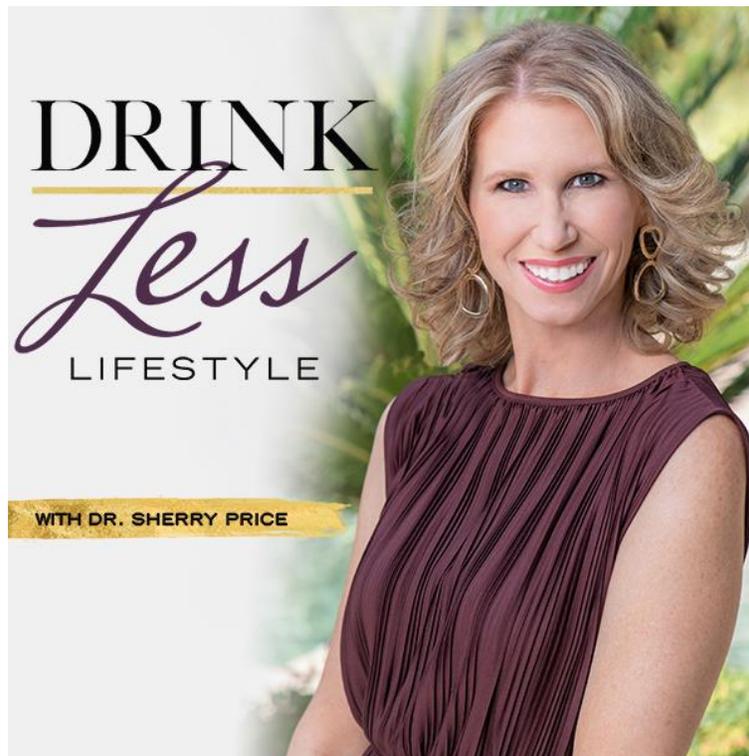


Ep #52: Alcohol and Your Wellness Strategy



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 51.

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 Wednesday going? And maybe you're listening to this on a different day but I hope your day is off to a great start. So, I wanted to jump right into the topic for today and how I want to talk about it is through the eyes of a client that I just helped with this topic. And I have to say I want to tell it through my eyes and her eyes because it was very profound. And I think it can really help a lot of you out there struggling in this area.

So, we were on a coaching call and she has been getting tremendous progress in terms of drinking less and improving her life, getting to the root cause of what's causing her drinking and solving for those issues. But she still wanted to reach more success and to her she wanted to be drinking even less. So that was her flavor of what she wanted. And so, we were looking at how it is that she was still using alcohol in her life.

So, as she was recounting the experiences where she still feels that she just doesn't want to be drinking in these moments or at least wants to be drinking a lot less in these moments. And I'll share with you specifically what was going on. She's like, "It just still doesn't feel good to me even though it's not a huge quantity." So even though it might not be a huge quantity, ladies, give yourself permission that if it doesn't feel good to be drinking that way, let's look at it.

So, I told her to take me back to a specific moment in time or just kind of summarize exactly what's going on, where you're at right now. Because that's what life coaching is, we look at the present and we get you to the

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future that you want. So, she was talking about how she works all day, and most of the time her job is pretty intense. It requires her to have a lot of mental engagement, mental energy throughout the day. She's thinking. She's strategizing. She may be leading a meeting. She may be responsible for managing other people.

She's collaborating across different departments to publish articles and write grants. And really maintaining that professionalism throughout the day. So, she's constantly thinking. She's mentally on throughout the day. So, she didn't say it quite in these words but when she comes home she's mentally pooped. She's just kind of mentally exhausted from using her brain all day.

And I think a lot of us feel that way when we're taking care of other people, we could be teachers and we're taking care of the students and we're having to be that on button all the time where we're like we have to show professionalism. We're constantly thinking and taking care of others, whether we're in healthcare or any kind of organization really where we're just always feeling like I've got to bring my best game forward.

So, when she gets home most of the time she feels like she didn't have the urge for a drink but every now and then it would be maybe a particularly rough day or a stressful day. She would take a glass of wine and it would lead to more or she'd privately and secretly have a shot of scotch and then go back for another hit of scotch. And this was always to lighten the mental load as she would say, or just kind of break free mentally because she just felt fatigued after thinking all day.

And it was interesting, I have this vision in my head, it's just like when we're thinking all the time, it's like the smoke is just coming out of our ears, not because we're angry but because we're just constantly thinking and then it gets tiring and exhausting. And the work environment always brings about new challenges or people like to say, "It's another fire that I always have to put out", or you just never know what the day's going to bring", or, "What this mood is going to be", or, "How this meeting is going to go."

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So, there's always uncertainties throughout the work day. And yes, we do have to bring our mental game and sometimes when we bring our mental game it's also not only mentally exhausting but emotionally exhausting. And it could also weigh on us physically. It just feels like a tiring day.

So, what I love about this story so far is I think we can all relate. We just feel kind of taxed as we go throughout our day. So naturally the brain will want to come home and say, "Okay, now is my time. Right now, is my time to unwind." I don't know if we want to call it unwind, or relax, or just not feel like we're on. Or we're looking for some kind of stress relief or reprieve at the end of the day. And for many people right now that's when the first drink enters. It's like, my time, I get to relax.

And this is a signal, or a ritual, or a way I choose to relax. And for a lot of people that's how the habit gets started. It starts with that first drink and then the body becomes adjusted to it, or tolerant of it. And then it's like, hey, that felt good, why don't we have another? And then maybe another as our tolerance builds. So, a lot of times that's where the habit starts.

So going back to this specific woman inside Drink Less Lifestyle she always says it's really important to her to prioritize her workout. Because when she takes care of herself physically she feels stronger mentally. And I think a lot of us can agree to that. When we take care of our bodies, moving them, we get that endorphin rush and it just helps us in all aspects of our life, mentally, emotionally, physically. And so, she wouldn't skip a workout. She finds that to be so life giving, so important to her wellness.

And then she mentioned other attributes throughout her day that were also important, like taking a green smoothie, or algae, or kale or whatever, spinach drink she was having to start her day. Because she wanted to get in those nutrients and make sure she was feeding her body with the nutrition that it needed. So, it became clear as she's talking that wellness was really part of her fabric. She really wanted that. She really enjoyed that. And that's how she took care of herself.

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So, she enjoyed the healthy eating, and this came at no challenge to her. But what she was wanting was to make more progress on lessening the amount of dependency on drinking to feel good at the end of the day or to take the edge off. So, for her it was really about reducing this type of drinking that just didn't feel good to her anymore. And as she's going through the story everybody on the call got the sense from watching her body language that it really seemed to bother her particularly around sneaking a shot of scotch.

You can definitely tell this was a pain point still for her. Now, as she's going through her story I could see of course that's why you're sneaking the scotch, I totally get it. I totally understand. And she's like, "What? I don't get it. I don't understand." And I said, "Well, you think it's part of your emotional and mental strategy to reduce stress. You think it's part of your wellness strategy." It's like when the end of the day hits and you have stress, alcohol will take it away.

Do you guys remember that old commercial, Calgon, take me away? I actually looked up that commercial because I'm like, I haven't seen that commercial in years. I want to see that commercial. And it says it was released in 1978. Alright, ladies, that just tells you, I have been around a while. I don't know if any of you remember that commercial. But that was a classic commercial to me back in the 70s, the TV ads were selling Calgon, a bath powder that you sprinkle into your bath, that melts our stress away. Yes, this is the messaging in the 1970s and 80s.

What's our messaging now in 2021? It's alcohol. Alcohol melts your stress away. And we see it on commercials, and we see it in magazines, and we see it on t-shirts, and we see it on fun cocktail napkins, and we see it on wine glasses that this is mommy's sippy cup. We see all the ways that it's now being marketed as the stress reliever.

Now, let's think back to Calgon. What are the consequences of Calgon? Are there any negative consequences to taking a Calgon bath? I can't really think of many, maybe some pruned and wrinkly skin when you stay in

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the bathwater too long. And I guess maybe instead of, if you were to eat the powder instead of pour it into the water, maybe there'd be some negative consequences from that. But truthfully, really, even the commercial goes on to say to have a luxurious bath.

So, I can't really think of many negative consequences that comes from taking a luxurious bath. However, it's quite a different story when it comes to ingesting alcohol. How many negative consequences come from ingesting too much alcohol? A crap ton. As we say in healthcare, TMTC, too many to count. And mind you, they are not the trivial consequences like wrinkly pruned skin that eventually will dry out.

No, there are consequences like ruined relationships, ruined health, ruined sleep cycles. And let's see, it causes fights, and mood swings, and bad words to come out of our mouth and words we didn't even mean to say come out of our mouth. And our brain doesn't work because it stops remembering things. And it starts forgetting thing.

And I know the countless women that tell me, gosh, when they drink, sometimes they just pick fights and they bring up things from the past like 20 years ago. And they're bringing it up today or they're bringing up something so trivial as like you forgot to take out the trash last week. And they're picking fights with significant others. It's like why are we bringing that up now? Why does this matter? And who cares that the trash wasn't taken out a week ago? What does that matter right now?

Alcohol causes us to act in such weird ways, and impairs us so much mentally, and it's really scary to see that people drive while drinking and it kills people, kills careers. It kills organs. But so many of us think it's just innocuous, it's just a few drinks, it really won't matter, it really won't interfere with my life. It's not causing that much damage. But it is. Let's be honest, it is causing damage.

Even if you say, "You didn't take out the trash last week", we know or at least it's been purported that you have to say seven positive comments to

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somebody to counteract one negative comment in a relationship. So, if your negative comment is about not taking out the trash a week ago, now you've got a deficit and now you have to say seven positive things that are truly heartfelt and meaningful to counterbalance and counteract the hurt that came from that comment.

And even saying you're sorry doesn't work most of the time. And it doesn't work especially if we go and repeat the behavior yet again and we hurt that person yet again the same way. Saying we're sorry, it's just not believable because we don't stick to our word. We talked about the four agreements from the book and agreement number one is to be impeccable with your word. And that is so hard for so many of us to do because when we say we're going to do something and we don't do it, we not only hurt others that we promise, we also hurt ourselves in the process.

And we begin to lose our self-trust, and our self-esteem. And I think that's why we hurt others, it's because we're hurting inside and so we just lash out on them. Because here's the thing, alcohol only makes you feel good for a brief amount of time before it starts making you feel worse. And the amount of time it makes you feel worse is much longer than the amount of time that you feel pleasure. But when it comes to sticking to our word, I will tell you, it's not like black and white, I either have the skill or I don't. It's like I could get the skill, I can learn the skill.

Again, it doesn't come back to perfectionism where we have to do it every single time. That's not the point. The point is you're practicing the skill to keep getting better at it. And it becomes easier the more times you do it.

So, coming back to my client now who has now heard me say that she is using alcohol as part of her wellness strategy. You should have saw the look on her face. She was horrified. You saw her jaw drop on the call. And I'm not going to get it exact but to kind of paraphrase what she said on the call, she said something like, "I am using a toxic substance to help me with my emotional stress and I'm thinking that's a good thing."

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It stopped her dead in her tracks because she not only saw alcohol differently in that moment, but she now understood her stress level differently and wanted to change the way she managed it. She wanted a way to manage her stress in a way that actually supported a wellness approach and didn't take away from the wellness strategies she had already implemented.

And I want to point out something here, ladies. I think a lot of us are afraid to be horrified. But I'll tell you, when you're horrified, there's nothing better that motivates you to change. You're horrified by something you know you want to stop doing that right away. And this experience further raised her commitment level to doing this process and taking her life from feeling stressful and kind of blah, to wanting it to feel so much better with less alcohol. She instantly wanted to stop treating her body this way.

And she also instantly saw that she was thwarting her own efforts from the morning practices she had by doing this practice sometimes during the week. And she saw that she was using alcohol in a way that she wasn't proud of and she didn't want to continue to do. She wanted strategies to manage this differently. And so that's what we did. We talked about ways that she can manage her stress and what would get her to feel relief and feel like she doesn't have to be on when she gets home.

She even admitted, it's not really that she wanted to feel relaxed. She just didn't want to feel so stressed and so on. And she needed that mental break. We went and looked at is this stress building throughout the day and is there things we can do during her workday so it didn't get to this high intensity by the end of the day. We also looked at new skills she could be practicing and new tools she can work with that would provide her a level of relief that she wanted that would promote also a wellness strategy.

And I love it because anyone on that call felt that it was the light bulb moment for her. It was so apparent. And seeing the truth in her life is what made her want to change even more. I often think we wait for motivation to just come like fairy dust and float through the air and we're hoping it just

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lands on us. That's not how it happens. Change begets more change. An object at rest likes to stay at rest. An object in motion and getting results wants to continue getting results.

But here's the thing, she didn't know the next steps to take because she didn't even realize how she was still using alcohol. And that's totally understandable. None of us can see it when we're in it. I know I couldn't and I know my clients can't, otherwise they would have helped themselves and solved this issue years ago. But when your brain becomes accustomed to one way of solving a problem and it works, of course your brain's going to want to keep doing it.

Your brain isn't stupid my friends, it knows it works. It's going to be like, "Yeah, let's do that again." It's quick, it's easy, I know it works, I know the results I'm going to get. Boom. But here's also the truth. Even though we get some benefit, the con list can be growing, all those negative consequences can be growing. But now the brain has developed a rut. The brain is stuck in this pattern of doing things and it can't get out. It doesn't think it's possible to get out.

So, because the brain feels stuck and that it can't get out, guess what it'll keep doing? It'll say, "Well, I guess I just repeat this behavior tonight." And I've been there. We've all been there. We've all been in ruts. We've all felt stuck. And we all feel like how the heck is this going to end, when is it going to end? And how am I going to get out? And this is the benefit of a life coach, they help you get out. They help you with your life. They help solve the problems that you're experiencing so that you can get that trajectory and that momentum going forward and get the results you want.

So that's what I did. I showed her the way out. I gave her the steps because now we understood the root of the problem. And now we understood she wanted to change it with the strategy that she knew that would work, one that would match her wellness strategy. So, we keep practicing those new ways. And guess what happens to the old ways? It

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goes away. It's no longer part of our identity. It's no longer the way we manage that emotion. It's no longer what we do.

Because we have to understand, the benefit you're getting with the alcohol so we could get that benefit via another way or mechanism that doesn't include the alcohol. Because here's what nobody wants. Nobody wants to drink less and feel worse. And that's what a lot of people do. They say, "Well, I guess I have to feel worse about my life if I'm going to drink less." And that's absolutely not true.

I want you to feel epic. I want you to feel amazing by drinking less. And that's when you make it a drink less lifestyle because you're getting the life you want and you're able to sustain it and maintain it because it feels better than if you drank more. And that's where a lot of times where the brain gets confused, because the brain likes to think more is better. And my brain was there for years, more is better. So, we have to fix whatever is causing the drinking.

And so, you saw with her, it was all these stresses from work. So, we broke down the big stressors, we broke down this grant collaboration that she was working with, with some colleagues and it wasn't going the way she wanted it to. It was kind of going south. It wasn't making progress. There was more tension in the air. The parties involved weren't happy so we fixed that. And literally in the next conversation she had with that collaboration, it got back on track because we fixed it. We fixed that part of the stress.

And then we saw that there was a small amount of stress coming from some family members and we helped to reduce the stress coming from that area. And then as I mentioned before is that we also developed another way to manage stress that matched a wellness strategy. And that didn't involve swallowing a poison that actually thwarted her health benefits that she was getting from the morning in her other rituals. And this is how it works, my friends. We have to do something that's going to benefit your lifestyle.

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Now, would this approach work for everybody in the program? Absolutely not. This is why it's a tailored customized program for your lifestyle, what works where you're having issues, and modalities and strategies that are going to work for your life. So how about you? Think about how you're using alcohol. Is it part of your emotional and mental wellness strategy? Are you thinking it helps your stress or your anxiety at the end of the day? Do you think your life will be better if I just have a few drinks?

And does that keep you in this rut of staying stuck and not being able to drink less because you don't know another way out to manage your anxiety, or your stress, or your boredom, or your loneliness or whatever? The studies show, most of us aren't chemically dependent on alcohol. We are emotionally and mentally dependent on it, especially grey area drinkers. And does your brain get caught up in, well, just a little bit more will provide a little bit better, will just be a little bit more better, a little more pleasure, a little more numbing?

And so, is this part of your emotional self-care routine? And here's a bigger question, is it working? Do you actually diminish the anxiety over time? Do you actually diminish the stress over time? Are you diminishing the amount of boredom or loneliness in your life with this strategy or does it come right back the next day? And it comes back with a vengeance. You feel more depressed, more anxious, it's more off the charts. Then it's going to require more alcohol because you're not truly solving it. You're not truly reducing it. You're just numbing away from it.

I hear this a lot with anxiety, people feel they can't come off alcohol because of the amount of anxiety that they have. And they tell me they feel they need to drink it away. And I've also been hearing in this past year and a half ever since COVID that many people are battling loneliness and boredom. And drinking has become their emotional crutch to escape these emotions, not to deal with them, not to diminish them, not to cure them, but just to put a band-aid over them so they can't feel them.

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So, what is your emotional care routine? What is your self-care routine? What are some of your self-care strategies? What are your wellness practices? What actually improves your wellbeing? Do they work? Do you need others? What support do you need right now? Because let's look at this past year, mental health has gone through the roof. You can't even get a therapist appointment or a counselor's appointment for weeks or months. Everybody is suffering.

And I'm not immune to this, my friends, I actually scheduled a few extra sessions myself with my coach when I hit a rough patch a few months ago. But I'm not afraid to reach out and get the help I need. I'd rather nip it in the bud while it's still small and will just take a few sessions rather than it going on for years, and years, and years and ruining my life and taking away from my life. And I know the people in my life who help me, who create a safe space for me to talk without any judgment, without feeling like they have to fix me, without feeling like they have to give me a strategy, because sometimes I just may not want one.

And if I just talk long enough I find my own strategy. Sometimes that's not the case. Sometimes I talk and I say, "I need a strategy. I need some skills. I need some tools. Help." So, who's in your corner? Do you have people that create a safe space for you to talk and to process things without judgment, to kind of understand what you're thinking and where you're at in your life, and what could change, and how it can improve? Who do you turn to for this kind of help?

And there's nothing wrong with seeking help, ladies. And here's what I also find, those who are closest to us, those that live with us are often not the best people that can hold space for us. And especially not a partner or a spouse, that's not even their job. They may not even be trained to know how to do that. And your spouse or your partner, they can't be your everything. It's great if they are many things to you but it's kind of unhealthy if they're your everything.

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We need people in our lives. We need variety. We need people with different skill sets in our life. And as you're thinking of your wellness strategy, consider, do you have any toxic relationships that you need to get rid of? What needs to be cleaned up that just doesn't feel good anymore in your life? I know for me I had to end some toxic relationships in my life.

And I've also talked about on a previous podcast of my toxic relationship with QVC many years ago. Boxes would just show up, I wasn't even using the things inside the boxes. It just gave a dopamine hit to get a package sent to my doorstep. I also chose to end my toxic relationship with alcohol use, daily. Now there's been other relationships I've had to end that were toxic in my life. And I'm so glad I took the time and learned the skills to do that.

My life is so much better with those toxins removed. Now, you may still choose to drink, I still choose to drink on occasion, my clients choose to still drink on occasion but you don't want to do it in a way that doesn't support your overall life goals. You don't want it taking away from your life. You don't want to feel bad or guilty about ingesting the alcohol. That's no fun. What's the point? I don't use alcohol as part of my wellness strategy because I know that's not the truth. It doesn't make me well.

We all know it's toxic and harmful in so, so many ways. So, when you limit it, how else are you going to take care of your emotional needs? Do you have strategies for that? And if you want help with a personalized plan, customized to your life then I invite you to check out Drink Less Lifestyle, we'll get you that plan so you can have the life you want. It is a life changing process, my friends, and it is so worth it.

Alright my friends, that's what I have for you today. And I encourage you not to just think about this information but actually apply it to your life. Get answers, start getting the life you want because it is awesome when you do. Alright my friends, I will see you next week.

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Thanks for listening to the *Drink Less Lifestyle*. If you're ready to change your relationship with alcohol, check out my free guide, How to Effectively Break the Overdrinking Habit at sherryprice.com/startnow. That's sherryprice.com/startnow. I'll see you next week.