

Ep #55: Creating Change Through Connection and Presence: A Success Interview with Anne



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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 55.

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.

Sherry: Well, hello my friends. How are you today? Today we have a very exciting guest that I am so excited for you all to meet. Her name is Anne. Anne was a member of the Drink Less Lifestyle program, and I'm so excited to have her talk with you about her journey with drinking and in the program. Also share what tools have really helped her live that lifestyle where she is in control of alcohol. So please join me in welcoming Anne. Anne, welcome to the podcast.

Anne: Hi Sherry. Thanks for having me on.

Sherry: Well, we're so excited to hear from you Anne. To get started I thought if you could just mention whatever you're comfortable sharing about you to the audience just so they get to connect and know who you are. That would be great.

Anne: Sure. This is always hard, right, to reduce yourself into a quick introduction, but here it goes. I am a professional. So I work full time. I'm a mother of two children. They are six and eight and just full of life and wonder. I'm happily married. We have a pretty full life. We generally describe it as a problem of too much. Like too much love and friends and work. All the things. So things feel at full tilt for us a lot of times, but for a lot of good reasons I should say. They feel like a full tilt.

So a thing that I've come to say to summarize myself has been if I had to pick a phrase that would go on my tombstone, it would be "That she tried".

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Like that I feel like sums me up as somebody who doesn't always get the mark right but really tries in a lot of areas.

Sherry: Yes. That's one of the ways that I feel like we've connected a lot because I identify as an overachiever and likes to do all the things. I know that's kind of your drive and your passion as well. So I want you to describe, if you would, what your drinking was like. What motivated you to check out the Drink Less Lifestyle program? Where was your drinking at for you and why were you bothered by it?

Anne: That's easy to summarize because in a short word, it wasn't good. It didn't feel good. More so than the number of drinks it was how the drinks felt and how I felt about myself after drinking or right before I was going to start drinking that felt like such a burden and a sadness to carry around.

So I think like a lot of people, I leaned hard on coping mechanisms that were available during the pandemic, particularly for folks that had young children at home while they're also managing jobs. That's not to say that those are the only folks who had stressors by any means, but that was a particular kind of stress that I personally experienced.

With a lack of other options like leaving or seeing people or doing other things, my balm or my salve or my duct tape at the end of each day ended up being increasingly turning to alcohol as a way to just numb out, to turn my brain off. And to try and create some internal peace for myself, although clearly that didn't work.

I will say though I don't want to fully put it on COVID because I had looked back at some notes. I really think that I found the challenge of parenting and parenting two children while also working and trying to maintain our relationships with friends and external family to be overwhelming at times. I found very little space for myself. I think that habit of when I needed to shut off or when I needed to get away, but I couldn't physically get away or any

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of those constraints, I think alcohol became a thing that solved some short term problems. Or I viewed it as that.

So I think there were some patterns put in place that really accelerated during the pandemic. So I would say that I was able to manage one day a week that I wasn't drinking, but that was really only because I had drank so much on the weekends that it didn't even sound good that day. Then it would be kind of like right back into it. Because slow progression through the week, drinking too much on the weekend, Monday off, and then back to it. It felt pretty terrible.

Sherry: Yeah. It's interesting we use it as a coping mechanism because we do know the short term satisfaction or at least the short term numbing effects that just helps us create the little bit of distance from the stress that's going on or the pain that's going on. Just all the circumstances that are being mixed up right now with the world as it is and going through the pandemic. It really does become something that I know for me as well, it just stopped feeling good because you just know it was too much. Whatever that count or whatever that number is.

So I love how you describe it as that. It just doesn't feel good to have the habit or to have the crutch or to feel like this is your only coping mechanism that's effective.

Anne: I felt like I was carrying something around with me. By the time I knew I was ready to do something, I think I struggled to find the right avenue to achieve what I wanted because I didn't see myself as an alcoholic. Despite how I just described my habit, I didn't see myself as that. I wanted something that helped me regain a balance and regain control.

While I was searching for that, I became very aware that I was carrying around like a very sad version of myself. Each morning when I woke up and at the end of the day when I felt like I just can't cope anymore and I'm

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going to turn back to the same thing that I know will make me unhappy tomorrow. But for now, it feels good.

Sherry: Yeah. Actually I remember speaking with you when you were initially considering joining Drink Less Lifestyle. I do recall you saying, "Oh I'm exploring other options." I think it was therapy and other things. You were doing that research and what is going to help me. Because you were struggling not with just alcohol but other things.

So I'm super excited to when we get to that part of the conversation, talk about how this has helped you so much. So it's really important that you do find a system or a way or a person or a program or something that's going to meet your needs. I'm glad you took time to do that.

Anne: I also remember asking you in the initial consult. I remember thinking I wonder if I'm just too far gone for this program to work. I wondered if I'd cross some invisible threshold where I couldn't be pulled back. Because I think there's a lot of norms of women drinking wine. Wine is slightly more socially acceptable. I was like what's your stance on martinis and scotch? Because that's really where I'm at.

So I was concerned that I was somehow too far gone. I was just afraid that I had made a rut too deep in my brain that couldn't be undone and that I would just have to say it's all or nothing. So I was so relieved to find out that that was not true. I was not past some invisible line.

Sherry: Yeah. I think that's interesting that you brought that up. Because I'm not sure I felt that way, but I can see how that could be a barrier. Just that fear of thinking, "Oh no, maybe I am too far gone. Maybe I really am an alcoholic." Even though that title or label doesn't feel well. That's very interesting that you bring that up.

I want to switch gears now and go to an email you wrote me when you were in the program. I thought if you would just highlight a little bit more on

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this. I'm going to read a section of the email. Because it really hit me. I only know what's in my brain and I only understand ways, but when you phrased it this way, I think our audience would really benefit from you really talking about this further.

So when Anne was in the program, she wrote me an email about this being a thinking problem. So drinking being a thinking problem. You know that's my stance and how I feel about alcohol. You mentioned in this email, and I'll read it kind of verbatim here. Something is you just didn't fully understand that concept when you started.

"I thought that I was thinking wrong about my drinking. My thoughts were too active, too intense, and too insistent around alcohol. What I've come to learn is that my thoughts in my life about everything that isn't drinking is where my drinking problem resides. When I turn towards my thoughts and the things in my life and I put my attention there, the drinking becomes much less important. So you were right, but I just didn't get the concept initially." Would you mind expanding upon that a little bit more in your own terms?

Anne: Yeah. So I think my first introduction to you was your first podcast. It was the *It's Not a Drinking Problem. It's a Thinking Problem*. My brain said, "Oh yes, I too think too much about alcohol." That it is all my thoughts and the urgency and the frequency of how much I think about alcohol is the problem. If I can change that, then I can change the action of drinking.

What I came to realize is that there are a series of thoughts throughout the day, hundreds of thoughts throughout the day that lead us to the place where we start thinking about drinking the alcohol. If I focus on all of those earlier in the day thoughts about who I want to be, how I want to show up for my children, how I want to create space and time for my children, how I want to be at work. If I manage those thoughts, I almost never get to those insistent urgent thoughts about the alcohol.

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I think what I had been trying to do with alcohol is create a sense of peace and presence and joy in my life just as it was. In the program, I realized that by managing my thoughts, I can appreciate the joy and the peace and the presence that is available to me throughout the day. Not just like when I pour a drink. If I'm able to capture some of that then the drinking becomes so much less important. So I was thinking I'm just thinking about drinking wrong. I didn't realize I had been thinking about my own life wrong.

Sherry: I'm cautious of using the term "wrong". I know. Because then that makes us feel bad. Sometimes when we feel wrong and we feel bad, we want to drink to escape that feeling, right. It's just pivoting how we're allowing our self-talk to come in, right. Because it's going to come in.

Of course we're fed through a lot of socialization and societal programming that things should be this way or this way. We actually don't give a lot of prefrontal cortex thought to it if this really makes sense for our life, if this really is the way I want to be thinking about things.

So once you bring a bit of that awareness to it and you can break down some of that along the way, it doesn't feel like you're so stressed out at the end of the day. Then oh my gosh, how am I going to change my thoughts just around the drinking? So it's a beautiful way that you've explained it that we're doing that work throughout our life, which makes the need for the drink lessen, right. Or the desire for the drink to lessen. Yeah.

Anne: Yes. To put it another way, I thought come five o'clock, I just have the wrong thoughts at five o'clock because I start thinking about drinking at five o'clock. But I didn't realize it's my thoughts from 5:30 or 5:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. that contribute to those thoughts around the necessity for alcohol.

I do have to say I was laughing when you were saying, "I don't know if I'd say wrong." Because this is not the first time you've had to clean up my language, which is one of the things about working with a coach. You get a chance to hear yourself back or you get a chance to observe yourself and

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your thought processes from a different vantage point. Like you're right. It wasn't wrong. It just wasn't maybe as good as it could be, or it wasn't giving me the result that I wanted.

Sherry: Exactly. Exactly. I love using the phrase it just wasn't serving you. It wasn't serving the life that you wanted to be living, right. It was getting in the way of being the Anne at five o'clock that you wanted to be. So we just look at changing it up, right. It's not right or wrong.

We just look at, "Okay. Now what can I do? What actions can I take? How can I think differently? How can I do this so that I am showing up as the person that I want to be?" Not just at work because I know you show up professionally and you do your work, and you do all the things. But also how can I carry that over into my personal life and show up as the mom and the spouse and all of that that I want to be. So important.

Anne: Yeah. I've shared this with you in the group calls and in our individual conversations. Even so much more important to me than the number of drinks that I have a week or my internal dialogue about alcohol is the ability to trust my emotions around my kids and to feel more proud of how I am around them and to feel like I can appreciate a lot of the smaller moments of joy that happen after 5:00 p.m. because I'm much more present for them. The ways in which we can connect on the weekends in an even better way than we were.

I think about how the changes within our family dynamic have been so meaningful to me. I would say even more so than the number of drinks that I no longer need.

Sherry: Just to expand upon that Anne, I really sincerely want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. Because when you had talked about, "Hey, I also want to be in your Epic You program this month," because the topic seemed to be relevant to something you were going through personally in your life.

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I was like wow, yes. Absolutely. I thought about it more. I'm like yes. The members of Drink Less Lifestyle should also be in Epic You because what I'm teaching over there and how to up level your life will help facilitate all the work being done in the Drink Less Lifestyle program. So it was your suggestion and initiating that conversation that yes, now I offer Epic You to everyone coming in to Drink Less Lifestyle because I believe they work in tandem so wonderfully well.

Because when you start improving your life, right, how your kids behave, the relationship you have with others that you live with. Whether that's a spouse or a partner. Some people have in-laws that live with them or elder parents. There is a lot of stress. We have to learn tools that are effective at coping, right, not ineffective. If we do decide to drink not as a coping mechanism, that's a choice that we can make. Learn control and confidence around that.

By cleaning up these other areas in our life, I don't mean they're dirty. I just mean like show up differently, right, to get the results that we want from those relationships, from those precious moments with little kids or precious moments with the seniors that we're taking care of, right. All of that so we can have this beautiful life and not rely on alcohol as our only enjoyment of it.

So thank you for that suggestion. You really benefited all the ladies now entering Drink Less Lifestyle. So I thank you for that. Now I'd like you to talk about other skills or tools that you've learned in the program that have been helpful for your journey to cut back and be more present in your life.

Anne: Yeah. So I am a CTFRA junkie these days. For everybody else, that's the circumstance, thought, feeling, action, results. I actually got the last two letters mixed up. Action result. The self-coaching model where we identify...Whenever something is kind of giving you a pit in your stomach either before you approach it, like you're noodling on something, or after

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something has happened you keep ruminating or you're doing that mental loop.

Whenever I find myself in either those situations pre or post gaming something, I pull out a piece of paper and go through what's the circumstance? Then try and walk my way through it to identify where can I change something or what do I care about? Is it the result that I care about? Well, then I will walk backwards and think about what are the actions I need to take or what are the thoughts I need to have?

That has been so useful. That really helps me with drinking, but it also helps me with managing situations at work in ways that I would not have anticipated that also just helps me come home with less of that mental chatter from the day. Because I was clear about how I wanted things to go, and I was able to achieve that result more easily. So that's a big one for me.

Sherry: If I could just interject before you go to your next point Anne is that some of the podcast listeners might not understand what you just discussed because that is a tool that I discuss in the Drink Less Lifestyle program as well as in Epic You.

This is one of the tools, one of the strategies, where you're able to just look at things more objectively. Just take some of the emotional sting out of things or just the emotionally charged whatever is coming at it. So it's called the self-coaching model, and the acronym she gave is just describing each of the words in it. That is an excellent tool. I mean I use that in my own life a lot as well.

I love that you said that you also use this. Because I think a lot of people think, "Oh, we're just going to learn tools around drinking in the program." We've talked sometimes on your one on one call not even about alcohol but about family dynamics or even work. "Hey, here's this outcome I want

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at work. It's just going off the rails. Can you help me see how I could get it to go the way I want it to go?"

So that was one tool I know we discussed on that call. Just knowing that these are tools I think really helps people not just to get a handle on the drink. It's really about creating the life that you want. You can bring whatever circumstance to it. Alcohol, work, kids, family dynamics, relationships, all of that. These tools will be effective across different spectrums of our life.

So I love that you highlighted that too because I think a lot of people when they get in the program, they think oh we're just going to talk about drinking and alcohol all the time. Actually we talk so little about drinking and alcohol. We talk about what's driving that, which is life.

Anne: Yeah, it really is. I'll say another tool. So I have never been a journaler. I think I'm too pragmatic or something to sit and either record what I did that day or my thoughts about the day. It's not a practice that I've had. I found needing to respond to the prompts given in the program are really useful, but it also made me realize that when I turn my attention inward, I can unlock some of this stuff myself.

So I'm probably not going to be a traditional journaler, but I think I will always have a place where I can put down some of those thoughts. Also know that when I'm ruminating on something, I can write it down and then I can leave it on the page than if I just keep it in my head. So that, I think, has been a really important tool.

I was thinking of something else too. This isn't a tool so much as it is a frame of mind. I think I was waiting for somebody to fix the circumstances in my life. I was waiting for these things to get better or I was waiting for somebody to be different or I was waiting for my children to get older. I don't know what I was waiting for.

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I think letting go of that mentality and understanding that we can't control things external to ourselves, but we can change how we show up and how we respond to those circumstances. That as a change in my thinking has helped me with not only drinking.

Because I used to think like I don't really want to drink on Sunday, but it's Sunday and eventually I'm going to start drinking because I'm going to be overwhelmed by life or I'm going to be sad thinking about the week coming up or there's something. So I just felt swept away with these circumstances. Similarly waiting for things to change at work or waiting for family dynamics to change. By changing my thinking around those and asking how can I think differently about those circumstances has really been a powerful shift in my thinking.

Sherry: Yeah, because now what I'm seeing is when you wait, right, that's a place of powerlessness. Like oh I can't do anything about the pandemic. I can't do anything about my kid's age, which is true. You can't. However, staying in that powerless "I can't control" energy, mindset, whatever you want to call it, right, doesn't allow us to take the actions that we want to be taking.

So when you get that shift to be like, "Oh wait, so what can I control? What is in my control? What do I want differently? Maybe I don't need the people to grow up, the pandemic to end, and I could get it now, right.

Anne: Yeah. Also I don't really want my kids to grow up any faster than they are, right. I don't actually want that. So there's one other thing if I have time to say one other thing. Maybe this is a classic tool, but for me focusing on the gains that I have made instead of the gaps has been so transformative for me as a dyed in the wool perfectionist and striver. I'm the first to pick out the ways in which I'm not measuring up or I'm not changing fast enough or all the things that still aren't there.

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Whenever I start to focus on what hasn't happened, if I stop and just rewind the tape back to before I started the program and think about where was I then. Is that different now? Do I feel different from then? Are there other benefits? When I'm able to focus on the gains, it's a lot easier to keep going. It makes me excited, and it makes the work not feel like a burden, but it makes it feel like, "Oh, I get to keep doing this." That has been such a good tool. I think it may also be useful in other aspects whenever we're trying for a result to focus on the gains and not just the gap.

Sherry: Yeah. Well said. That concept is something we utilize in the program. It originated from Dan Sullivan if anybody wants to look it up. Then one of my mentors and my life coaches, Ben Hardy. He's just coming out with a book in October. So when this podcast goes live, his book should be available. So *The Gap and The Gain*, excellent, excellent book if you want to read it. I know the concept is taught even more in a different way, not the gain versus the gap way.

But BJ Fogg wrote *Tiny Habits*. He talks about always being in that celebration, right. You're learning. You're changing. Things are starting to work. When your brain can learn to enjoy the benefits, right, because I think you're right. We get so hard on ourselves. We have so far to go, or we want this yet. So it can feel demoralizing. If you focus on the celebration and all the things you're gaining and learning and utilizing these tools and keep practicing them. It certainly helps you feel better in the moment, and it helps you gain more traction. We all want to be taking actions with traction.

Anne: Actions with traction.

Sherry: That's another concept we talk about too. So. So good. So good. I just wanted to comment on how you use journaling because I think that would be helpful for everybody to hear. I think a lot of us think we have to do the dear diary kind of writing.

Anne: No, that's totally what I thought. I was like what am I going to say?

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Sherry: That we have to talk about our day and what we ate and who we met. Whatever it is that we have this vision of journaling. What I love to embrace and help cultivate is for a powerful journaling session. So that doesn't have to look a certain way. I love how you described what it looks like for you. And how when you were describing, I'm thinking, "Oh, she's just a problem solving journaler."

So when you're ruminating or noodling on something, you're just like, "Wait, I don't have to do it every day as part of morning pages or an effective routine, an effective part of my morning. I do it when it's going to serve me." When it serves you is when you're noodling on something and you want to solve it, right. So you use it as a problem solving exercise or a problem clarification exercise if you want to call it that. I love that.

I know some of the women in the program use it as an emotional discharge release. Rather than taking it out on a human, let's take it out on the pen and paper. My thoughts are at least safe, and I'm not going to get any feedback or criticism for how I feel. I just vent on the paper. Then I get to rip the paper up. It's just out of my system so I'm no longer carrying around the frustration or the anger.

So there's just so many ways we can learn emotional management techniques that aren't going to siphon off relationships or cause a chasm in relationships that we care deeply about. So I love that you've talked about how you use the journaling process for your life. I just want to give anybody here permission to use the journaling process to, again, become the person you want to be if it works for you. It doesn't have to look the traditional way.

So good Anne. So any other benefits you want to talk about as we wrap up this show? Any other benefits from the program or your drinking or anything that you want to highlight?

Anne: I would say, gosh. I have so many and it's really hard. Like how much time do I have? I would say a top benefit for me has been shedding a

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skin of shame that I think I just carried around with me for a little bit feeling like there is something wrong with me. The way in which it is wrong with me is different and worse than how it is wrong with other people. Feeling like there's something intrinsically broken about me or weak that I had both allowed the situation to arise and also wasn't able to really pull myself out of it in a way that I wanted.

I think externally I think I hid it pretty well, and I think a lot of people would be surprised that this was exactly how I was feeling, but that's how it felt to me. Shedding that skin of shame has been a true daily benefit and one that's just for me that's not about my family or my work or something else. It's just like my daily experience.

I would also say that I don't think I realized how many times I woke up with a headache that was due to being dehydrated and drinking. I'm very glad to not wake up that way all the time. Maybe not even a headache. Just like groggy and slow and feeling like your brain is made up of molasses.

Then I would say what I have found is that... I don't know if I'm going to have the right language for this, but I can see it very, very clearly in my mind. That there are moments with my family that I would have missed that I have been able to experience lately that bring me the type of joy and connection that I've wanted desperately. I was doing something that I felt like would make me available to be joyful and present, but it was really taking me out of the experience. It was taking me away from my family. It was robbing me of those moments.

Something as silly as a movie night with my kids. Before I would have been a couple drinks in and been like it's a kid's movie that I don't really care about. So it would have been a way for me to have fun while doing it. Now I actually have a lot more fun and I'm able to be with them and that silliness. That feels so much better than that artificial pop that you get from a drink.

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That's not to say that I don't ever drink, but I just don't want to do it as a default or a laziness. Or out of habit or to cope or because it's the only thing fun in my life. Because I think I've started to realize there's a lot more ways to seek and have pleasure in my life than in a glass. So those have been my big benefits.

Sherry: I love it, Anne. Very well-articulated. It's so true. When you're in it, you don't think these things can give you joy because the alcohol has poisoned our mind, poisoned our emotions to not be able to feel true joy. We feel false joy as I like to call it or false pleasure.

When you do start stripping it away and lessening it and these pleasures start coming back in and you're able to connect with it, it's a magical place feeling that you're like, "Wow, this is what I've been wanting, and I've been trying to achieve with alcohol. Alcohol was actually the thing preventing me from getting it. I couldn't see that. I couldn't feel that. I didn't know how to tap into that."

So I love that through these skills and these exercises and this journaling and all these things and the modalities that have helped you reconnect with that pure joy. So you can really not only enjoy it the first time but enjoy it a second time when you have the memory of it, right. Like I love creating experiences with my family, not for just the experience of that moment, and I like to be present in that moment. Also remember it, right. Because it's a joy that keeps giving.

Anne: Yes. Yes. That's very true. Yes. I can close my eyes and access those moments even if I don't have the right words for them. I can feel a sense of that same warm glow that happens when the world is aligned, and you have access to the things that you really want and care most deeply about. That is a true magic, and that's better than any buzz.

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Sherry: Yeah, and the buzz doesn't allow us to put it into a memory to access it again because we forget conversations. "What happened? What did I say?"

Anne: Yeah. You don't have to hate yourself the next morning, which is honestly...Or like wake up at three o'clock in the morning as your body's done processing, and then be like jolted awake and just horrified. Ugh.

Sherry: Yes, yes. Be like I know I'm tired. Why is this happening? Oh, because I over drank.

Anne: Yes.

Sherry: Well, Anne, thank you so much for coming on the show, sharing your journey with the ladies. I know that by you talking about it and you sharing, you're really going to inspire other women to look at this differently and maybe take some different action and start implementing some of the tools and skills that we discussed here today on the show. So thank you so much Anne. I really appreciate it.

Anne: No thank you Sherry. Without this program, I would not have any of the things to say that I have. I wouldn't have these great results. So thank you.

Sherry: Thank you Anne. All right ladies. I hope you've enjoyed the interview I had with Anne. It was such a lovely conversation. I hope you take some of the tools that we discussed, and you start implementing in your own life to up level your life so that drinking just becomes irrelevant and non-important to you. All right. Have a good day, 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*

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Break the Overdrinking Habit at sherryprice.com/startnow. See you next week.