

Ep #42: Taking Back Control: A Success Interview with Amanda



Full Episode Transcript

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You are listening to the *Drink Less Lifestyle Podcast* with Dr. Sherry Price, episode number 42.

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. I am so excited that you are tuning in today because I have a treat for you. And the treat is a past client of mine that I had the wonderful opportunity to work with, her name is Amanda. And I wanted to bring her on because I find that when other women share their story about drinking less it really opens up other people's mind to know what is possible and what they can achieve. And everybody has a different journey in cutting back.

And so, I think it's really helpful, not that you just get my exposure of my journey but what other women experience and what has helped them on their journey to drink less. And just understanding the role alcohol played because maybe you'll see some parts of your life in her life. And it's a way that you can see it from an outside perspective so that you can glean more clarity around your walk with alcohol and looking to reduce the intake. So today I want to welcome Amanda to the show. Hi Amanda.

Amanda: Hi Sherry.

Sherry: How are you?

Amanda: I'm doing really well, thank you.

Sherry: Great. We are so, so excited you're here. And I'd just love my listeners to get to know you a little bit. Can you just tell us a little bit about who you are and we'll go from there?

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Amanda: Well, I have two teenage daughters. And I've been married for 20 years. And I am a businesswoman. I own a family business. And I teach fitness classes on the side. So, I'm very busy, very busy all the time. It was next to impossible to clear my house out just now too for us to do this and so yeah.

Sherry: Well, thank you. Thank you for clearing out the house and taking this time. I want to start off with the role drinking played for you before we met, before we worked together. If you can just talk about when you used alcohol, or why you used alcohol, or what role it played for you, I think that would be a nice place to get started.

Amanda: Okay. Drinking in my life, drinking had taken on a really strong role in my life when I reached out to you. And it was during COVID really my drinking got pretty severe. I have always been a person who enjoyed alcohol socially. And I was able to live that way pretty much my entire life. And then in the last year during COVID my drinking patterns, they just changed. And all of a sudden drinking just became like a total priority, necessity every night of my life.

So then sort of the depression and the shame started to appear, the daily sort of mental spiral down from the drinking the night before. So, I don't know how I found you. I must have been researching something on Facebook or on the internet and you popped up. And I felt your program was perfect for me because I truly don't believe I'm a traditional alcoholic. I know we don't like to use these labels anymore. But I just feel my drinking habit got a little out of control for a while.

And I had so much shame around it and was so embarrassed to try to seek out a formal rehab program. I didn't feel I was there. I just, I had to figure out where I was at with it.

Sherry: And I think that's so common. It just creeps up and it tends to get us to this place where we stop feeling good about it. We stop feeling good

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about our consumption. It puts us into that shame. So, do you know why you were drinking and why it increased?

Amanda: Well, it's a little different every day to answer the question. I was drinking to bury my feelings. Sometimes I was drinking because I felt bored. Sometimes I was drinking because I felt overwhelmed, anxious. Oftentimes I would be drinking, maybe I'd have dinner with friends where it was social and happy but then I'd come home to my house and for some reason still have the desire to drink and open a bottle of wine and finish the bottle of wine by myself. And not really know why I was doing it.

And then working through your program and starting to analyze that behavior. Why would I do that to myself? I mean I know I have to get up in the morning. I know all of the responsibilities I have. I know I need to have a clear head. And then I would just repeatedly do the same self-sabotaging behavior. So, did that answer your question?

Sherry: Yes, totally, yeah, because it just seems like we fall into this pattern. We fall into this habit. And I find a lot of people don't understand why they're doing it which doesn't help us really solve how to get out of it. We just think about putting more rules around the alcohol and that will work. Have you tried anything before we worked together to control your drinking?

Amanda: No, not at all. And it was so hard for me to even reach out to you because I felt so ashamed. Apparently I'm a perfectionist on some level or some, I don't know. I was actually embarrassed to reach out to you because I had already wanted you to see me in a certain way which is why I had never sought any type of help before. And I'd never talked to my friends about it. And I put all this energy, and stress, and pressure on myself actually about my drinking.

And then working with you in your program and hearing other women I realized how much I do that in my own life about pretty much everything.

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And that's actually where the problem is. So now part of my process with you is actually just to take the pressure off. It does not have to be the end of the world. It's okay to go through life and have struggles during different periods of time. And it might come back again and that's okay. It's okay. That's okay. I just keep doing the work and it doesn't have to be perfect.

And just because I did this program doesn't mean I'm going to be fixed overnight. And I don't know. I've just kind of taken a lot of pressure off of myself about things from your program in general.

Sherry: Yeah. I've seen that shift in you tremendously. I remember the tightness you used to have and the tension you used to carry in your body. And now I see you and you're just a lot lighter.

Amanda: Yeah, thank you.

Sherry: It's not like we're trying to control everything and thinking we can control everything because I think for a lot of us women who are, you know, we describe ourselves as high achievers, or type A, or running companies, doing all the things that you're doing. There is this level of yes, I do get to control parts of my life. And then we take that to mean we can control a lot of our life which we actually don't have that authority or that power to do. And then that could feel that tension, and that just we hold it in our body.

And now seeing you and this transformation, it's like you're just stepping into your power on what you can control and what you are just like, yeah, I'm okay with it being okay, it's just okay. And we're seeing that transformation. And you said something interesting and I want to just see if we can go back to that because I had that same issue. I was not comfortable bringing this up with my friends, talking about it with my friends. Do you know why for you it was uncomfortable to talk about it with your friends?

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Amanda: Well, I think I'm far too concerned about what other people think of me. That would be the number one. And I would never want to – I mean in the past I was so ashamed of it. That's the other thing is I was carrying all this shame, just so much shame. I remember the one thing that happened with you too. I did something really stupid when we were starting the program. I forget what it was. I forgot to pay a bill or something and I had this huge ding with my credit score. And the way I felt about my credit score was exactly how I felt about my drinking.

I was so ashamed of myself. Here I am, I'm 44 years old, I know better. Why would I do such a stupid thing? And then I was beating myself up so badly. And I remember being so nervous before my phone call with you because I didn't want to admit to you that I had done this totally stupid thing. And I talked to you about it. And you're like, "You know what? It's okay, it's alright. It does not have to be what you're making it." And so that really helped me. And then I just sort of started seeing that I was doing the same thing about drinking.

And by the way, I told my kids about this program. Remember in the beginning I wouldn't tell my kids? I was trying to find a room in my house where I could have this secret conversation with you because I didn't want anybody to know I was struggling with this issue. And yeah, I just took a lot of that energy off of it and said to my kids just now, "I'm going to do a podcast with Sherry, my life coach who you know I've been working with. And we've been working on all sorts of things in my life, overdrinking is one of them."

Because my kids have seen me over-drink a 1,000 times, sad to say but it's, you know what? It's the truth. It happened. We're going to talk about it and it's going to be okay.

Sherry: How did your kids receive that? What did they say?

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Amanda: They were like – well, they just left and they were perfectly fine with it. But when we had the drinking conversation they were like, “Yeah, mom, sometimes you really get a little loopy Lou.” That’s what my daughter said and then she laughed, which the old me would have taken that and lost sleep over it and analyzed it for hours. And instead, I’m like, “Yeah, it’s true.”

Sherry: Yeah. And in those honest discussions I find we build greater connection because our kids already know. We just think maybe there is some small hope in us that we think maybe they just don’t know, but they know. And I think when we as moms particularly, especially raising other women, men too, but when we could admit that we’re not perfect, and that we’re flawed, and that we’re getting help and it’s okay, it allows them the space to say, “I don’t have to be perfect. And if there’s a problem I can reach out for help.”

And having that honest conversation with yourself and then being able to have that from a place of love and support for yourself. And then just wanting to invite your kids into that story just to allow them to see your transformation, what you are dealing with. It also gives them, like they might dealing with schoolfriends, peer pressure, or social anxiety, test anxiety.

It allows them to open up to what they’re struggling with and it deepens the connection because they realize that, you know, because some of us think we have to keep it all together and all perfect for our kids so they get the best example. But sometimes the best example is walking in the muck and mire with them just with a different struggle. I think that’s [crosstalk].

Amanda: Yeah. And just not giving so much power to drinking because exactly like you’re saying, I mean if there were a chocolate cake from somebody’s birthday party and it was out on the counter, I would openly say to my kids, “Okay, I’ve had one piece. I shouldn’t be having anymore.” I

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would talk about it openly. I wouldn't have shame about it. It would just be like, because I always try to watch my nutrition for example. I mean so I'm trying to think of this, maybe not exactly in the same way as food. But also, not give it the amount of power I was giving it before.

Because that was debilitating, there is nothing to do with that, just sitting in muck and not having any way of seeing your way out of it is no way to live.

Sherry: And when we don't talk about things that bother us, it's not like the people around us that are living with us don't know. So, like you're saying, taking the power out of it to give power to yourself and the words, and how you experience it. And it's just a substance we're choosing to put or not put in our bodies. And having a radically honest conversation about that and the choices that we make. And then you're prepping their brains for how they're going to make choices for themselves. And of course, with a bit of education in that too.

Why are you choosing not to have the extra piece of cake? Why are you choosing not to have an extra glass of wine? I think that is going to help guide them rather than pushing it under the rug and pretending it's not there, and not addressing it at all.

Amanda: Back to that silly credit score story but it's the same thing. I talked about that, what happened with them as far as the mistake I had made. And how many times in my life I've done that now and we had an open conversation about all of that too. So, it's all related.

Sherry: Yeah, it is. So, tell me, anything around the shame, because I know a lot of women listening probably still feel that embarrassment or that shame, or maybe they're at that place where they can't talk about it yet. What has helped you to release some of that, reduce some of that, or rid yourself of that?

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Amanda: Listening to the other women and realizing how many of us struggle with that. And then thinking about how far back in my life that goes and when it started. In our family growing up the underlying message that I received from my parents was to keep things private. And it's okay to talk about things a little bit. But mainly it was like everybody just kind of kept things private. And if you lost control once and talked about your struggle, that was kind of it in my family.

So, I think probably that's where it started, just somehow if I'm struggling with anything, I'm not going to use the word 'weakness' anymore because I truly don't even think this is a weakness. I now see myself like I was always a really creative person. I'm kind of an empath. I take on a lot of people's feelings, and emotions, and hold onto it. And that's a gift. And it can be overwhelming at times. And you just have to learn how to handle that instead of trying to bury all those feelings perhaps. I don't know. I'm rambling. I was rambling.

Sherry: No, I see it beautifully how you're describing it in that when we reject that part of ourselves we want to numb it. And drinking allows us to just numb that part because we don't know how to deal with it. Or it could feel too overwhelming. But like you're saying, learning the skills to manage that part and realize it is a blessing. And how you can use that talent, skill, blessing that you have in a way that serves your life rather than needing to drown it out.

Amanda: Yeah, exactly. And perhaps opening up to other people, talking about it, first step, opening up and feeling it, allowing yourself to feel it, talk about it. And the shame has just sort of lessened over time because I'm not holding on so tight to these feelings anymore. I'm just sort of, okay, well, it's okay to feel that. And I might not like feeling it but it's okay.

Sherry: Yeah. And it's no longer paralyzing you and causing you to do more self-sabotage. So, talk to us now what your drinking looks like.

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Amanda: Well, COVID, being stuck at home for me personally that was the hardest thing with drinking, which I feel a little guilty about admitting how bored I was. But being active every day and busy is helpful. It's a lot harder when you're just stuck at home and you're bottling – because that was my issue was alone drinking at home. So, my drinking, what does it look like now? When I decide to drink, I go to the fridge and I have a little talk with myself like, “Are we going to drink tonight or are we not going to drink tonight?” I don't drink every night.

If I open a bottle I make sure I'm sharing it with my husband, not consuming it by myself. I try to drink a glass of water between each sip. Before I go to a social situation I make a decision if I'm going to drink or not. I live in wine country so it's a lot of drinking all the time here.

Sherry: So, what would you say your drinking reduced by if you were to give it a percentage?

Amanda: Oh gosh, well, it was pretty excessive there for a while. So, I drink three nights a week now.

Sherry: And how do you feel about that? How do you feel about your relationship with alcohol?

Amanda: I feel good about my relationship with alcohol. I feel like it's going back to a healthy place. I'm still sort of afraid of alcohol a little bit. I'm going to be completely honest. I don't feel I totally have a handle on it. But I know that I'm working on it and it's okay. But yeah, I mean it's still a temptation. I go to the grocery store and I see my favorite bottle of Sauv Blanc and I have to have the conversation. Am I going to buy it or not? So, it's healthier but it's still there. I'm much happier when I don't drink, much, much happier when I don't drink. I feel so much better in the morning.

Sherry: Isn't it interesting that you feel so happy when you don't drink?

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Amanda: Yeah. That is the lesson, I'm so much happier when I don't drink. And I don't even like the mental exercise that I have to go through to have the drink. That I've identified for sure. But I still give in occasionally.

Sherry: Yeah. So, what tools have helped you, or how has the program helped you?

Amanda: Well, it's just it's helped me so much in really every area of my life. I mean I don't feel depressed. I don't feel like I'm stuck in a rut. I've started doing a lot of things that I wasn't doing before. I have a lot of interests. And I make my interests a priority now. I wasn't doing that before because I was feeling so overwhelmed by what I was struggling with on a daily basis that I wasn't pursuing things that I'm interested in.

I'm going to start teaching my classes again next month. So, I'm training really hard for that. I'm very nervous about it. It's been so long since I taught a class, but good.

Sherry: I know what you're going to teach but the audience doesn't know. Tell them what you do. It's awesome.

Amanda: It's called Inferno Hot Pilates. It's like bootcamp; in a hot room with weights and Pilates and you're just dripping in sweat. It's very intense. So, it's very fun, disco lights going on and the room is dark, and it's really hot, and it's very challenging. But it's great, it really helps get a lot of that – a lot of that stuff that women carry and hold onto and need to process. You get it out in the room and it's awesome.

Sherry: And how long has it been since you taught those classes?

Amanda: When did the shutdown happen? A year and a half ago, March.

Sherry: March 2020.

Amanda: March 2020.

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Sherry: 2019, sorry.

Amanda: 2019, which isn't that crazy? It's been almost two years, is that right?

Sherry: No, maybe we have the date wrong. It might be March 2020. Yes, March 2020, yeah.

Amanda: It's like, what is that?

Sherry: A year and a half.

Amanda: Yeah. So, I've been taking the classes on Zoom but it's just not the same. Sherry, that's what I wanted to say that's been the biggest change.

Sherry: Go ahead.

Amanda: I really took a break from social media. That's a big part of it for me.

Sherry: Yeah. Tell us why.

Amanda: I was just taking on too much stuff when I'm on social media. I think I'm too sensitive for it. And I waste time. It makes me unproductive. It alters my mood. I get on Facebook and I see it, it's National Sibling Day or whatever. And then inside my head for 15 minutes I'm thinking I should make this perfect post for my sibling and the photos and all this pressure. And then if I don't do it I feel bad about myself. And I finally just at one point thought it's one of the things that's just I need to take away right now. And then maybe it'll come back in the future. But for right now it's just cleansing for me to stay off of it.

Sherry: It's so good that you're tuning into how you respond when alcohol feels too much, when social media feels too much, when too much

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chocolate cake feels too much. I think this is honestly a skill we need to keep building for ourselves because it's so easy just to get lost in all the distractions of life. And when you get lost in all those distractions, of course then we have greater worry, greater anxiety. In this past year, the anxiety rates in this country have skyrocketed because we're filled with fear and worry.

And I did a previous podcast on that, it's like we really have to be in control of what we allow in because our nervous system gets activated by all this. So, I'm loving it that you learn the tools around drinking. And then you have applied it to all these other areas of your life because drinking's not just a siloed thing. It ripples into every area. These tools you learn don't just help with drinking. You can use them on your financial status, your social media, all of that.

And then you realize how much more power you have in controlling your mood, how you feel, what you allow in, what makes you feel good, what doesn't, what trains you. I think paying attention to all of that and your energy, where that goes because we don't have unlimited energy. We only have a certain amount per day. And then we need to recharge overnight by sleeping. And then what expends that energy and what depletes it fast is so good for us to know about ourselves.

Amanda: Yes. I've learned a lot through this process. And then working with you on the other program, I learned a lot about myself. I am an introvert, married to an extrovert and that's okay. But that was a big source of the cause of drinking too.

Sherry: You were trying to keep up with him?

Amanda: Well, I'd come home at the end of the day and certain social situations, or work, or things I have to do in my life really make me feel drained. And so, I was looking for downtime. I was looking to be replenished. I just need downtime. That's great, it's fun. I rediscovered, I

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used to love reading poetry. I used to love coffee table books and looking at architecture and homes in the south and all these little interests that I had. And I pulled all those books out and I put them out in my bedroom.

And instead of reaching for that glass of wine I'm going to do something that actually fulfills me, just simple little things. And it's just now I sort of – I feel so fortunate to be able to do activities again. First of all, I'm so grateful just that the world's opened back up and I'm fully vaccinated. And I can do all these things. But I'm very conscious now of how my week is laid out, how my day is laid out. And I plan for these activities that I'm interested in, that I had totally forgotten about and neglected forever. And that's just a silly example. But just trying to do all the little things that I used to like.

Sherry: Yeah. And it sounds like such a small thing but to your brain, just hearing you talk about it and now I see you over video and seeing your body language comes to life. We kind of downplay these little things but they really are big things. They really fulfill your soul in a way alcohol never will. And when you get that connection again, yes, to your brain when you say it out loud to other people it might sound like a little thing. Maybe it's not their passion and that's why we feel that we have to say it's a little thing.

But if it's our passion and it's what lights up our soul, that's everything. It's what we want to connect with. That's how we stay vibrant, and energetic, and recharged and I love that. I love that you shared that with everyone.

Amanda: Yeah, it's been really nice.

Sherry: That's great. So, tell me, any nuggets of information you want to tell the audience as they're thinking about their drinking and they're thinking, gosh, I want to get to that place where my soul sings again. I want to get out of this rut that I feel like I've been in since COVID and maybe I'm ashamed or struggling. What would you offer to those women?

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Amanda: Well, I feel like when I go to teach my first class, so many of us are struggling with so many similar things. I mean this is just an example but I've gained a lot of weight. So many people have gained a lot of weight. So many people have substance abuse problems and drinking. And so many of us have suffered from severe depression and anxiety. This has been such a hard thing we've all been through but we got through it. We survived so we need to start there giving ourselves some credit. And try not to give so much power to the shame, and the depression.

And there is a way out and it's just going to be little steps out. And for all of us it's awkward. I love that graph, the path to success, I really suffered from seeing some successful person and I thought okay, well, they're successful because they were so smart or they did this correctly or it was just so easy, it was a straight line. No, for every single person it's up and down and they think it's mess while they're going through it. And that's the road to success.

So, I feel like that's going to be my new approach to everything in life, whether it's drinking, or weight, or depression, or anxiety. Just not giving it so much power and it doesn't have to be perfect. And just that first class where we all get back together in the room and we aren't as in shape, or strong, or healthy, or confident as we were. And that's okay, it's okay. We're in this together.

Sherry: It is okay. And just meeting yourself where you're at is another undertone I'm hearing from you. Just like here's what I am. It's not perfect. I realize my brain loves perfection but that's not achievable. That's just an illusion that the brain throws out. And I'm just going to meet myself where I am. And like you said, just the next small step. And taking that step towards our health, towards our vibrancy, towards that change we want to embrace in our life to make that our new lifestyle. I think is so important, yeah.

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Amanda: Yeah. And it's really helped my marriage too. We just celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary.

Sherry: Congratulations.

Amanda: Thank you. I'm going to take that. And I feel really proud because...

Sherry: You should.

Amanda: Thank you. But when I was younger or whatever, I used to think that certain perfect marriages have to be a certain way. And that means that they never went through hardship or hard times, and that was a perfect couple. But when we were sitting together celebrating it I'm like, "You know what? All of the problems we've had, and struggles we've had, and times when I thought we are just not going to work out because we're two completely different people." That's kind of what makes it beautiful, but we've made it.

Sherry: Right. Sometimes you like artwork, vases, things, they're not perfect. We like them because they're unique and because they have painted a picture in our mind. I just love that. And if it was perfect I also think about that. If my marriage or anything in my life was perfect, how boring would that be? It would be predictable, I would know every step they'd make because they'd be meeting my expectations, every time. Yeah, it would just get so boring. And you would always have to one up it.

Well, if that was perfect and there was a magical carriage that showed up, or a limo to pick me up on my date, what would perfect look like next time? Even perfect would get boring.

Amanda: And I was so afraid to tell my husband that I was doing this program. I felt so much shame about it and didn't want him to know. And kind of just loosely told him one day and he was like, "Oh, okay, great,

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that's awesome honey." In my mind I had this whole thing, he's going to see the worst part of me. He's going to look at me differently now. He's going to think I'm weak. Or I don't know what story I had created about it. But he was like, "Of course, yeah, I know." Just like you're saying about the kids, he already knew everything, you know what I mean?

Sherry: Right. They already know the truth it just takes us longer to see it, and accept it, and to be able to talk about it. It reminds me of Brené Brown's work, and just being vulnerable, and just putting out there what you're experiencing, it is the path towards greater connection, deeper connection, better relationships, including with yourself. If we have to keep hiding things I think we do it to hide it from others but I think we also do it to hide it from ourselves. I really don't want people to see this side of me.

Amanda: Yeah. And I felt like – well, I felt, I was betraying myself. I mean that habit, that overdrinking habit and all of the feelings that I was trying to bury or hide, or keep secret, or not feel, or whatever, it feels like a betrayal. And then that's a terrible feeling when you betray yourself. And then you're living your life and it feels like everything's incongruent because you're living your life. But then deep down inside you have this whole thing going on. It's a terrible place to be.

Sherry: Yeah. It's like the lie that keeps growing, when you tell one lie then you've got to tell another lie to protect that lie.

Amanda: Yeah. So, I guess, you asked me about the women, I guess that's what I would say, you're not alone and I'm assuming there's a lot of other women who have had those feelings too.

Sherry: Yeah. I think it's pretty universal when the drinking feels like it's controlling your life more than you want it to. I think these are universal feelings. And I love it how you put it so eloquently for the ladies and talked about it for you. Just so we can see that this is part of the human experience and this is part of the nature when alcohol kind of takes too

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much importance in your life. When you look at it that's when you can actually start to dissolve the shame.

When you run from it and you want to continue to hide it, it's like the boogeyman grows, the shame monster grows. So just seeing how far you've come in your journey, how far I've come in my journey and other women have come in their journey, it's by facing it. And sometimes that is the hardest step to take.

Amanda: Yeah. And I mean like I said, I'm sort of embracing that this might be the beginning of my journey with this and that's okay. I have not put pressure on myself. I completed my program with you and that's never going to be a problem for me again. And I'm going to have it under control because I'm just really actively trying not to put things like that in my mind anymore about everything. But I have the tools now and I know that I can reach out to you. And I know that there's other women who are struggling with this and it's okay.

Sherry: I love it. I love it. Just embrace the journey and where you're at and try to keep improving as you go along. That's beautiful. Well, thank you so much for coming on the podcast, Amanda. I think this has been so valuable for other women to hear what your experience was like. And really as an empath, other people are going to feel that energy from you. And hopefully it'll inspire them to take their first step and their baby steps. Thank you so much.

Amanda: Thank you. Thank you, Sherry, thank you for your program, thank you for everything you've done for me. Thank you for being available for all of us. It's so badly needed.

Sherry: I feel that way too and you are so welcome. This is honestly the most fun work has been, if you could call it work, it's so fun for me. And it's so energizing to see women transform their relationship with alcohol. So, thank you, Amanda.

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Amanda: Thank you.

Well, everyone, thank you for listening to this episode of the *Drink Less Lifestyle* Podcast. And I will 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.