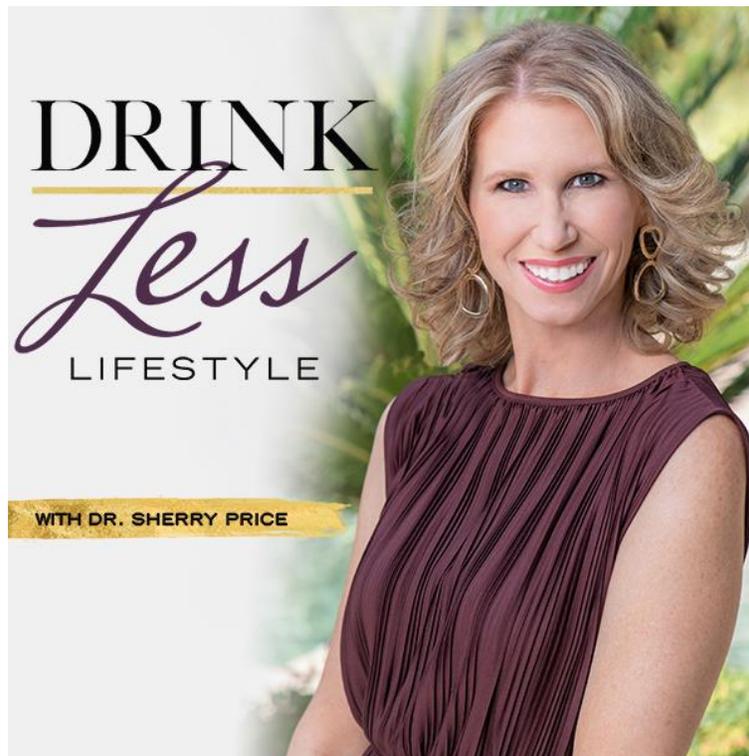


## Ep #43: Stages of Change



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Dr. Sherry Price**

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You are listening to the *Drink Less Lifestyle Podcast* with Dr. Sherry Price, episode number 43.

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 your summer going? Well, for me here where I'm recording this it is midmorning and I just got done finishing breakfast. And what a yummy breakfast it was. You know what I had? Bacon. I love me some bacon. It was crispy, and delicious, and cooked just right. I have to say this is my newest and latest addiction is to bacon. I love it. So, I am doing intermittent fasting because I love how it makes me feel and I am also wanting to lose a few pounds and I really look forward to breaking my fast midmorning with some bacon.

So, actually, up until last year I haven't been a fan of bacon. It wasn't something I loved, or desired, or looked forward to. I mean, yeah, I'd have a few pieces here and there, but it was just like, it's just bacon. I thought of it as unhealthy and greasy and just when I had it, it was just unfulfilling and not super satisfying. But recently, I've been loving it. And given that I know that we can change our desire for things, I have really been working on changing my desire for bacon.

So, you know that the more we have of something, the more it encourages that feedback loop in our brain that we crave it more. Just like if we have more alcohol, we're going to crave it more. So, I love bacon. I now noticed how my thoughts even around having bacon are so different this year than they were in years prior. So that's what I love about this work, it's these meta skills that we learn when we do the work on drinking, that we can do this work on anything in our lives.

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We can learn to change our desire for bacon. We can learn to change our desire for sugar. It's so fascinating to me how the brain works and just using these tools in your life in a way that feels good and in a way that serves you. And it is serving me because I am losing weight and I love it. I also have greater mental clarity following this food protocol that I'm following and it feels so amazing.

So, I do actually talk about how to lose fat inside both of my programs, inside Drink Less Lifestyle there is a bonus program talking about a masterclass on how to lose fat specifically and that same bonus program is also in my program How To Get Your Off Button Back, both which are available on my website. And I have gotten so many emails from women saying how that class has really helped them lose weight.

And why I do this is because when we get change in one area, if we're willing to change our drinking, I hear from a lot of women, "I just put on so much weight, how else can I tackle my weight?" And when we get change in one area, it's easy for the brain to say, "Okay, I'm changing this area." And go after other areas to change. So, when you change one area, it begets change in another.

So that's why when you move, when you take on a big change such as you're going to move, that's why you become motivated to now declutter your house, get rid of things you don't need because you don't want to move them. One change or change in one area of our life, makes changes in other areas of our life just easier. It's because the brain is expecting the change because the brain is like, now we're moving into a time when we're going to be changing.

And it goes right along with that principle of Newton's first law of motion. That something in rest tends to stay at rest, so a body at rest tends to stay at rest. Whereas an object in motion remains in motion unless acted upon. So, when we're moving in one area of our life and making changes, it's easier to add on change on top of the change we're already making.

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Speaking of change, that is the topic of today. I want to talk about the six phases of change. And why I find this helpful is not necessarily you have to go through each phase of change. But when you are considering making a change, I think it's helpful to know how the process can go and can work. So, in the six phases of change, we're going to talk about each phase separately.

So, the first phase is precontemplation. So, this is when you are really not ready for change. So, as it relates to a drinking habit, you might like, I'm not going to change. I'm not ready for change. I don't want to change. I like my current drinking habit. I just want to stay here. So precontemplation is you're not even thinking about change. Maybe you're not aware of the facts. Maybe you're not aware you can change. You're just not interested in change.

Commonly what happens, especially around alcohol is people stay in this precontemplation phase because they've tried previously to cut back or give up alcohol with little success. And because they've had little success, they have become demoralized and despondent. And I find this is so true in the addiction space or any time you're talking about a codependency. We just become so used to the habit, or the pattern, or the way we're operating and maybe we've tried to change it. But we haven't been successful, so we just give up.

And we get fixated on this aspect that we think we can't change. And we think that, well, since this hasn't worked or nothing has worked in the past, we stop looking for programs or for things that can work. And when we think that things can't be changed, I know this can be very disheartening for people. It could be feeling like really that it's not available to us. And I see this come up a lot because I do free consult calls with women. I want to help them tackle their drinking issue.

And when I do these calls, many of the women may be interested in my program or interested in ways of cutting back. And they start talking to me and I can clearly see what their barriers are to overcoming the drinking

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issue. And then how to help them get to the other side where they don't have this drinking issue. Because it's always easier for somebody on the outside to see the problem, rather than you going through the problem. And here's the thing, sometimes, I hear these women, that they say they want to change, but they really don't. They say they want to change.

I was just talking actually to a woman the other day who says, "My husband wants me to change." And then I say, "Well, do you want to change?" And she actually said "No, I don't want to change." And here's the thing, when you are not ready for change, I'll tell you what. You won't change. When you think you can't change or you just don't want it, you won't. So why spend the time and energy and waste money on something that your mind is not ready for right yet?

So, as I was talking to the woman on the call and she says she's not ready for change and I said, "Tell me more about that." She said, "Well, I just want to do it to appease my husband because I think he'll leave me." She said, "My drinking problem is causing our marriage to crumble." And I said "Okay, is that motivating for you to change?" And she said "No." And admittedly she said that she loved her drinking more than her marriage. And it's so good to get that radically honest with ourselves. To know, am I ready for change? Is this right for me?

And obviously, I'm not offering her my programs because they're not going to work if she's not willing to change. And so, we dove deeper on the call as to why she wanted to get on the call then. What was her reason for reaching out to me? And so, we talked about that issue. But here's the thing. This is not the first time I have encountered this. This is not the first time I have spoken to a woman who's not ready for change.

And when I speak with women and I present to them the radical truth, you know what happens? Your brain starts to mull over it. And what happens a lot of times is these women wind up calling me back, wind up getting on my calendar again, wind up talking to me. And then they're like, "I see what I didn't see before because you pointed it out. And now I think I am ready for

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change.” I just want to offer that I’ve never seen the truth sent in love and support ever to be a wrong action to take. So, ladies, we have to recognize if we want to change, if not, admit it.

Admit that you don’t want to change. And surprisingly this will set you a bit free. And even more surprisingly, this opens you up to acknowledging the truth what is today. But then you may find that you do move into the next phase, you do move into the next phase of wanting the change.

So, the next phase of the change cycle or the change process is contemplation. So, we went from precontemplation, where we’re not interested in change, to contemplating change which is really getting ready to change. So, it’s when you start to think, yeah, I might be able to change. And usually, in this phase, the person procrastinates a little bit. They’re thinking about the change, but they’re not really taking action yet. So, they’re mulling it over, they’re moving closer to the change, they’re thinking about it more and more, but they’re just not ready to bite the bullet yet.

Oftentimes in this phase, the person becomes very aware of the pros of making the change. And they are also keenly aware of the cons of making the change. So, for example, I’ll hear a lot from women as, “I know I need to cut back or stop drinking for my health, or for my marriage, or for my kids. But I enjoy the buzz, and the escape, and the relaxation of it so much.” So, the recognizing both sides of it, the pros, and the cons of keeping up the drinking.

But here’s the thing if you stay there too long. When you balance the cost versus the benefits, it often leads to ambivalence. And that ambivalence is where you don’t take action from. It’s also a place where you have these mixed or contradictory feelings. And that’s what can lead to a person feeling very stuck. And often you get stuck for an extended period of time. Because you’re like, I like it on one hand, and I don’t like it on the other.

And this is where I stayed stuck for a long time. It was that real mental battle that I was having in my head. I talk about my 6:00am self, how I just

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wanted to be done with alcohol. I was so sick of the hangovers. I was so sick of how tired I was and I wasn't getting good sleep. And I was forgetting conversations and all of that. I was just so tired of it and at 6:00am I'm like, "I'm done. I'm not drinking today."

And then flip the switch, come 6:00pm it's like all I wanted was a drink. All I wanted was a glass of alcohol in my hand. Who was that person in the morning? Who said all that? Who thought all that? That wasn't me because right now I just desire the drink so much. And when you're in that mental struggle it's like you feel bad for wanting it so much. And you feel like something's wrong with me, what is wrong with me? Why do I have this one way of thinking in the morning time and then this completely opposite way of thinking in the evening time?

So that was my drinking struggle. I stayed in this contemplation phase for years, for a long time. I kept wanting the change but I also kept wanting to keep the alcohol in my house, wanting to keep drinking it, wanted to keep being a drinker. And here's the thing, when you're there, you know what comes up a lot? Fear. Fear of what it would be like if I cut back.

And I actually sometimes really feared that. Would I be fun? Would I be dull and boring and a drab at parties? Would I be able to socialize if I wasn't drinking? Would my friends still like me? Would they still like my conversation? Would I still have interesting things to talk about? Would I still be funny? And here's the thing, I also thought, would I like myself with less alcohol? And would I like my friends or would I not like my friends because they drink too much?

And then the biggest one was, not just would I like myself, but would I even like my life? What would I be doing with my life if I wasn't drinking? What else is there to do? I don't have that many hobbies. So, I had all this mind drama about the fear of if I could like that person who does drink less. And all that does is prevented me from trying out, okay, let's just try on that person for a while, let's see if we like it. But I had so much thoughts about being afraid to try that person because what if I didn't like her?

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So, I want to tell you that I had those thoughts but I wasn't aware of them initially. They were in my subconscious. They were kind of underneath the surface. I think I was not fully aware or fully conscious I was having those thoughts. It was once I hired my life coach and she made me become aware of my thoughts and thought work and we started doing thought work together that those thoughts started to surface. And I started to be radically honest with myself and say, "Those are some thoughts that are holding me back from getting the change that I want."

Next, let's move to the third phase of the change process which is preparation. So, a person in the preparation phase is thinking I will change, really. And they're committed to changing their behavior. They develop an action plan, and they organize resources, and they develop strategies to make this change happen. So, they're ready to move into the action stage very soon, typically, within days to a few weeks.

So, when you're in the preparation phase, you're like, this is how I'm going to do it, this is my plan. If I need to hire a coach, or get a counselor, or a therapist, this is what I am doing. And so, I recognize this when I'm speaking to women because I hear it when I'm talking with them and they say things like, "I need to understand what support is available to me in this program before I commit to it." So, whether they're deciding to do my Off Button program or my Drink Less Lifestyle program, they're like, "I just need to know a few more details before I commit."

And oftentimes, they've already decided, but they just want some reassurance, they just want to talk through some of the details of the program. They want to make sure what's required of them, what's expected of them, how the change process works and all that. So, they want to talk through a lot of the particulars and also, they want to talk through some of maybe the anxiety that they have or the fears that they have. But they know that they are going to overcome those fears and just go for it because they are ready for that next phase.

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And that phase is phase four, taking action. So, in that preparation phase is where a lot of women I wind up talking to on my calls because they're like, "Okay, I have been listening to your podcast. I have been checking you out on social media. I've been at your website, I believe that you can help me and I'm ready to start." And so, they're in that preparation phase, right ready to take action which is step four. So, when people are taking action, it means that they have started doing the thing.

So, they have started to change. They have started the drink plan. They have started the different action steps and the strategies to change their relationship with alcohol. Now here's the thing, most people think I just start with the action, this is where it's at. And yes, you can start there, but I will say a lot of people go through the other phases first even in other areas of your life.

If you think about finding a mate, you date for a period of time because you're vetting the person, you're getting to know them, you're getting to know their quirks. You're getting to know if you like them and if you're compatible and all the things before we decide to take action and get married and spend the rest of our life with them. So, this process is a natural process, that we may talk about getting pregnant and having kids and all that before taking the action of conceiving.

Or we may want to lose weight for a long time and we think about it, and we think about it, and we think about it. And we stay in that precontemplation mode and then contemplate it, contemplate it, contemplate it. Maybe we move into preparation and say, "Yes, I'm ready. I'm going to hire this trainer. I'm going to belong to this gym", whatever. But then they never pull the trigger. It's the actual action phase where you actually pull the trigger and actually do something about it.

You sign up for a program, you get help, you reach out to a support group. You are doing the action so that you get the behavior change. So, when you're in the action phase, you should be noticing whether it's working or not. Because when you take action, what you're doing is actually

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programming your brain for a new pattern of behavior and that is starting to form. So right in the first week of my programs, you are taking the action you need to start patterning your brain for a new behavior.

So, women start experiencing a reduction in their drinking very early on and then they feel very successful which is what you want because that's what generates motivation. And here's the thing, most people think they need to be motivated before taking action and that's not actually how it works. If you think about the famous quote, action precedes motivation. That means action comes first. Once you take the action and get some success, guess then what happens? You start feeling motivated. You start feeling this feeling of motivation which keeps you motivated to keep taking the action.

So, it's the action that generates motivation, not the reverse. But most people think it's the other way around. So, in this action phase, you keep practicing the new behavior pattern over and over and then this modifies their lifestyle and now how they start to see themselves. So, their new behavior is observable by other people, other people are noticing, whether it's drinking less.

Like in my programs and when I help women or whether it's you're exercising routinely and you're noticing it and other people are noticing or eating more healthy. People are starting to comment because they notice the change. So, you stay in this action phase as long as it's necessary. You keep changing your behavior.

You keep practicing that new behavior until you're able to move into the maintenance phase which is phase five. And this is when you often look at yourself and say, "Yeah, I've changed. My drinking has totally changed. My weight has totally changed. My eating habits have changed." When you're in maintenance, you've already achieved some level of success from the actions that you were taking. And now maybe you want to still achieve some more success, you want to take more action to achieve some more success.

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And then you're in this maintenance phase where you want to maintain these good results. So, a new pattern or behavior has been sustained for a reasonable amount of time and now it's part of the person's lifestyle. I love that word, 'lifestyle'. Because that's what we want to do with our success, we want to build it into making it our lifestyle.

And if we don't want to be codependent or dependent on alcohol, but we don't want to give it up completely, or maybe we do want to give it up completely, we want that to be our lifestyle. And when it's your lifestyle, the person is confident that they can continue with this new lifestyle and that the behavior change is already embedded in their lives. And when you're in the maintenance phase, you're really less likely to have slip-ups or relapse. Now, you may fall back or slip-up into your old self, but it's rare.

And when you have this new behavior change it is across multiple situations that you develop these new coping strategies or this new way of being. And the maintenance phase is very important. A lot of people think once I get there, once I take all of the action and I get there, I could just forget about it. But there's work to be done after getting there.

It's the maintenance phase and this is why I offer a maintenance phase to the women that I work with in Drink Less Lifestyle. It's called the Drink Less Lifestyle Alumni program. So, it's for those who are still getting results, still want to be coached, still want to receive my unlimited support and help. But they want to do it for the longer than the three month period just to ensure that this is part of their lifestyle.

Because, here's the thing, nobody wants to start over from square one. If you are getting the results, you're happy with the results and you want to continue getting that support to maintain them, I'm there to support you. And you can stay in the maintenance phase as long as you need to get that support that you need. Because we've all been there where you make initial progress and then you slide back and you just don't want those slide backs to be permanent.

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So, after the maintenance phase comes the last phase and that's considered the termination phase. That's when you're confident there will be no relapses and no slip-ups. That's when the person says, "I'm changed forever." And any temptation to return to old ways of behavior are just no longer present. The behavior change is now who the person is. They don't have any temptation and they have a 100% self-efficacy. And I've talked about self-efficacy in previous episodes.

So, when you're in this termination phase, you don't return to old ways. The unhealthy habit is no longer a part of the way that you cope or you deal with life. Instead, you have this new behavior, which is part of your identity and your lifestyle and it's persisted for a long, long time.

So, this is the phase that I feel I'm in. My example would be I have been drinking less for many years now that even after a disappointing event, or my daughter gets upset, or has a temper tantrum, or has anything going on, I continue to not need alcohol to cope. I don't use alcohol in my life to cope any more. I used to use it to manage my emotions and now I do not. And that to me feels like I'm not dependent, codependent on it for any reason. And that feels amazing. It feels like freedom to me.

So, as I present these six stages of change to you, I want you to ask, where are you in the process of change? And maybe you're dealing with a spouse or a significant other, a loved family member and you're listening to this podcast because you want them to change their behavior with alcohol or address their drinking issue. And so, this could be a really helpful episode for you to internalize this, print out the show notes if you need to and assess where that family member is. If they're in the precontemplation phase they're not going to be ready for change.

And so, you would speak to them completely different than somebody who was in the contemplation phase. As I mentioned before, if I'm talking to women on the phone and they're in that precontemplation phase. I'm not going to offer my programs or to work with them because they're not ready for change. They're on the call because a loved one wanted them to make

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a call or for some other reason, but it's not to change their drinking. But there are ways you can work with people in this phase that may motivate them to change or at least contemplate change.

Maybe you're in phase two, contemplation, getting ready for the change. You've been contemplating those pro and cons. You keep going back in your head, do I want alcohol, do I not? I don't know. Some days it's great, some days it's not. I stayed in that phase for so long until I was just at this pain point that I'm like, I can't take the mental chatter any more. This is not how I want to live the rest of my life. This is not the example I want to set for my daughter.

So, I went into that preparation phase. I started Googling, what's out there? What can help me? Because I don't want to do this for life. And if you're in the preparation phase, great, but don't stay there too long. You want to keep progressing. You want to keep going after the change that you want. Some people could be in this preparation phase for a long, long time. But really getting to phase four which is taking the action.

And here's the thing, we all want to know if the action that we're going to take is going to be successful. But there is no way to know that ahead of time. You know how many diets I've tried and how many ways of eating I've tried to find one that fits my lifestyle, that works for my chemistry, that works for my biology and gives me the results that I want? I've tried so many. And I'm not mad I've wasted money on that one, and that one, and that one. I'm not going to name all of the ones. But they just didn't work for me and my lifestyle.

I couldn't eat cardboard box meals all the time because I got sick of them. I wanted to eat fresh fruits and vegetables. But I couldn't if I am on these cardboard box meals. So, I had to find a way of eating that fit my lifestyle, that fit my preferences, that fit what I like to eat and that provided me joy. I mean let's face it, chicken, and broccoli every night does not provide me joy. I don't know, most people would say it doesn't provide them joy. We are humans and we like variety, particularly when it comes to food.

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So, go to the take the action phase that's so empowering. Once you start taking action and start seeing results there is nothing more motivating than that. And then when you get those results and you're experiencing life as this new person enjoying their life, enjoying how they are around food or how they are around alcohol. And you find that I want to embrace this and this becomes your lifestyle, then you move into the maintenance. Then you're like, do I maintain this so I am this person? So that's when it starts to really switch your identity.

A lot of times when you're taking the action, you're still working on changing that identity. It's in the maintenance phase that your identity begins to shift. And then once your identity shifts, and you don't find you're even thinking about alcohol, it's just easy, you haven't had slip-ups in such a long time. Then you can consider that I'm now in the termination phase. So, one thing I want to mention about each of these phases is there is no general timeline that you stay in them. Some people stay in certain stages longer than others.

Some people can start off right at the action phase. I know there was a change I wanted to make in my life and I didn't even go through the contemplation, precontemplation phase. I started right off in the preparation phase. I learned about this Inner Voice work with Jess Lively and I was like, "Wow, I want to do that." I just knew I wanted to do that within the minute I heard about it and I heard somebody's experience with it.

And I wanted to be an Inner Voice facilitator. I wanted to do this work in my life. I wanted to do this work for my clients that I work with. And I went right to preparation. I went right to her website, looked at how much it was, looked at the program, boom, took action, signed up. So, I know on the internet you'll find the length of time each phase lasts. And I just want to say that's not always true. We're all unique, we're all unique individuals and so our timing is our timing.

And here's the thing, when you read that it's sometimes not helpful because you're like, "Well, I haven't been here that long, the internet says I

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could be here for five years,” or whatever. It’s like if we start comparing our journey to other people’s journeys, that just really hurts us. Because then we think, if it took them a year to get over their drinking habit, that’s what it’s going to take me. And I don’t find that that’s true. I find that everybody varies on this how quickly they learn to be around alcohol and change their relationship.

Yes, there are factors that influence it, but it’s not a given that you can say, “It’s only going to take three months, it’s only going to take six months.” You can’t make these blanket statements for everybody, because there could be so many pain points that are leading to the drinking, because ultimately, we’re solving for the pain points in somebody’s life. Drinking, like I said, is just a side symptom. It’s like we’re solving for the headaches so we don’t need the Advil.

So, it’s like if my program was just talking about cutting back from Advil, cutting back from Advil, it’s like well, I still got this headache. So, my program is not cut back on drinking, cut back on drinking. It’s like, no, we have to look at the triggers causing the drinking, fix those, change those. Therefore, you won’t need the alcohol, just like if you cure the headache and what’s causing it, you won’t need the Advil.

And that’s why you can join my programs at any time. They don’t start all at once and launch all at once because I don’t want other members comparing their journey to somebody else’s. When you come into Drink Less Lifestyle, or you come into Off Button, you have no idea other people’s journeys. You have no idea how long they’ve been there and that is such an advantage and the women have loved that because it gives them freedom to express themselves as their own journey and this is just their journey.

So, as you look at this process of change, I also want you to notice that it’s a process. Changing a habit, changing a pattern, takes time. Of course, we want the immediate gratification, of course we want the 10 pounds gone, of course we want to stop drinking and feel good right away. But here’s the

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thing. When you enjoy the journey, and you're enjoying your life along the way, you are in less of a hurry to get there.

And that's why I love making it fun within my programs. This is not some heavy life sentence we are served. This is a problem that we can solve, which is such a joyous way to think about handling this issue. This doesn't have to be heavy and downtrodden. And here's what I love, is when you start getting results, you start feeling better, your energy comes back. And you're so proud of the progress that you make and I love that.

And we celebrate when people are proud of the progress that they make because you should be proud. We're proud of our kids when they make progress. We teach them to be proud of themselves. We should have that same energy and proudness for ourselves. Plus, here's the thing, when you're proud of yourself, you show up for yourself even more. You begin to love yourself and your life even more.

And that's exactly the actions that we practice inside my programs, is loving the life that you have and changing what needs to get changed. Because if you're hearing this and you want to change, I want you to know, you can. You can create the change that you want in your life, hands down. If you want to diminish your relationship with alcohol, diminish your dependency on alcohol, you can do that. If you want to find out what's causing all the drinking, we can do that and fix it in healthier, better ways that actually solve the problem.

And this is like offering freedom and joy to somebody. It's the most exciting work I've ever done in my life. So, if you're ready to make change and you're in that preparation phase and ready to take action, I'd love to help you. You can jump on my calendar and we can get on a free call. You can do that by going to my website, [sherryprice.com](http://sherryprice.com) or [drinklesslifestyle.com](http://drinklesslifestyle.com). This is your one life and I want you to live it to the fullest and create joy and freedom by living a Drink Less Lifestyle. Alright, my friends, that's all I have for you today. Have a beautiful week and I'll see you next time.

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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.