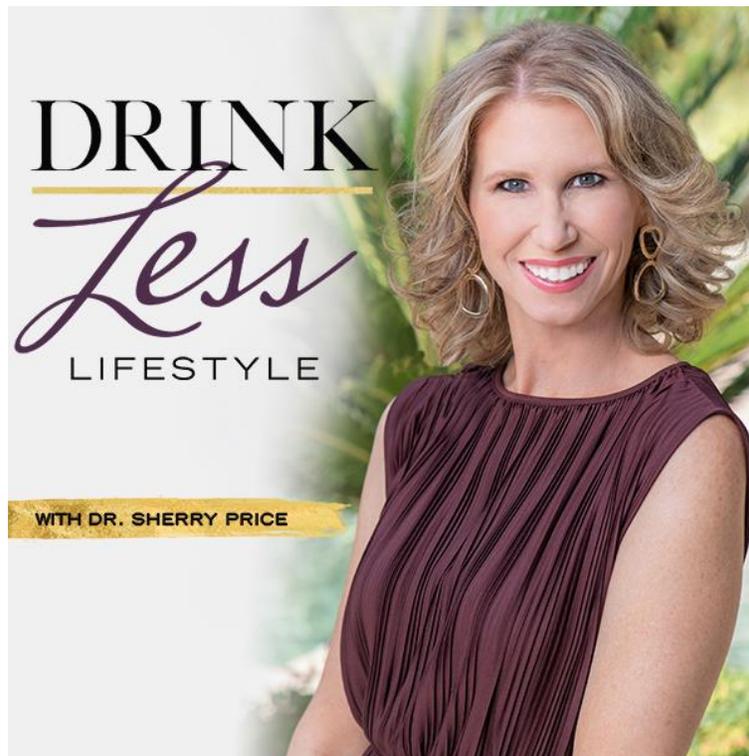


Ep #44: Changing Before You Hit Rock-Bottom: A Success Interview with Kelly



Full Episode Transcript

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Dr. Sherry Price

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You are listening to the *Drink Less Lifestyle Podcast* with Dr. Sherry Price, episode number 44.

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 beautiful friends. I am so excited for today's podcast because I have one of my dear friends and previous clients on the call with us and I can't wait for you to hear her amazing story. She has gone through the Drink Less Lifestyle program and I wanted to invite her on the show to just talk about her journey with alcohol, where it served her, how she was using it. And then the tools that she used to conquer it or control it. And before we begin and dive into all that fun stuff I'd like to welcome Kelly to the show. Hi, Kelly.

Kelly: Hi. Thanks for having me.

Sherry: Yes. And as we're getting started and before we get into really the questions I'd just love our listeners to get to you know just a little bit more. Whatever you're comfortable sharing we would love to hear about.

Kelly: Yeah, sure thing. So, I am a wife and mother. I have a wonderful husband, Ryan, and I have three children. My oldest is seven, she'll be eight shortly. And then my second child is turning five. And I have one more child who is not with us. I have my one and only son, Thomas Joseph, TJ we lovingly call him. And he lived for four days. He was born in March of 2020 and he went home to God after that. In addition to my full life as a mother, I like to say I'm a full-time mom and I work part-time, I own a professional organizing business.

Sherry: That's awesome. And I love hearing your story. So, if you don't mind, let's jump in.

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Kelly: Sure, sure.

Sherry: So, before we met, tell the listeners what was your drinking like? Why did you do it? What did it look like?

Kelly: So, I will start by saying I don't think I really truly understood why I did it prior to this program. I think it had become a habit. I had started listening to – and I would encourage anyone who has not listened to the first episode of this podcast to go back and listen to it because it truly resonated. And it took a lot of the shame and guilt out of it for me. But I would say I am closer to 40 than I am 30. So, I would say that this has been an issue for the better part of 20 years.

I don't think I ever truly learned how to drink responsibly. It was either binge or nothing, maybe not always that bad but somewhere in the grey area. But anywhere long story short. I would say that I would either drink to excess or not drink at all. And if I wasn't drinking I was thinking about, well, am I going to drink tonight? I think so much of what you've said in the podcast, your 6:00am self and your 6:00pm self. I would have a lot of that mental chatter. And how many have I drank this week? And if I don't drink tonight am I going to drink tomorrow? If I don't drink tomorrow am I going to drink tonight? I don't know.

And it's just how much am I going to have? Am I going to have too much? Am I going to feel awful? I need to do a certain thing x, y, z in the morning. I should probably scale back tonight but what if things are really hard and it's a stressful day and I really just want that off switch? So, I would say that was kind of my journey, and my professional, and family life on and off of course. Pregnancies and postpartum and all of that aside, I would say that was pretty much my pattern.

And I would drink most nights of the week, not always to complete excess but never really having a set number in mind that I was going to stop at. And then of course once the pandemic hit which happened to completely coincide with my son's death. I was just, I had no coping mechanisms. I'm

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a very social person so I was very much isolated at a very difficult time in my life. And drinking provided a sense of relief for the moment. But then it always makes things worse in the long term has been my experience.

So maybe you have a bender at night and you're feeling loopy, or happy, or whatever you call that emotion where you're enjoying drinking, well, okay. And then fast forward, play it all the way through the next morning and the next day and are you cranky? Are you irritable? Are you popping Advil because you have a headache? These were all things that had happened to me.

Sherry: Yes. And it doesn't make us feel good long term. And you then have the long term consequences of that. Have you tried anything to cut back during this time? Have you tried any modalities on your own, or sought out help, or any of that?

Kelly: I've never sought out other help because it was so normalized and the culture. I would think from college onward everybody drinks, is the thought that we would get together with friends. And there would be – no one really had a set end goal in mind. No one went in and said, "I'm only going to have two drinks tonight or three drinks tonight", or whatever it is. It was just like okay, just keep going until the good times at end and it's time to go to sleep. And then I certainly didn't feel like I fit in with what would be described as alcoholics or alcoholism.

I would always question that when the anxiety came afterwards. But I kind of felt I would have been laughed out of an AA meeting because okay, so you're overdrinking, you have five drinks on however many days a week. You're still functioning during the day. You're still taking care of your family. You're not failing on any of your commitments. There was no real big turning point in my life where it was like well, this was the horrible thing that happened. And now you have to really clean up your act. It was more like a slow progression.

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So, no, I hadn't really tried anything to get help other than the promises, broken promises to myself. Or just saying, "Okay, I'm going to drink tonight but I'm not going to drink tomorrow", those bargaining. So, nothing really concrete, no.

Sherry: And I love that you highlighted that because I felt the same way. And I think there's probably a lot of people out there that it's like if you're not down and out, if you're not on Skid Row, I don't know, what terminology to use.

Kelly: Hitting rock bottom.

Sherry: Exactly, that you would be laughed at or my problems aren't this bad. And it makes you kind of minimize what you're experiencing. And to your brain it's like well, if I'm not that bad maybe there isn't a problem, or maybe there isn't a reason to change. And I love that you highlighted that because I think a lot of people are in this grey area where they're like it's getting too much. I know it's getting too much but I don't feel it's like a disease or alcoholic. And I don't feel comfortable in that environment and so what is there? What are the options? And they're not really promoted or talked about.

Kelly: Except for you. Yeah.

Sherry: Well, I talk about them and there's certainly other programs out there, absolutely. But it's almost like you have to do your research to find them.

Kelly: You have to really look to find them.

Sherry: Yes. They're not just out there. I mean we know of one or two programs but there's so many others. And we don't have to wait till, like you said, life really turns in an upheaval and things really go south quick. We can take care of this and take care of ourselves. And I find that when you nip it in the bud early it's so much easier, so much easier.

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Kelly: Yes, totally.

Sherry: You can handle it quicker. You can change quicker. You don't have to make amends in so many areas of your life. Most of the time it's just you and maybe your intimate household. And it's just, it's such a relief. So, tell me, what really bothered you? Why did you want to change your drinking?

Kelly: I think I was just sick and tired of the mental chatter, of the constant just feeling like, okay, this is not in control. I have control in so many other areas of my life and I am moving forward in so many other areas of my life. And I just couldn't continue this way. And I didn't want to role model that for my daughters. I also was starting to get negative health indicators. Of course, I was putting on weight. I don't think grief and a pandemic did me any favors there. But it was certainly – I mean wine has a ton of calories and sugar in it.

And then when you're snacking afterwards it just all adds up. So, I was gaining weight. My sugars were getting higher. Like I said, I'm not even 40 yet. I need to take care of myself so that I can be my best self and be there for my family and my children, and whatever work that God has for me to do. If I'm not healthy myself I can't really be helpful to anyone. And then once I found your podcast I was like, "Wow, this really resonates with me and this is real science and maybe it is doable."

Maybe I'm not just doomed to a life of either, well, I completely give up alcohol and I fake some AA program because I don't think I would fit in. I mean I have never gone. I have never gone to an AA meeting so I can't really comment on that. So, either I give it up entirely and then that has to change my social life and the way that, just so many things I think would change based on the goals of that type of a program. Or do I just stay doing what I'm doing? And I'm resigned to a life of not the most optimal health long term.

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And then generationally am I just setting my children up for this same type of lifestyle? And I don't want that for them. And if I don't want that for them I shouldn't want it for me either.

Sherry: Yeah, that's great insight. And it totally resonates as well with me. I was the same way. I was dealing with my daughter's stress and her tantrums by just storming the fridge and hitting the bottle. And then I'm like, what am I doing? What am I teaching her? What am I doing to myself? This just doesn't feel right. It seems like I should be able to handle my anger differently, or better, or have different modalities. So, I totally understand and feel that it's enough of a pain point that you're like, yes, this has got to change.

Kelly: Yes.

Sherry: So, talk to us about your experience when you signed up and went through the Drink Less Lifestyle program? What did you learn? What was helpful to you? Anything you want to share?

Kelly: I learned so much. But I'm going to start from the beginning. When I finally took the step to schedule the appointment and have the first introductory call with Sherry, it was the week after the year anniversary of my son's death. And I think anyone listening to this who's dealing with grief or who's drinking has anything to do with grief. I felt like I had to be ready. And there's no timeline on grief. And I mean to lose a child is just so unbelievably painful. I just felt like okay, it's been a year. And he would want me to live.

And I can't live fully with continuing this habit in my life. So, it's my responsibility to try to fix that. And worse case scenario, had it not worked, at least I tried. So, I made the appointment. And I think I talked with you a week after the one week anniversary. It was like okay, you've had your year, time to get your life somewhat back in order or at least try. So, my first call with Sherry was really – I keep saying Sherry like you're not here,

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it's you. My first call was really encouraging. You just really inspired confidence that this is doable.

Yes, this is a problem in your life but it's not an unsolvable problem. There are tools that you could teach me and there is a whole method, and a whole program where I don't have to give up alcohol entirely because that's not my goal at this point in my life. Maybe it will be done day. And certainly, within the last few months the way that I look at alcohol is completely different than how I had looked at it. I used to think of it as this cure all and this is my adult pacifier and it'll make everything just feel better. And in reality it really doesn't.

Yes, you might feel some fleeting moments of feeling better but there are just so many other joys and experiences in life that can truly help you feel better. I think there is natural pleasures versus artificial pleasures I think was one of the podcasts too. And that really spoke to me. And I can attest that. I've seen that in my life. As I've cut back on drinking the wonderful experiences and world around me. Because we always talk about that we have these good lives.

We're successful women with good families. And maybe you don't have every single piece perfectly together like you would want. But when you look at your life you're saying, "Why am I doing this?" Everything is so good and why am I dulling all of the good aspects with this alcohol. And you brought up in that podcast, you can speak to it better but when you're relying on those dopamine hits from alcohol it's really dulling. The dopamine hits that you get from the true beautiful goodness good things in life.

Sherry: Absolutely, yes. And I love how you just explained it in your own words too. You kind of think the alcohol is the end all, be all, that it's that cure all as you called it. I used to call it my panacea, whatever problem I was experiencing, it was just like take some alcohol it'll just make it better. I'll be okay. Everything will be okay. I can control my emotions with it. I can

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cure my anger. I can cure my loneliness. I can handle this pandemic. I think we do look at it as this way to medicate ourselves.

And it does feel good in the moment. We're not going to lie about that. That's how the drug works. That's how the chemical works.

Kelly: Otherwise, why would anyone do it?

Sherry: Exactly, exactly. So, it's not like you enter the program and you're brainwashed, it doesn't work that way or it doesn't feel [inaudible]. No, we just are radically honest. Why are we doing it? Do we want to keep doing it for that reason? And it's an individual choice, just like how you spend your time. How you spend your life, what you put in your mouth. What you consume. You control all of that, you really do. And we lose sight of that I think when it comes to alcohol when it feels like it's controlling us.

Kelly: Yeah.

Sherry: And we don't have to give it up if we don't want to, for most people who aren't that far along in the spectrum of drinking.

Kelly: Right.

Sherry: Yeah. So where are you now with your drinking or what tools have really helped you?

Kelly: So, I've cut back significantly, Sherry. And I've done the math at different points in the journey. And it's anywhere from, at the beginning maybe closer to 30%, sometimes 50%, but even up to as much as 75%.

Sherry: And you mean 75% less?

Kelly: Yes. Yeah, that I'm drinking that much less. And I think for me one of the biggest gains there was that the mental chatter around alcohol has stopped. I am not thinking about it when I'm not drinking. And when I'm drinking then I'm experiencing, I'm present with it. I'm mindful of what is

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happening. I'm not thinking am I going to drink tonight? Are we going to go to that party? Are they going to have alcohol there? Are the kids going to be safe? It's just all the things. Who's going to drive? All of that.

So, the tools that really helped me to get there, I'm a planner. I plan out my meals. I'm a professional organizer. I am super organized around my home. I know what is happening when. I know all the schedules for all the people. To say I like a plan is the understatement of the year. So, I always plan out my meals. Why this was not something I could conceive on my own, I don't know. But I always plan out my meals for dinner and for the whole family really.

So, the drink plan, to plan out which days you are drinking for the week, how much you will be drinking. And then to track what you actually did was just so transformative for me. And it again, really silenced all that mental chatter. Is this happening today? Is this not happening? What is it going to feel like the next day if it does? What if it doesn't then what? Just oh my gosh, shut up. So, the drink plan is really one of the most powerful tools for me. I think also having the – with the coaching calls, we meet as a group twice a week. And there are also private coaching calls, just one-on-one.

I kind of felt and a shout out to all the ladies who are in the group with me. I felt responsible to the other ladies. I wanted to show up for myself but I wanted to show up for them too. And it really helps that two nights a week there are calls about your drinking habit. So maybe don't drink those two nights at least. So that's at least a starting point. I never planned to drink the nights that we had calls. I wanted to be fully present. And I wanted to hear what the other ladies have to say.

I wanted to share my story and thank God we have Sherry as our guide to kind of break down any issues that are coming up. Or ask the poignant questions for, "Well, why are you thinking of it that way? Or could it be possible that there is this other alternative? And how would that feel?" And to really delve into the feelings that go along with the action of drinking.

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Sherry: I love it that you mentioned the group calls because I was going to ask you about that. Because you attended most of them and...

Kelly: All of them.

Sherry: Right, people loved seeing you on the calls. They loved hearing about your journey. They loved hearing about your triumphs. They loved hearing about your setbacks. We just have to embrace the whole experience. And we're going to have both ups and downs along the journey and along the way. And you just put it out there. And the ladies really would comment to me one-on-one or they would private message, "I just love Kelly, she just shows up so authentically."

So, I love it that you brought that up because some people are afraid to join because of our group call. What was your experience of the group calls?

Kelly: Oh my gosh. That literally never occurred to me. Like I said I'm social. I love having interaction with other people. And I think we can learn so much from each other. And I certainly did learn from others. And I could take their plans into account, and their experiences, and how they were problem solving really helped me learn.

In fact, I would say that there's one – I'm not going to name her but there is one lady in the group who had a very detailed plan for going to a social event and how many drinks she was going to have at the social event, and what time she might have them. And how was she going to stretch out the time there? Say the party's going to last five hours, and you have three drinks that you've allotted yourself and you don't want to go over that limit. She'd narrowed it down to the half hour, 15 minutes, was she going to have a seltzer, or a water, or juice or whatever it is in between the drinks?

And I'm really thinking that for those longer term plans, I'm going to adopt that. I think that's awesome. And it's not just planning out how many drinks you're going to have for the night, or how you're going to handle that event.

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It's really like okay, let's get down to the minutia of truly how are you going to do this? And our brain follows what we tell it.

So, if we make a plan and stick to it, the more that we make a plan and stick to it the more that our brain has confidence and we do what we say we're going to do. We're not just falling into habit brain. We're not just on autopilot. We're making conscious decisions to show up for ourselves.

Sherry: I love that.

Kelly: So yeah, the group calls were amazing, I love them.

Sherry: Yeah. And what I've heard from other people, and I don't know if you want to comment on this, is like we've been carrying around this pain point for 20, 10, whatever years. And when you show up on the calls and you are with other women who are rocking at life mostly, in all these other areas.

Kelly: Yes, totally, yeah.

Sherry: Yeah, they're just powerhouses. But it's just this one area that it doesn't feel good. And when you talk about it and you see other women talking about it, I feel, and I've heard this from other women, it just starts to drop the shame. It's just like, oh, this is going on for you too. And it doesn't feel like you are broken, you are flawed. It's like, oh, there are other women experiencing this. And look, we're here together. We're not complaining about lives. We're not talking about the past.

We're together to problem solve. What is the reason driving your drinking? Is it your kids? Well, let's look at how you can parent differently. Is it your spouse? Let's look at how we can manage that relationship so that it's not a trigger for drinking. So that you can manage it otherwise in healthier ways or ways that feel good to you or that don't require alcohol.

Kelly: Absolutely, yes, dropping the shame and guilt was huge for me. And I think that that was a roadblock that I had come up against without

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knowing it in the past. But I just felt so bad about my drinking habit that it was hard to even be really honest with what was truly happening. And what was I allowing? What was I doing that I didn't like? What was in my control? What wasn't in my control? And to really look at those things with, again, we say radical honesty. But radical honesty doesn't mean condemning yourself.

The way that the program works, it's just shame and guilt are not a part of it. And that was huge for me. I don't think that I could have really made the transformation. And again, it's an ongoing one. I'm not at the end of the road. There is no graduation, there's no like you did it, yay. It's just, we're all in an ongoing process of life. I don't think I could have made the transformation up until this point with shame and guilt being part of the scenario. I think it would have held me back too much.

And like you said, the other women in the calls are just so inspiring because they're awesome moms, awesome wives, awesome professional women who are super smart. And in our heart of hearts, we know better, we know we're better than this. We know that we control the, you know what, out of everything else in our life. We can handle this.

Sherry: Yeah, yeah, it's so good.

Kelly: Alcohol is not that powerful.

Sherry: I know, I just love the loving support of care we treat each other with. And I just love, I know you've developed a friendship outside of the group and you continue to nurture that relationship. And I really think connection and just talking about what's going on in our lives, there's just so much healing in that process. And I've seen you heal tremendously in many ways of your life. And sorry that you had to experience those circumstances.

Kelly: Thank you.

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Sherry: But circumstances aren't something we can control but we control our response to them. And I just saw it in your heart that you just wanted so much better for yourself, so much better for your loved ones that you lived with. And I just commend you for taking the scary steps. It's scary. It's scary to say, "Hey, is this program going to work? Hey, I think this all makes sense to me but can I do it?" And I think we get stuck there. It's like, but can I do it? We're so afraid of failure as we age. Kids, they don't care.

Kelly: Right, yeah, totally.

Sherry: I hit the baseball bat all the way over there, the baseball, or I knocked it out of the park. It's like, yeah, alright, I'll go get the ball, it's fine. But we just feel so disappointed in ourselves. And it's like that's another layer of shame. It's like no, we've got to just know that any time we fall down we have to look at why. And once we understand why that's what we tackle next time. It's just a process. And as you said you're never really at the end. I'm still choosing to have alcohol in my life now as well. But there might be a time where my process and my journey is different.

Yeah, and I'm not close minded to that. And I like to keep an open mind but right now that's just not where I'm at. And I have to say another thing that I commend you on is there are so many worksheets in the program.

Kelly: I knew you were going to talk about the worksheets.

Sherry: Kelly gets the award for doing all of them, you really do. I mean there are just, there's a lot of tools, a lot of things you learn. And I say, "Take and use what works for you and then leave the rest behind." But Kelly's like, "No, no, not leaving any worksheet behind."

Kelly: No. No worksheet left behind. No conference call left behind. I was there for all of it. Because again, the personalities that fall into this group, we don't do things halfway. We are all in or nothing. So yeah, the worksheets really did help because when someone says, "Go journal." I'm like, "Okay, well, what does that mean?" Yeah, so it sounds lovely. It

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sounds like I should have candles going and a bubble bath that I'm in and I'm just there with my thoughts.

But the worksheets, yes, they're journaling. But I think the fact that they were on a piece of paper and they were poignant questions, it just helped me to delve into the true answers to the questions and what was going to help me to come out the other side of this. So that's why I did all the worksheets with reckless abandon.

Sherry: And you sent them to me on Voxel. And then you posted them in the Facebook group. Your work has helped other women because they're like, "That's how Kelly's thinking. That's what Kelly's doing." You were just so inspiring for the ladies.

Kelly: Thank you all.

Sherry: And I just want to offer that up and encourage other women that by sharing what we go through, whether it's good or bad, just by sharing, we really do inspire others. I mean just having you on this podcast, I know you're inspiring other women to, I'm going to take that tool that she talked about and start implementing it in my life. And recognizing if it works and if it doesn't work. Life is a big experiment. We just keep trying and learning what works and then we leave behind what doesn't work. And you emulated that so beautifully.

Kelly: Thank you. Yeah, I would say to any woman who's listening to this, who's had that feeling in her heart, maybe this is for me. Just make the call, just call Sherry, get on her calendar, have the talk. And I know that you will give it to them straight. So, if this is not for you, Sherry will point you in another more appropriate direction very quickly. She doesn't waste anyone's time. And I would also say, like you said that I was inspiring to other women, which I appreciate and I am glad that I could do that.

But I would say for the woman who is hesitant, you're not just holding yourself back. If this is truly your call to discover, you're holding back what

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you can give to other people. And I know sometimes we have guilt around, well, is this just for me or is this selfish? And it is a time commitment. But in the long run you're giving such a beautiful gift to yourself and to your family, or whoever is in your inner circle of daily life and life in general. So, if it doesn't resonate for you to do it for yourself, do it for the people around you.

Sherry: That's beautifully said, beautifully said. And as we are wrapping, Kelly, is there any other things you want to share with the audience, or any comments, or any other part of your journey that you want to share?

Kelly: I think we covered a lot of it. I'm sure that there will be things that I'm like, I should have said that. But I think we covered a lot. I think we covered the tools. We covered the initial hesitancy but then commitment to the program. I want to also say that the program is really gentle. It's definitely a meet you where you are and it builds on itself. So, it's all about when you're ready. I would not have been ready for this prior to the anniversary of my son's death. I just wasn't in that headspace.

But then again it's like any time, having a baby, starting a new job, any major life change, there's never really the ideal time to do something. But there are times that are better than others. And when you take the leap you just go all in.

Sherry: Beautifully said, Kelly, beautifully said. And I just again want to applaud you for your work and your journey, and how much you've done and committed to this process, and the results that you got. I remember early on in the calls when you were like, "I had two alcohol free days in a row. This was amazing."

Kelly: Yeah, it feels great. Yeah.

Sherry: Yeah. And just to see that increase for you.

Kelly: Now I've had four, four or five, it's wild, living on the edge.

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Sherry: Right. And I just love how you embrace that and shared that and how your journey continues to evolve and how you're having fun with alcohol and without alcohol. That's what it's about. Having fun in life when you choose to drink and when you choose not to drink. And you've demonstrated that beautifully. So, thank you for being on this podcast and sharing your journey with the listeners, I so appreciate you, Kelly.

Kelly: Thank you. I couldn't have done it without you. I always say that. I know that we have to do the work but seriously, thank God for Sherry. I really appreciate it.

Sherry: Well, thank you for that, Kelly.

And listeners, thank you for tuning in to this episode of the Drink Less Lifestyle and I can't wait to 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.