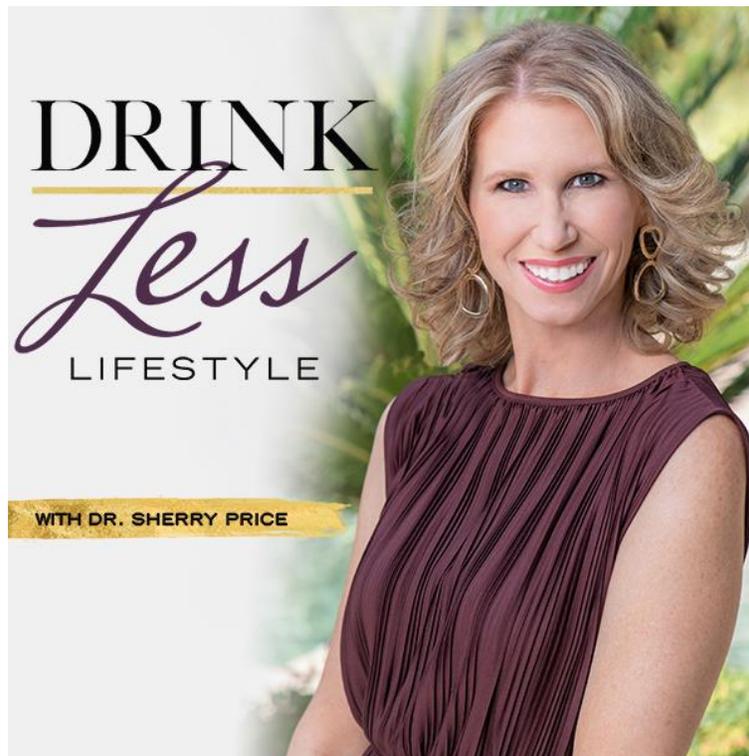


Ep #24: Negativity Bias



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dr. Sherry Price

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

You are listening to the *Drink Less Lifestyle Podcast* with Dr. Sherry Price, episode number 24.

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.

Well, hello my friends. How is it going? It's really going great for me. I am so excited that my daughter is back in school four days a week. She's getting to see her peers. She's getting to be some sense of normalcy for her. And although it's caused her a lot more anxiety, she gets a little stressed about going to school and seeing everybody, not because of Covid but because of her lack in her ability to think that she can complete projects without mommy's help. But I have to say this is so good for her.

I'm so impressed how she's handling it. We're handling it and that she's back in school. She needs that especially as an only child. And I'm also excited because in my business I have launched a new program called Epic You; right now it's for women who have worked with me previously. And I'm just seeing such amazing transformations in that group already. We are in our second month and it's where we take this coaching work and we don't just apply it to our drinking but we apply it to so many other areas of our life.

And it's really giving a lot of the women that sense of control, not just around their drinking of course but how they could show up bigger, better, more powerfully for themselves, their families, for their workplace. And I'm just loving the kind of interaction that we're having in the group. It's really collective. It's really about inspiring and encouraging one another to be our best selves, to get to that place where we are not at the effect of what's happening around us, but that we have the ability to show up and respond differently.

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

And also about feeling amazing, I am just coming off an extended fast. So I like to do intermittent fasting. I like to take care of my body. And what I've been reading a lot are the benefits of extended fasting days. So I am just coming off a five day fast and I have to say I feel so clear mentally. I feel like I have more energy and I just feel healthy inside. I've been resting a lot. I've been really taking care of myself. And I think it's really a gift that I gave my body. I'm very excited about that.

Alright, so speaking about feeling amazing, I want to share with you an email that I received from a podcast listener whose name is Mary. And Mary writes, "I was inspired to write you this morning because for the first time in years I had only one glass of wine by my own choice. Last night my drink plan was a glass and a half but it wasn't hard for me at all to stop after the one glass. Prior to this I'd been a two glasses a day chardonnay kind of gal for well over a decade.

At times it would creep up to about three glasses and I would tell myself I'd either have to get it under control lady, or stop completely. And that usually worked. However, in the weird year that it was in 2020 my nightly average crept up to two and a half to three drinks. And the usual story about getting it under control or else, wasn't working. I've been seeing your stuff for a while so I finally took the plunge and listened to your first episode of your podcast. I am now on episode 11 and I have been able to cut back.

It hasn't been the quick fix but it feels so real this time and it's not as hard as I anticipated. Thank you for this important work that you are doing. I always thought it had to be an all or nothing scenario with drinking until I started following you." So congrats Mary, I know it feels so tremendous to be in control again and to realize that you have the power to stop and to enjoy that power. And I agree with you that it doesn't have to be hard at all.

Actually when you learn how to change your desire I find that it's not that hard to say no to the next drink because you know what? You generally don't want it. I also love how you wrote it feels very real this time. I felt that shift too. I call it that flipping the switch shift where it's not like your habit

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

brain is running your drinking. It's like you are running your drinking, your human brain is running your drinking. And it feels so good because it doesn't feel like you're deprived, or you have fear of missing out, or you feel that you want more because you just generally don't.

It's so powerful, so thank you for sharing your story as I know it will help to inspire and encourage others that are listening to this podcast.

Alright, today we are going to move on and talk about negativity bias. Have you heard of this term? Have you heard of this concept? It's popular in psychology. And if you haven't I have to tell you it's such a good one. And every brain does it and what to do about it. So let's get started by talking about what it is. So negativity bias is our tendency, to not only register negative stimuli more readily but to also dwell on those events, or comments, or what happens that's negative.

It means that we feel that sting of a criticism or a negative comment more powerfully than we feel the joy of a praise, or something said nice, or a compliment. It also means that we scan our environment to look for things that are wrong in the world. Now, let me just remind our brains that this was a necessary skill for survival back in the day. We had to keep the species alive so that meant we had to look out for saber-toothed tigers and other predators that could attack us and destroy us.

So we know that this is the primitive part of our brain and it was truly a mechanism built for us to survive as a species. Now, if you can imagine, it's us against the tigers and the other predators. If we bonded together in a tribe and found other humans to be with we would point them responsibility that they stay guard all night to protect the humans from nocturnal predators. So, we bonded together, we kept each other's backs, we looked out for one another and it was all to keep us alive and thriving.

And then procreation became a big part of that because we wanted to make more humans because there was so much work to get done. So if we add more humans to the equation we could get more work done, we could

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

build more things, we can hunt, gather and all that. So why do I go into all that? Because it is the normal part of our primitive brain, and I just want you to see that it did have value to us tremendously back in the day.

So we did scan the environment, we did scan and look around to see what could threaten our survival. And then we joined other humans and formed tribes because we knew if we were part of the clan we can gather all the skill sets each of us had and do our jobs more effectively to stay alive. Somebody could be hunting, somebody could be cooking. Somebody can be nursing the kids. Somebody could be taking care of any animals that could be domesticated.

All of that kept our species alive, so relying on each other, wanting to be part of the tribe because we knew our survival would be threatened if we were excommunicated or thrown out of the tribe. But nowadays it's quite a bit different. We have so many modern day conveniences and with technology, many people can live without the skill sets of others or if they need it they just call and they show up at the house, fix what needs to be fixed. We don't rely on each other like we used to back in the day.

So this negativity bias is a good thing as we saw from the early generation of the humans and it allowed us to get here where we are now. But the fears of what we're running from or how we're interpreting this and scanning the environment around us are not the same as saber-toothed tigers. They're not going to take us down and kill us. Some of us have been scanning and looking for bad things and we're finding it, but it's not that harmful to our survival.

And the problem with negativity bias is that if we keep focusing on what's wrong we keep scanning our environment and talking about what's not working or what isn't right in the world. Our brain becomes patterned to that where we keep doing that, and keep doing that, and keep doing that. And we become more negative focused and more negativity bias focused. And that perpetuates to the point that you may even notice some people, but

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

that's all they point out is all the wrong, all the things that aren't going well, all the things that aren't right, right now.

And just think about what you're saying to yourself during these times. What isn't going right for you because you probably have a laundry list, I think we all do. My spouse shouldn't be acting this way. My kids shouldn't be acting this way. My boss should be more kind to me. Maybe you're thinking there aren't enough vaccines or when are we going to get over this Covid thing? Or when can I travel again? Or when will things be back to normal? I can't believe somebody wrote a post on my post on social media. Or I had a terrible day again. Or I got a negative comment from my boss.

Or something like I can't even get in a relationship right now because Covid doesn't allow us to meet or dating is fruitless right now. I've been hearing a lot of this coming up in the women that I'm coaching. And it's like they're always looking for what's going to go wrong or what's broken. And here's the thing, of course our brains are going to notice some of that. But a lot of us are saying it like we're just reporting the news. This is just obviously fact.

And I hear a lot of women say, "Well, I'm just observing this." And yes, you may be observing these things but I really don't think that's the case. I think your brain; we know the primitive brain is focused towards looking for what is wrong. And by talking about what is wrong, we become accustomed to just talking about what is wrong that some people forget to infuse a little bit of what is working.

It's like your brain zeros in on what's not right, what's wrong and just dwells on it. And it begins to ruminate on it. And when you dwell, and when you ruminate, and when you keep thinking the same thoughts over and over, guess what? Your brain thinks it's true. Your brain thinks it's an actual fact. That's because the negativity bias, you just don't stop it. It just keeps coming, it just keeps coming, it just keeps coming and you're just at the effect of it.

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

And I find a lot of times I begin to notice this in my own life when I start talking about, and I notice in my vocabulary all these I can't's. I can't do this, I can't do that, I can't do this, now is not the right time. And I'll hear this when I'm coaching my clients like, "I can't find love now." Or, "I can't seem to change my drinking." Or, "I really don't like my job, or it's impossible to like my job." Or, "I can't deal with my partner or my kids." It's like saying that I have to wait for things outside of me to change before I can change. Really, do you really think that's true?

Because I don't think you have to wait. I don't think that's a true statement because you really can change the way you think and feel about a job, about your kids, about your spouse, about your drinking, whatever it is. And I really think your thinking is really your job, it's really up to you and you are the only one that can change it. You get to determine how you show up. You get to decide if you're going to drink or not and if you drink, how many. That's all your decision, that's all your thinking. It comes solely from your thinking.

And once I discovered this I was like, wow, if it just comes from my thinking that doesn't mean I have to do an all or nothing approach. And my brain was spinning out from this. I'm like, well, alcohol has to be an all or nothing approach because that's what I was taught in pharmacy school. That's what I'm taught by the general public. That's all I thought. Until I discovered that wait, not everybody has to take the all or nothing approach because what I learned is there is a term called overdrinking, or drinking excessively.

And not everybody that drinks excessively is considered to be an alcoholic. And that's what the research supports. So when I looked into the latest research on this I found statistics like alcoholics make up only 10% of those who drink excessively or who are considered over-drinkers. And then I started thinking, well, what about the 90% of us, what's going on with them? And could it be true that this 90% could learn to be around alcohol and just not crave it all the time?

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

So then my brain was like wow, this is very interesting, I could potentially get behind this because I wasn't interested in cutting it out completely at that slice of my life and that phase of my life. So now my brain saw a possibility. It said, "Interesting." And as I researched it forward and looked into it, right now you see a lot of people wanting just to drink less. Yeah, what holds us back a lot of course is our negativity bias, thinking I can't do it, thinking I don't know why I can't do it, nothing's worked before.

And I like to say open up to the possibility because what's the downside of that? What's the downside of considering what could be? And I really don't see one if you look at, as they say, the bright side of things, because you know what? When you start looking for that silver lining or the bright side don't you notice internally inside of you, you start to feel a little bit better? And aren't we all wanting to feel a little bit better right now?

And I think that's why mental health is such an issue because of Covid, because a lot of us don't know how to channel that, we don't know the tools. We don't know cognitive behavioral therapy tools. We don't know cognitive thought based tools that can really enhance how we think and feel about our lives despite what's going on around us. Now, I don't know about you but for me when I start noticing all that's going bad in the world, or all that's going wrong in my day, or all that's going wrong in my life, it really zaps me of my energy.

And honestly what makes me want to numb out at the end of the day, why bother if everything is so negative? And so think about it, if you're going throughout your day and you have these negative thoughts that keep coming, and keep coming, and keep coming and they're wearing you down. They're wearing you down mentally, they're wearing you down emotionally and then you might even be physically feeling the effects of that.

And then of course when it gets to 4 or 5 o'clock and we feel so worn down, so mentally tired, and fatigued, and emotionally exhausted, we want to escape that. And of course alcohol provides that escape. I mean think about what most of us think about all day long. We beat ourselves up

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

throughout the day where maybe at work or at home this isn't going right. This is now broken. I need to escalate this to so and so.

I didn't get everything done on my to do list. That was a big one for me at the end of the day. I'd look at my list and go, "There's still so much more I need to accomplish." Or I hit this stumbling block, or so and so's behind on their part of the project so that makes me behind. Or why are the kids being so loud or needy? Or a lot of times I would think this is just an exhausting day. And then you hear, "I'll never learn how to cut back." Or your brain comes up with "I have tried for decades and nothing's worked." Or "why start now?" Or "I'll have motivation tomorrow."

Sometimes I'll hear my clients say, "I have social anxiety." Or "I'm a sensitive person and an empath." Or, "Drinking is the only thing that helps me calm down." Or, "I should be happy with my life, I mean look at it, on paper it's great. So what's wrong with me?" So I had a lot of these thoughts at the end of my day and all I have to say is newsflash here, there's another way we could be thinking and talking to ourselves at the end of the day. It doesn't all have to be negative. It doesn't all have to be focused on the bad.

And don't hear me say you shouldn't have any of these thoughts. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is as these thoughts come we can't just go down the spiral that we like to just allow our brain to have at it, just keep giving me another slap, yeah, just keep talking bad to me. No, we can stop that spiral.

And I just want us to always go back to not to get mad at our brain because this is how our brain was designed. And back in the day it kept us alive, it was a good thing. It's just that we're not needing to constantly scan for fear and life threatening things because a lot of us aren't in those situations. So our brain tends to overemphasize some of the negative things that happen throughout our day. Or we interpret them as negative when they're just things that happen throughout our day.

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

And here's another thing I will notice too, and trust me, this happens to me and it used to happen a lot more in my past than it does now. But negative bias can also look like things will be better if. Or things will be better when. And yeah, certain things will be better but you know what? I think there will be other problems that our brain will find when we get to those places.

So I always like to question my brain, okay, if I think it's going to be better over there, how can I also appreciate what's good now while I'm here? Because if I'm missing what is good and if I'm missing what is right and when I'm missing all of that I'm also missing the power to change how I emotionally feel. So that if I don't feel that I have the power to change how I feel emotionally guess what will give me the power to change that? Yes, I'll just turn to the bottle of alcohol because I know that will temporarily make me feel better just in the moment.

I won't think about all the regrets the next day, I won't think of all of that if I go beyond one glass. Because in my mind I just need that first drink because here's the thing, your primitive brain is not stupid. Your primitive brain was designed to be motivated by the three things. And I talked about this in episodes one, two and three in the podcast.

Your brain is designed, go back to your brain, your primitive brain is motivated by three things, we talked about those, seek pleasure, reduce pain and conserve energy. So of course it wants pleasure at the end of the day especially if your brain is convinced it worked hard all day. And it wants to reduce any kind of pain and suffering, whether that's emotional, whether that's physical, whether that's mental. For a lot of us we're looking to relieve our mental pain, some of us it's emotional.

And of course we want to conserve energy, so if your primitive brain is designed to conserve energy, saying, "I'm going to do a yoga class", or, "Go out hit a high intensity interval training", may not be what motivates your primitive brain because that's not conserving energy, that's expending energy. And while that's good for us and our prefrontal cortex knows that, our primitive brain may not be so onboard with that idea.

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

So thankfully we have evolved from the primitive brain and we have now this human brain that I talk about being the prefrontal cortex a lot here and our frontal lobe. And that's what makes us evolve. That's using our higher power brain to execute and do the things that serve us, that serve our lifelong term. Because in our modern times we may not need that primitive brain so much but it still shows up. It still has an opinion inside your head.

So I just want you to notice when the primitive brain shows up with that negativity bias because it happens to every brain. And I think it's important to start really analyzing it, really thinking about it, really starting to change that narrative that's going on. And start changing from I can't to how can I. Or what is possible for me given these circumstances? Or how can I let the brain also see what's right while it's seeing what's wrong?

How can I direct my thoughts from I'm a mess, or this world is a mess, or this day was a mess to I can change things that bother me, or I can contribute to this world in a positive way, or I can do things to make my day a little bit better that doesn't have to include drinking? Because I'll tell you what, the more practiced you get at letting the negativity bias run amok in your brain the more unhappy you will be. And guess what? You get better at that because that becomes your default programming. That becomes your self-talk day in and day out.

And nobody wants to be beaten up by their own brain day in and day out. And how do you notice? You'll notice when you hear yourself complain all the time or you think you're just reporting and observing the news but it always tends to be on the negative side. And it's interesting because that means we have a certain standard that people should operate by. So if our boss didn't treat us the way we wanted to or our partner didn't treat us the way we wanted to, we have a standard set for them on how they should operate to make us happy.

Or we have a standard on how the world should operate, there shouldn't be a pandemic right now because – I don't know, there have been in the past. Human society has evolved and moved on. There were pandemics, there's

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

wars. So saying this shouldn't be happening is only arguing with reality which only causes more of our own suffering, which makes us more and more unhappy which in this can case definitely become our way of thinking. And that of course will affect us tremendously emotionally.

But here's the thing, the question is and they may be not what my standards are for people outside of me or circumstances. What are my standards for myself? And I love that question because I am the only thing I can control. I can't control other people. I can try to influence them but I can't control them. And I only have limited ability, and capability, and energy throughout my day, and just handling myself, that's enough.

So a lot of times I find that if we have certain standards for ourselves, certain ways we want to show up, certain goals, certain things we want to achieve and we're not doing it for ourselves, guess what? We tend to take that anger, or that resentment, or that bitterness, and project it out onto other people, that they're not doing enough, or they're not doing enough, or things should be different in my life. And that totally keeps us in a place where we feel powerless because we can't change the environment.

We can't change other people, but we can meet our own standards. And we can change ourselves. So I always like to say, "How are you doing in that department?" And be honest with yourself, where am I letting myself down and where I might be even taking this anger or disappointment out on others? Because that's what I usually find when I'm coaching women is that we get so upset with ourselves that, or the negative self-talk and that's why we turn to the drinking.

Because you know my philosophy, drinking is a thinking problem, that's it. And if we solve for that, boy does our life improve, not just from the drinking perspective but all other areas. So ask yourself, where are you not giving to you? Are you not giving yourself enough love, attention, respect, honesty, rest, recovery, compassion, all of these? Because if we don't get enough of it from ourselves we expect others to meet that need and guess what? We can't control what they meet and what they don't meet.

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

And here's the thing that I find so interesting that women think that when they're being alcohol free or constantly increasing that number of alcohol free days, that will change their internal dialog, and that will change their negative bias. I find that it doesn't work because no matter how many alcohol free days you have, or consistently counting increase in alcohol free days, if you don't change your self-talk along the way, guess what your brain will do? Your brain will just find something else to be negative about.

So instead of being negative about alcohol free days and the number going up, you're going to be maybe negative about this is so hard, or negative that I don't get to join in, or my story should be different, or why do I have to abstain, or the fear of missing out, or why can't I drink when others do? Or now you over-exacerbate other areas in your life. You start seeing the news as being more negative and getting upset about that. And then in the back of your mind your programmed brain, your patterned brain is going to say, "When we were disappointed in the past we used to drink."

And then people find their slippery slopes and all the other things that they say that they fell off the wagon. Now, I'm not saying not to have alcohol free days or not to count them if that makes you happy. But really relish in the happiness of that. And start changing your self-talk along the way because truly that's where the change needs to take place, inside the brain.

Another area I find people get upset about when they're projecting onto others is when they get in this compare stage. So you might be on social media and somebody's getting a lot of likes, or all these great comments, or you see a picture that makes you upset because you think you should be living that life. I'm not out and about right now and I'm mad that other people are. Or I'm not taking a vacation because we can't travel and other people are or whatever.

I've even heard women say all those pajama matching Christmas things would make them upset because they didn't do that for their family. So being in that compare space we really have to clean up that thinking because our lives are not meant to be identical to each other. Yes, we can

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

join in fads when it serves us, or trends when it serves us, or something we want to do. But you don't want to just join it just to join it to fit in. We don't need that tribe mentality like we used to in the past.

Now, I'm not saying to not do it if it makes you feel good, and you can afford it, and it meets all the, you know, it doesn't get in the way of anything you want to accomplish. But if it's not serving you then we need to limit that so that you don't get negative effects and wanting to buffer out of your life because your life is beautiful. And there are so many good things about it. And that's the thing about negativity bias, we can let it take over our brains and go in that nasty spiral but it doesn't make us feel good.

And when we don't feel good I know a lot of us turn to do things we don't want to be doing. We don't want to be overeating. We don't want to be overdrinking. We don't want to be just numbing out in front of Netflix all day. Now, some of that may be fine but a lot, meaning overdoing it, no, a lot of us want more out of our lives and more from ourselves. We have a higher standard for ourself.

So be careful when you do the compare thing because I'll see this with drinking, my partner gets to have some drinks so I want to join in too. Just because your partner chooses doesn't mean you have to choose. And this is something I had to work on a lot for myself. Now, also I see people, well, if my girl friend has two I should have too, or somehow meeting the same quantity as others. No, you don't have to. You can make your own rules. You're an adult, trust me.

And it's so much more fun when you make your own criteria and what feels good in your body and what doesn't feel good in your body. And I love getting in tune with that because that's really what's going to reprogram your mind. And here's another thing, nobody likes to be around a chronic complainer, so if you've got negativity bias running rampant, nobody's going to like that. So there is another avenue of wanting to keep that in check. So again focus on what is working, what is good. How can I see this in a different light?

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #24: Negativity Bias

And maybe if it's not even positive you can at least go to neutral. Okay, I understand this is happening and we will get through this. I understand this is happening and this too shall pass. Or go back to the questions that I mentioned earlier in this episode. Notice what you were thinking throughout the day and if those thoughts change as the day goes on. And that might be what's wearing you down by the end of the day like it was for me that you just want those thoughts out of your mind so you pour a drink, and then another, and then another.

So notice how your thoughts have an impact on your desire, which is the feeling, that's that think, feel, act cycle. Notice how your thoughts impact your desire. I mean I woke up in the morning and I didn't have desire for alcohol until well into the afternoon on most days. Because my thoughts were not beating me up and I was suffering because of them that I needed an escape. And here's what I love, you can change your thinking so that you feel better, that you don't need the alcohol and that your desire for it changes completely.

Because when you feel better it sets you up to take action that you want to be taking, not action to escape or to numb, and that type of action that you want to be taking, that's what fuels you, that's what motivates you. You don't get motivation before action. Action has to come before motivation. Motivation comes from taking the action that you want to be taking. And that is a skill set I want to practice and get better at.

Alright my friends, that's it for today. Have a great rest of your day and I'll see you next week.

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. See you next week.