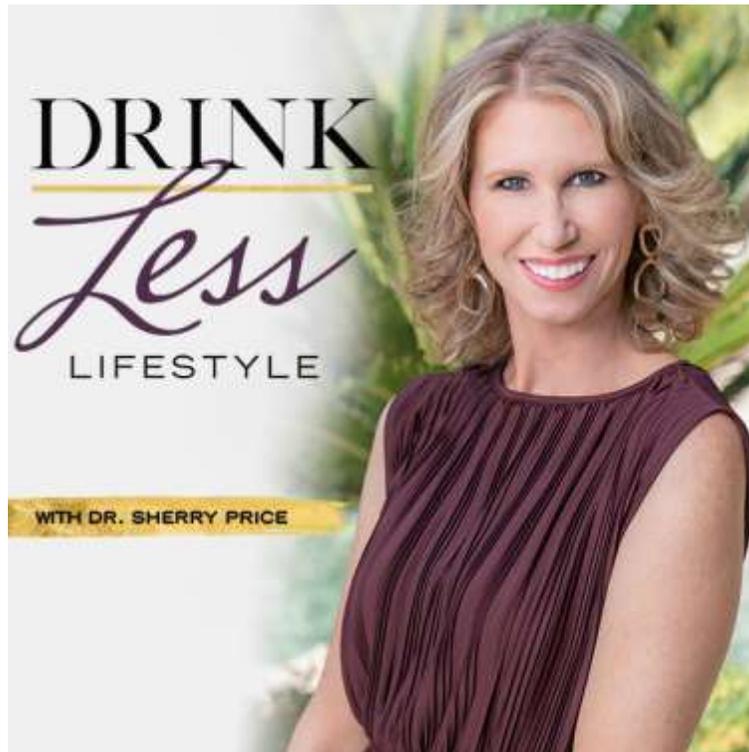


## Ep #1: Drinking Is a Thinking Problem



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Dr. Sherry Price**

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## Ep #1: Drinking Is a Thinking Problem

You are listening to the *Drink Less Lifestyle Podcast* with Dr. Sherry Price, episode number 1.

Welcome to *Drink Less Lifestyle*, a podcast for successful women who want to change their relationship with alcohol. If you want to drink less, feel healthier and start loving life again you're in the right place. Please remember that the information in this podcast does not constitute medical advice. Now, here's your host, Dr. Sherry Price.

Hello, everyone. I am so excited to be sharing this podcast with all of you. This podcast has been a goal of mine for a long time and I feel now, more than ever, it's the perfect time to be launching it because we are in the midst of this coronavirus pandemic and as we know alcohol sales have skyrocketed. Alcohol consumption is up dramatically, particularly among the females more so than the males.

So, I used to be there, too. I used to be drinking a lot for many different reasons. We know people are drinking because they're bored or they're stressed or feeling lonely. For me, it was just a way to relax and take the edge off at the end of the day. But I felt it became to be too much. It was something I was doing more than I wanted to. It was that one glass that always turned into a whole bottle and that's when it really doesn't start to feel so good.

My goal with this podcast is to help you with practical tips and strategies so that you can learn to lead a drink less lifestyle and be a better version of you. So, you're in the right place if you feel that you are very high functioning. You get all the things that you need to do, for the most part, done. You love to accomplish things, you're very goal-oriented, and you have a passion for learning. You like to learn new tools and new techniques to better yourself and better your life. And you feel that really you have most parts of your life very well under control except this one area, this drinking thing.

Also, if you really don't resonate with the concept that you're powerless. I'll be talking more on this in a future episode, but you really just feel that you

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lack the tools and the strategies to break this overdrinking habit. So, in this first episode I think it's really important for us to get to know each other and for you to know who I am.

So, my background is in pharmacy and I've been trained as a pharmacist and I have my doctorate in pharmacy. I'm also a certified life coach. I also want you to know who I am not. I am not an addiction specialist, I'm not a psychotherapist, or a psychiatrist or have any real specialized training in addiction behavior. So, I want to be very upfront and clear about that.

What I share on this podcast are tools that have helped my journey and tools that I use with my clients to help their journey in cutting back on drinking. So, I want to share a little bit about my drinking history with you and I'm sure more will come out in future episodes.

I was just a woman who liked a glass of wine at the end of the day and I found that having a glass of wine, well guess what, always seemed to lead to another and another and another. Shortly I became someone who polished off a bottle of wine pretty routinely like on the daily. My brain would just see that alcohol was pleasurable, I enjoyed it, why not? Everybody else is doing it. It just felt like this is what we do when we become an adult and we come home from work and want to take the edge off. That's what my brain would tell me.

This pattern of overdrinking went on for years. What really perplexed me about my drinking was that I thought, "If I just had more self-discipline I could cut back." Why that was so perplexing to me is because I had self-discipline and self-control in so many other areas of my life. I was super successful, I had a successful career, a successful marriage, home life, all of that. I ate healthy, I exercised, but this just seemed to be that one area that I couldn't get a handle on.

Now, I really enjoy drinking. My life not only involved drinking it also started to revolve around drinking. Like, if I was invited to a party and I know that there wasn't going to be alcohol there, of course I wasn't going to go to the

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party. Or if I had to go to the party then I would just bring alcohol with me because after all, parties are more fun with alcohol.

So, back to thinking I needed more self-discipline. I thought that would be the magic. It was so frustrating when I would do all these ways and all these things to cut back on drinking and none of them ever worked. So, let me share with you some of the things that I tried. I would try doing those periods of abstinence like a Sober October, a Dry January, sometimes I'd go on a cleanse or a detox and then alcohol wasn't allowed in those and I'd very well. I wouldn't drink at all, but then right when they ended, I went right back to the same type of drinking that I used to do.

Or I'd make rules around my drinking like, "I'm not going to have any during the week. I'll just allow it on the weekends." Yes, I would follow that for a little bit, but then I'd always cave and I'd always have a strong desire for the alcohol even during the week.

Another strategy I tried was trying to control my environment, like maybe not even bring it into the house. If it's not in the house I can't have any. Or I'd go to the grocery store and just buy a limited quantity because I was afraid that I couldn't control how much I would drink, so I'd just buy one bottle of wine because I thought if I bought two, well, I might finish the second one, too.

I tried all of that, controlling my environment, the periods of abstinence, the making rules and breaking them. Each time I felt that I failed because I always had the desire. I was always thinking about it. I always wanted it and I was always telling myself, "No, you can't have it for these reasons or these rules or there's none in the house." So, I was always trying to control alcohol from the external perspective, by controlling the drink.

Now, I have to say being in healthcare I was highly embarrassed of my behavior. I thought, "I have all the statistics. I practiced as a critical care pharmacist. I would see the effects of people with end-stage alcoholic liver disease or all the negative effects that occur because of the drinking." Now,

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yet I wasn't there, but I saw all that and I thought, "Come on, Sherry, get it together. Can't you see what alcohol does?"

Even in my own life I felt some of the ramifications. Like if you overdo it the next day you don't feel so good, you need extra coffee, your sleep is disrupted, I had started to gain some weight from it. What really bothered me was just the mental chatter I had about it every day. Like berating myself in the morning saying, "You shouldn't be drinking. You shouldn't be drinking that much. You know better." Swearing it off for that day and then at night it was like I was a completely different person because I wasn't 100% committed to swearing it off. I was like, "Oh, let's just have one drink. One won't hurt."

I repeated this cycle over and over and over and I would say my drinking felt like an overdrinking habit. Every time I got started I would just indulge just a bit more than I wanted to and it was like a habit cycle. I had the cues, I had the triggers, I had the cravings, everything that's in that habit cycle felt like it was happening to me.

So, of course, this leads to shame and embarrassment and I didn't know where to turn. I certainly didn't feel like I was an alcoholic. I felt like I just had this habit problem. Now, let me just share with you that according to the CDC about 90% of people who drink excessively would not be expected to meet the clinical diagnostic criteria of having a severe alcohol use disorder. So, that's 90% of people who drink more than they want do not meet the clinical diagnosis for severe alcohol use disorder.

I felt, "Yes, that's me. I'm part of that 90%." I don't feel quite as I'm that far along on the spectrum, but I feel like I'm headed that way. I felt that the alcohol was controlling me more than I wanted it to and being a control freak I certainly didn't like that.

So, one of the big things I learned on my journey to a drink less lifestyle was that all the reasons why I couldn't cut back on my drinking in the past I figured out why. Like I said before it was because all of those modalities focused on the drink. Now, if you just focus on the drink and say rules or

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you can't have it or you get to enjoy it just on the weekends, if you come at it from that perspective you're trying to control the drink. But I found out the drinking is not the primary problem. The drinking is just a symptom of the primary problem.

Drinking is more of a thinking problem. Now, hold on with me right there, because I know when I first heard "problem" I'm like, "Yes, it's a habit, but I don't know about that term 'problem,'" and if alcohol is causing any kind of problems in your life, right?

To me, I like that word problem because it means that there's a solution and that's exactly how I felt. I'm like, "There's got to be a solution to this because this just feels like a bad cycle that I'm in." So, just think about it. If you have your car light come on, say, and it's like the car is telling you it's got a problem. Here's a warning sign, here's a problem, and then you take it to the car dealership or a mechanic and they fix it and the car light signal, the engine light signal shuts off. It was a problem and that it was fixed.

Problem, to me, further felt like that's exactly what I was experiencing because I didn't feel I had the diagnosis. A diagnosis, to me, felt more life-long and probably more permanent than just having a problem. So, if you're one of these 90% of people who drink excessively, but yet don't have a severe alcohol use disorder, who are you? What type of drinker are you?

There's data out there to say they could be moderate drinkers, gray area drinkers. I like to just think of it as people with an overdrinking habit because for a lot of the women I noticed that there's a repeat pattern to their drinking as it was for me. It started around 5 o'clock. I'd say 5 to 6 o'clock was my witching hour, when I'm starting to cook dinner, as I come home from work. I just felt like I wanted that glass of wine. It's like cooking dinner would be more enjoyable with a glass of wine. Having a glass of wine after work, yes, I should have that. I should be able to indulge in that because I worked a hard day and what's wrong with one glass of wine?

Now, of course, my brain would, "Okay, let's just pour another and another and another," and of course, that catches up to you over time. So, once I

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really started to understand that drinking was more of a thinking problem than necessarily a drinking problem it started to reframe why it is that I was drinking. So, I just want to share with you some of the common thoughts I thought over and over and over that led me to pour that first glass and many more of Chardonnay.

So, here were a few of my common thoughts. “I need this drink to relax. This is my reward after a long day. I deserve this. I just want to shut my mind off and this will do the trick. I’ve taken care of everyone else, now it’s time to take care of me with my favorite drink. Oh, this party would be more fun if I drank. Everyone else is drinking so I’ll just join in.

“It’s fun and sophisticated to select wine off the wine list and I love the whole waiter comes by and you get to twirl it and smell it and enjoy it. It feels like high society. It feels like I’ve made it. It feels like an achievement. I feel sexy holding this glass. This is what adults do to have fun. I can just deal better if I just numb out. I don’t really want to feel responsible for things right now, so I’ll just have a drink. I feel anxious and awkward and so a drink will help.”

So, these were the common thoughts whether I was drinking inside my house or outside with others or when we were able to socialize. These were the stories I kept telling myself about my drinking. When you tell yourself these stories over and over, if this is your programmed narrative of course your brain is going to want to reach for more alcohol.

That’s why I think truly drinking is more of a thinking problem and when you get under all the ways you think about drinking it really starts to highlight how you can change that. Now, the more you think these thoughts and the more you think these narratives alcohol becomes now this magical elixir that solves everything. For me, it was like this panacea. “You got stress? Oh, let’s drink. You’ve got anxiety? Oh, let’s drink. You feel socially awkward at this party because you don’t know anybody? Have a drink.”

So, my brain just saw it as this panacea, this solution to things. When we think about thinking as the primary problem then we can really start to

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uncover why it is that we drink so much. We can really start to understand ourselves because if we just put rules around the drink you may find that that doesn't work like it did for me. Think about it, if alcohol was truly the problem then everybody who drank would have a problem, right?

I mean, there are some people that can have a drink and stop and they have their off button and I wasn't one of them. This really caused me frustration because I wanted to be one of them. Now, I am. One of the tools that helped get me there was to really start to uncover all the ways that I was putting alcohol on a pedestal. All the ways I was saying, "It's this desired substance." All the ways that I looked at it in a very positive light that would help me solve something that was going on for me internally.

So, as you're rocking in your journey to drink less think about all the stories that you have that put alcohol in a positive light. Think about how you think about it and that's the beauty we have as humans, right? We can think about what we think about. When we start to understand those narratives that have been running for maybe 5, 10, decades long, we can really start to see how we're creating our own desire for it. That's truly the relationship that needs to be changed.

Because if we just try to control it and use willpower and just focus on the drink there's going to be a point where willpower just gives out and we're going to cave. We're not going to truly change the relationship we have to the alcohol because that relationship is inside, right? That's all in our mind. So, by thinking of drinking as a thinking problem now we can really start to think about how to change what's truly keeping us attached to the drink.

Staying attached to the drink is something we practice over and over in our minds. That's where it first happens. I can't wait to talk to you more about strategies on how to undo this in a future episode.

All right, my friends. That's what I have for you today. I will be back next time with more tools on how to change your drinking habit so that you can become a woman who can take it or leave it with her drinking. One thing before you go, I want to let you know that I am celebrating the launch of

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this podcast by giving away 4 \$100 Amazon gift cards to lucky listeners who subscribe, rate, and review this show on Apple Podcasts. Of course, I do hope that you love the show, but it does not have to be a 5-star review. I want your honest feedback to make sure I continue to provide you tons of value.

So, visit [sherryprice.com/podcastlaunch](http://sherryprice.com/podcastlaunch) to learn more about the contest and how to enter. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode. Bye for now.

Thanks for listening to *Drink Less Lifestyle*. If you're ready to change your relationship with drinking now check out the free guide, *How to Effectively Break the Overdrinking Habit* at [sherryprice.com/startnow](http://sherryprice.com/startnow). See you next week.