creating your desire and the thoughts giving you permission to drink, but I promise, it is possible if you're willing to practice. Until then, until you get to that point, you just have to be willing to keep problem solving no matter what. Not five times, not 10 times, as long as it takes.

You have to be willing to look at the decisions you make in life around drinking without judgment. But here's the thing; learning how to do this around alcohol is so powerful because guess what, it's not just the decisions we make around alcohol that we have a lot of judgment about. Learning this skill in this arena will transform your life because you will have able to apply it to everything.

You have to be willing to understand that shame spirals are not going to help you problem solve. What will happen, you will lose days and days and

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days feeling terrible. You will lose days beating yourself up and not wanting to look and hiding and not asking for help. This used to happen to me all the time. I just remember, it was like I could lose weeks sometimes feeling so bad, feeling so ashamed about my behavior, and I think about how much I stunted my ability to create change because I was lost in the shame spiral.

Listen, no matter what you believe, shame is never productive. Never. It is a thought error. It is a faulty belief, the idea, oh, if I feel bad enough then I'll change. We get a lot of messages that is the case, but it is never true. The belief that you can shame yourself into change is simply wrong, and the way that we know that is the think-feel-act cycle.

Because here's what you will learn; once you start paying attention to how this cycle works, you will start to see that negative thoughts never create positive actions. If you're not taking positive actions, you cannot create positive results in your life. Negative thoughts lead to negative feelings, which drive negative actions and create negative results. That's just the way it works.

And people want to argue this with me, and you know what? I wanted to argue this for a long time because I was so used to trying to shame myself into being a better person and trying to shame myself into stopping drinking. And you know what? Sometimes I could shame myself into stopping drinking temporarily, but here's what discovered.

Whenever that was the case, whenever I was saying no to a drink because I kind of hated myself, what would happen was I would turn to other things to numb how I would feel. So I would just take the behavior of overdrinking and it would become overeating or overspending or overworking. I would just turn to another numbing behavior.

And eventually, I always went back to drinking because I would get to a point where I would think, oh god, well I feel this miserable or I'm this screwed up, so I might as well drink. Because that pattern of using

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something, using an external substance to cope with how I felt, it was still there. I hadn't done anything to change it.

Even if you are able to hold out for a while, even if you are able to say no for a while, if your ability to feel good about yourself, to think that you are an okay person is dependent on whether or not you pick up a drink or whether or not you eat the food or whether or not you spend the money, whatever it is, just ask yourself what happens the moment that you make a different decision. What happens the moment you decide to drink or decide to eat or rack up the credit card bill, whatever it is?

You just use it as evidence that you're a bad person and that you're never going to figure this out and that something's wrong with you and that maybe you're broken. You're right back where you started because what you're trying to do is prop up your self-worth by never making a mistake and doing things perfectly, and it's impossible, and that's why it's so exhausting.

It's exhausting to try to be a perfect person and to never fail and to never make a mistake so that you can feel good about yourself. I should know better or I should have known better, they're lies. You have got to drop this line of thinking right now if you want to change your drinking. The way to do this is to switch. It's a very subtle change, but it makes all the difference. I can understand better.

I can understand better will send you in the direction of problem solving. Hiding, beating yourself up for days, that only stalls you. You cannot shame yourself into changing the habit. I promise, it will not work. And even if you are able to use that shame to say no, I guarantee you're going to feel miserable in the process. The only way to change a habit is to problem solve, and you can only problem solve when you aren't beating yourself up.

Shame will keep you hiding. It will have you bury your head in the sand. So next time you tell yourself, I should have known better, make sure you switch to, I can understand better. That will help you change the habit.

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Alright everybody, that's it for today. I will see you next week.

Hey guys, if you're finding this podcast helpful, and I really hope you are, I would love if you would head on over to iTunes and leave a review. And as a special thank you, I've updated and expanded my free urge meditation give away. I've created two audio meditations plus a brand-new workbook that will teach you a different way to respond to the urge to drink. The meditations are super simple. All it takes is five minutes and a pair of headphones, and each one now comes with a follow up exercise in the workbook to help you dig deeper and really retrain your brain when it comes to the habit of drinking.

So after you leave a review on iTunes, all you need to do is head on over to [rachelhart.com/urge](http://rachelhart.com/urge). Input your information and I'll make sure you get a copy of both meditations plus the workbook in your inbox.

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.