

## Ep #89: 3 Tips for Drinking Less



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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 89.

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 and welcome back into another episode of the podcast. I don't know if you can tell but I'm feeling a little nasal and I have a bit of a sore throat so my voice may sound different this week than other weeks. I want to start off this podcast and say that I love all of you, all of my listeners. Thank you for coming back and listening to the episodes.

I know many of you write me and talk with me, and tell me how much you appreciate these podcasts, whether you're out walking and you listen to them or you're on your way to or from work, or doing errands that you put them on in the car. Or that you listen to them on the treadmill or wherever it is. I just appreciate you and thank you for listening. And I'm so, so glad to be on this journey with you. So today I wanted to talk about three tips to drinking less because you know here at DLL, that's what I call *Drink Less Lifestyle*, my program, I call it DLL.

We're all about supporting one another to our goals and it's a great goal to want to do better. It's a great goal to want to drink less and even if that doesn't mean abstinence initially or ever. And I know for a lot of people they think, it's just not as good as abstinence but it is good. It's an admirable goal. And here's what I find, when you start drinking less then you wind up wanting to drink even more less a lot of times. And that doesn't mean you have to give it up completely.

I am a big believer in harm reduction. And so, reducing the amount of harm that we cause to ourselves is huge. So, drinking less is just as admirable of a goal in my opinion. And that's my story, going from an average of around 47 drinks ish a week to about 12 drinks a week was a huge initial success

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for me. And that's all I wanted at the time and that felt amazing. And we know when we drink it's really not about the alcohol, it's why we are wanting so much of the alcohol so it's all worth it because when you drink less, you're going to learn so much more about yourself in the process.

And I learned so much about myself that I would never have uncovered if I was still drinking more, fascinating stuff, things that I couldn't see when I was still drinking a lot. And I know we hear a lot that less is more and I think on some level we say, "Yeah, that sounds nice." But is it really? And we know that that's true because we know that at some point too much of anything, well, is just too much and it stops feeling good.

I mean think about when you overindulge with food. There's a point where you're just like, "I shouldn't have ate all those cookies or I shouldn't have ate all that." And you just feel bloated, and yucky, and not good. I think of that when the holidays come around and the cookie exchanges, and all the things. And it's just like, it's just a little bit too much desserts and sweets going on. Or I remember times of having too much drinking on the weekend and it was just like wow, that was way too much. It would have been much better if I drank less.

And there are seasons I get in where I'm working too much. And I'm like, "Wait, wait, this is just too much. I need to relax, and unwind, and go on vacation, and get away because it just gets to be too much." Or a closet full of clutter and just stuff everywhere, it's just too much, it's too hard to get ready and get dressed in the morning, and find things. So, we know that less is more, oftentimes. And things are better in moderation.

It's like you don't feel deprived or the opposite end of the spectrum where you feel so gluttonous because you just overconsumed and now you're feeling the effects of that, that doesn't feel good. And for a lot of people moderation feels good to them for those reasons. They're not feeling like they can't enjoy any pleasure and they are feeling like I also don't want to enjoy it to the extreme end where it doesn't feel pleasurable.

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And because of my journey and I'm now open about and I've shared about it a lot, I get so many clients are like, "Yes, that's exactly what I want." And they've gotten to this level where they just drink less and they have dealt with all the stuff that kept them wanting to drink more.

So, for today I want to walk through three tips for drinking less. I haven't talked about these tips on the podcast before but I certainly do talk about them in my programs because there are many, many tips. And so today I just want to cover three because I think these three you may have not have heard before. And they might be a little surprising. And what I like about them is that they are commonsense but a lot of times they say things are commonsense or yes, that makes sense but we forget, we forget about them and we forget to implement them.

So, tip number is decrease your weekly drink count. So, I love this tip because some people start off with making a drink plan, and yes, that could be a great tip and I've talked extensively about that on the podcast here. However, some people don't like making a plan or that just seems too much work. And so, start simple, start by just decreasing your weekly drink count. And what I love about this is it gives you awareness to hey, what is my weekly drink count. Does it fluctuate over time? Is it pretty consistent?

Are there parts of my week that I drink more? And that's going to give me insight to, why do I drink more on a Friday, versus a Wednesday, versus another day? So, I love looking at it per weeks. So, as I talked about in last week's episode, many people have this black and white thinking where drinking is either right or wrong, good or bad. And if you drink it's bad. Now, this weekly drink count is different because a lot of times I hear things in certain circles or, "I was alcohol free for seven or 10 days but then I had a few drinks so I'm back to day one again."

So, I think in our mind we keep coming back to this concept of a 24 hour time period. But what if we changed that time period to a seven day time period? So, the person who abstained for seven or 10 days, or had no drinks then and all of a sudden has a drink or a few drinks, they're automatically saying, "I have to start back at day one." Rather than saying,

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“Wow, I decreased my drinking for a whole week and I’m winning.” That’s huge, that’s a major success,

And so, when we think in these day like concepts, this is where I hear the vernacular and the terminology being like, “Oh, I’ve got to start over at day one.” And when I say that and when I hear that, I know that the brain is thinking, wow, I failed. Rather than looking at all the success that the person has achieved they look at how they failed in a 24 hour time period. Now, I know this comes from recovery circles and AA, and there’s a lot of hype around that 24 hour time period. There is memes or things that they say like, “Take it one day at a time, tomorrow is a new day.”

I hear things like, “Don’t break the streak.” Or in recovery circles they talk about how many days they have been sober. So, a lot has been focused on this 24 hour time period and what I worry about is if we just focus on this 24 hour time period we might be missing the bigger picture. So, if you didn’t drink for seven days and then you drank, and then you decided not to drink again, that means in that eight day time period you drank one day. Isn’t that great news? When it comes to harm reduction that’s amazing news. That’s a win. That’s success.

And what even makes it better is if you’re working on changing the things in your life that are driving the drinking, and you’re really now opening up and understanding what’s leading to your drinking, while you’re drinking less. So, you’re getting two wins at once because we have to come back to what is driving the drinking, that needs to be worked on first and foremost while you’re looking at cutting back and actually drinking less. Now, if you frame it that way as a success, don’t you want to keep going?

Isn’t that more empowering and more motivating than thinking about drinking one day out of seven as a failure? I mean it just doesn’t make sense to call it a failure. I have to share that I was just attending this training session for coaches wanting to treat addicts. And the teacher leading this training was telling us a story that just floored all of us in the audience. You could just see it all on Zoom, all of our faces were like, really, that just happened?

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He was mentioning that he was working with a client who had drunk and on average she drank 13 bottles of wine a week. That was her typical week. Some weeks were a little more, some weeks were a little less but generally on average, 13 bottles of wine a week. She was completely high functioning, high power at her job, wasn't really interfering with her day to day life. She just didn't like that she had this addiction on the side. And she just wanted to feel better, more concerned about her health and really wanted to kick this habit.

So, as he's telling the story she was also seeing a therapist as well. And as time goes by, there was one month where she drank about six or seven drinks the entire month. And she was telling the teacher running this conference that, "Yeah, I told my therapist." And the first thing out of his mouth was, "What, six to seven drinks, why are you still drinking at all?" And all of us in the room were like, "Wow, how horrible does that make that woman feel?"

I mean think about that, listen to her being told, "Why did you have the six or seven drinks", when she came from 13 bottles of wine. And let's do that math. There's five drinks in a bottle of wine, so five times 13 is 65 drinks a month on average and she was down to six or seven drinks a month. And if you keep doing the math, that's over a 90% reduction in her drinking, a 90% reduction. How is that considered a failure? Tell me, in what area of life that's considered a failure? Certainly not in sports where we see batting averages less than 50%. And shots on goal and shooting averages.

And even on a test, on a test you take, 90% is considered success. We're usually pretty pumped with 90%. And this is what I don't like in this addiction space, or this bad habit space, or whatever you want to call this. I personally don't like using the term 'addiction' but I do want to use it because I do want to honor that yes, this is something that's a problem that we can take care of. But shaming people and embarrassing people where they don't want to talk about drinking is not helping them. We need to open up the conversation.

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We need to explore what's going on and we need to celebrate huge wins such as a 90% reduction. And this is what harm reduction looks at. Now, what about the client, was that her goal? Did she feel successful? Is this where she wanted to be? Did anybody even ask her what her goals are? Because I tell you what, if a client came to me with that kind of news, I'd be cheering them on.

So, I don't know if you're a therapist or somebody that works in this sector for work or deals with people but we really have to start thinking about what's the message we're sending, that any use is bad? Yes, that may be the end goal for a lot of people but we have to celebrate their wins along the way. And look, not everybody can achieve it overnight. This is not something that most people can conquer super quickly. It's like somebody who wants to lose 50 pounds, you don't expect them to get 50 pounds lighter overnight.

There is a process, there is a journey to this and some people take longer to percolate than others and that's okay. So, there was a client of mine who really, really liked her wine habit at night but she didn't like it so much in the morning. I'm sure we can all relate, I have been there too. But when she started working with me she shared that she was just so scared to give up this drinking, this drinking was really covering up some traumatic things that happened in her life and she found drinking so comforting.

So, she shared that she might want to take it slow. She might not get as quick progress as maybe the other clients that I have worked with. And I said, "Hey, no problem. We will take it however fast you want to go. We'll start where you are and what you can do. Let's focus on that. Let's focus on where you're at, where you want to go and what you're able to achieve right now." Because progress is progress, small steps add up. So, when she was ready, she decreased her wine count by one glass per night. That's what she wanted to do initially. She's like, "I can do that."

So, we worked for a few weeks together with that decrease in one glass per night. And the next step she was ready for was I could take it down by half a glass, not a full glass. Great, let's take it down by half a glass. As

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time went by she eventually went down by another half a glass. So now we are two whole glasses down per night. Now, as she was cutting back she knew things were going to come up for her. She knew she had to deal with certain things and she was prepared as I was coaching her, while she was decreasing the alcohol.

And just earlier this week she had let me know that she went two whole days without any wine, two whole days without any wine and this was the first time she's been without wine in 12 years, 12 years. I was so overjoyed for her. I couldn't believe the progress that she has made over this time. What I didn't say is, "Yay, let's make it to three days." Of course not. If I'm going to focus on the next a day and making that a zero, I am erasing all of her accomplishments from the weeks before and all the drinks that she didn't take in.

That massive decrease in drinks over those weeks to months led up to so many bottles of wine. And by me jumping ahead to the next day, I would be glossing over the monumental shift that she is making in her life on a daily basis. Her body's been exposed to less and less alcohol for weeks and months now. And that is huge. I can't imagine if we were to count up all the drinks she didn't drink, what that number would be. And let me tell you, that's what counts. Harm reduction is looking about how much we're reducing.

And that's what we miss when we have this myopic view on just a 24 hour time period as I get to check it off the box, or not break the streak, or say, "Tomorrow's another day." Or focus on a 24 hour time period. I am afraid that we're missing the bigger picture. And the bigger picture is she is radically transforming her life. She is healing in this process and she's fully understanding the reasons for her drinking and solving it along the way. Now, I know she is a regular listener to this podcast and she might recognize her story.

And I just really want to tell you how proud you are and how strong you are to do this work. Because if you look at the statistics, only 10% of people who struggle with alcohol will actually seek help, 90% of people who

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struggle with alcohol do not seek help, and you did my friend, and I'm so dang proud of you. Amazing work. Amazing work.

Alright, moving on to tip number two. Leave some alcohol in the glass. Oh my gosh, when somebody would tell me that I'd be like, "What did she just say? That's wasteful." So, you may have heard an earlier podcast, gosh, it was recorded maybe years ago now, but I have personal experience with this. I wanted every last drop of alcohol, whether I paid top dollar for it or whether it was the cheap stuff, I would always finish my wine or my cocktail, I would finish my drink always.

If you put any glass of alcohol in front of me, guess what? It's gone. No, no sandbagging here, no leaving any behind. And my husband was this way too. So, as I mentioned, in an earlier podcast I think it was the one called Alcohol Scarcity, I would talk about how I would even proclaim and declare that, "The bottle's not empty but the rest of the alcohol that's in that wine bottle, it's mine." So, when I saw it getting low I would just say, "Honey, that's mine, don't touch it." Sometimes he'd ask me to try my drink and I'd say, "Yeah, but not too much."

I wanted every last drop. It was like alcohol was like Folgers Coffee to me, it was good to the last drop. So, I wouldn't want to waste it. And I had all this story in my mind about wasting alcohol, leaving any of it in the glass, or throwing it out. This was crazy talk for me. Such a foreign concept, why would anybody do that? I remember walking by restaurant tables looking at wine glasses where they weren't fully drunk and I was like, "What was wrong with those people? There's wine in there." Totally not on my radar to leave wine in the glass.

It was like I had to scoff up every last drop. So, to become a woman who can take it or leave it, I started leaving a sip behind in the glass. It was a visualization, proof to me that I didn't have to have every single drop, that I could just leave some in the glass. It was especially easy if I didn't really enjoy the wine or it wasn't that pleasing. But even when I did enjoy the wine it was one of those small things I can do that started to change my graspy-

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ness for more, my wanting for more. And feeling like I needed it. I needed to get every last drop in.

And so, by leaving some behind in the glass it started signaling to me, I don't need every last drop, it's okay. I'll be okay. I'm fine. I'll be safe. It's okay, the wine can stay there. It doesn't need to be consumed every last ounce. And just this little act alone started working on my deeper belief system because when I started to leave some behind I started to see all the beliefs that came up that I needed to work on, wasting is bad. I shouldn't waste money. I need to get total value out of my money. So, I had money stories going on in there, wasting stories, all the things.

And I was like, "Interesting that I have these deep beliefs and they're manifesting through alcohol." And so, this one small act would bring up all these things and then I'd bring them to my coach and I'd say, "Help me rock through this because I don't know, now that I know this, now what do I do with this?" So, she helped me understand why I was so tethered to the alcohol and what was going on truly beneath the surface.

Now, here's the funny thing, I started leaving some wine in my glass. I started leaving some cocktail left in my glass. And I noticed my husband would finish them. He was doing what I used to do. And I said, "No, no, we're going to practice leaving some in our glass." And he was quite confused at this. So, I explained what I was doing and how it was working on me. And he made humongous strides in this area. There were even times I started to send my drink back if it wasn't made to my liking.

And funny thing, we just visited my parents in Pennsylvania this past weekend and I saw him send his drink back. It was way too sweet for his liking and they swapped it out no problem. And my brother crossed the table, he's like, "Wait, what, you can do that, you can send your drink back if you don't like it?" Again, it was a foreign concept to me too till I learned. And so yes, you can swap out the alcohol if you don't like it. But really try leaving some in the glass. And when you do, see what comes up for you.

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It's fascinating stuff because it really gets to the deeper beliefs that keep you overdrinking.

Alright, number three, this one I know you haven't heard before. I have not seen anybody tout this one. I have never seen it in any magazines on how to drink less, or top 10 things, or top 10 ways to decrease your drinking. This one has never been stated. And so, tip three, don't drink when you're thirsty. Sounds pretty crazy, doesn't it? And the ladies in my program when I say this, they kind of look at me like, wait, what did you just say, don't drink when you're thirsty?

And I said, "Yeah, because when you're thirsty your body is craving water. Your cells need water. Your cells need to hydrate. And guess what? If you drink alcohol you're really not hydrating your body. So, if you're thirsty, drink water. Drink water first. Have any of you ever had the experience where you're out on a boat most of the day and you're out in the sun, and you're drinking nothing but alcohol? And then you get back that night and you're like, "Wow, what hit me. I don't feel so good."

Because you're out in the sun, you're perspiring, you're losing water and a lot of times we're drinking beer, or spritzers, or wine, or margaritas and everything's just infused with alcohol and that's a mild diuretic which is making you lose more water. And so, you feel worse because you're not hydrating yourself with what your body needs. Now, I would do this. I'd get home from work and I'd be thirsty on my commute home and the first thing I'd do was hit the fridge, uncork the chardonnay bottle and just chug that first glass.

I chugged that first glass, wasn't sipping, I chugged it because I was literally thirsty. And it was cold in the refrigerator all day and it tasted so good and I was so thirsty. And so, I'm trying to get rid of my thirst response with alcohol, which is going to make me more thirsty, which is going to make me crave more alcohol and want more alcohol. So, any time you sweat a lot and you go to alcohol to replenish, maybe right after you cut the grass, maybe if you have one beer, not a problem but if you keep going it's probably because you're dehydrated and you actually need water.

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So have the water first, even if it's just eight ounces. Your cells need it, your body needs it, and it's really wanting water because here's what you do. If you drink when you are really, really dying of thirst, you wind up drinking more than you want. So, if you want to drink less, fill up with water and drink water when you're thirsty. Save the alcohol for just pleasure or for just pure enjoyment, not to quench a thirst. Don't treat it like Gatorade. Alcohol's job is not to quench your thirst.

Alright, so there you have it, three simple tips that are super easy to do, each one of them helps you drink less. Now, remember they don't fix the primary cause of your drinking. Alcohol is just the symptom of something else going on and it's not the primary problem. Just like a fever is a symptom of generally an infection. And so, you can treat the fever with Tylenol, ibuprofen, it'll take it away but it'll come back if you still have the infection.

However, utilizing these three quick tips will help you get some small steps and some wins along the way when you're doing the deeper work which will actually solve the problem. And if you want to be one of the 10% of people that actually seek help for this problem and get into that deeper stuff and solve it so you can be hangover free, live your epic life and become a woman who can take it or leave it, then I invite you to come check out one of my programs so you can experience freedom from alcohol and change your relationship with it entirely.

Alright my friends, that's what I have for you today, have an amazing week and I'll see you next time.

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](http://sherryprice.com/startnow). That's [sherryprice.com/startnow](http://sherryprice.com/startnow). I'll see you next week.