

Ep #10: Making Decisions



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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 10.

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. And thank you for joining me here each week and also happy December. I love this time of year, but I also know it's going to look a little different. It's going to look a little 2020 style. So my family and I decided that we are not going to be traveling to see my family at Christmas. Every year we usually travel back to Pennsylvania where I'm from, where I still have my mom, my dad, my sister and her family, and sometimes my brother joins us as well. We just decided not to take the risk and it's just safer to stay home this year.

And we also decided not to visit with my husband's side of the family which lives about two, two and a half hours away from us. It just feels like it's not the right decision and it just doesn't feel safe this time of year. So this year it's going to look a little different. This December we're going to have to make different traditions and unique memories and I'm really looking forward to that. How about for you, what will the holidays look like for you? Have you decided? I say to just decide and stick to that decision, make the decision once and move on.

Alright, I'm super excited to announce the winner of the beautiful, beautiful strength necklace. I think the message of this necklace is so spot on for any woman looking to cut back and on her journey of following and living a drink less lifestyle. And our winner of the necklace today goes to Mikin. And here's what Mikin writes, "The absolute first thing to ever truly resonate with me was when I heard Sherry say that 'You don't have a drinking problem, you have a thinking problem.' I can't get enough of these podcasts and Sherry's free Facebook group. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

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Oh, Mikin, your words are so awesome, and thank you from the bottom of my heart. It was a pleasure to speak with you back in October. I know that you like myself, like so many other women, we just want to learn how to control alcohol, and have confidence around it again and not to over-drink. But yet we don't want to give it up completely, and for most of us I think that is a viable option. So, congrats on cutting back and I look forward to sending you this necklace.

So today I want to talk about making decisions. And I want to start off with a quote that I love from Michael Jordan. And the quote is, "Once I made a decision I never thought about it again. Once I made a decision, I never thought about it again." How many of us live our lives like that, you decide on something and you don't think about it again? My guess is not many.

And what I see and hear out there is once the decision is made we feel that we need to discuss it again and again. We need to revisit it. We need to think about it some more. And by revisiting it we are actually acting as if we're second guessing our original decision, or confirming, or convincing ourselves that we made the right decision. You probably see examples of this all the time. And I want to share one that happened to me back in the summer.

So, like many moms back in the summer, maybe you had an option to how you're going to school your kids coming up in the fall. And so here in San Diego we had the option of doing, at least for my daughter's school, to stay at home a 100% remote or to do a hybrid model where she would go to school two days a week and do remote learning the rest of the week. And we had to make our decision by July 30th. So once July 30th came we made that decision.

We decided to send her into the hybrid model where she goes to school two days a week and the rest of the time she would learn at home. A few weeks later I was out on a walk in my neighborhood and I ran into some moms, super excited to see them. And of course what do we talk about? Our kids and we were discussing that models they chose for their kids, or

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what model I chose for my kids. And then we parted our ways. And what do I do on the rest of my walk? I start thinking again about my decision that I had made.

It's not like I could go back and change it. It was the decision I made. But then I started worrying, and I started agonizing, did I make the right decision? Should I have chose differently? Will this work out? I had all these questions pop up in my head, even things like is it even safe to send her back to school?

So when I got home I told my husband about the conversation that I had and how I was thinking, and I was feeling. And I just loved what he said to me. He said, "Honey, we already made our decision on this." And that was exactly what I needed to hear. He stated it so beautifully and instantly that quote from Michael Jordan stood out in my head. Once I made a decision I never thought about it again. And he's right, we decided. It was done. And do you know what's so nice in deciding? There is such relief in that. You're no longer in confusion.

You're no longer weighing all the options. You just get to decide. So when we think about why do we go back to that original decision, what benefit does it have to go back to it, to revisit it, to look at all the reasons? I just think about just the little time I spent on the rest of my walk, I was stewing, I was ruminating. I was agonizing over the decision again even though the decision had already been made, even though I still felt pretty confident in the decision that I did make. And what my brain likes to do is try to find evidence that I made the right decision.

But here's the thing, how can I know if I made the right decision ahead of time? I can't predict what will happen in the future. There's no way of guaranteeing I made the right decision. I don't know even if I make this decision and I feel it's right, it is the right decision, because how would I know how she would have fared out had we done the other model where she stayed at home the whole time and did online learning? Maybe there

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would be no difference. Maybe there would be a difference, but I would never know that.

And I will never know that, because let's be honest, whether she does that hybrid style learning or just complete remote learning, they both have pluses and minuses. And I can sit and choose to be in that confusion, and that doubt, and that worry, and that agony, and to sit and ruminate. But how does any of that help me? What is any upside to doing that? It just robs me of my confidence in making decisions. It robs me of the present moment that I do have because I'm spending it on mind drama from a decision that has already been made. So it's actually pointless mind drama.

And if I don't even show up for myself because I'm clouded in my mind and in my thinking, I'm certainly not going to show up for my family members. So it just robs me of connecting deeper more fully with them. So as I look back on that example I didn't really need to revisit that decision at all. I didn't change it. I couldn't change it unless I went through lots of hoops and stuff. But there was just no need to go back and look at all that again.

And you know what I chose to do in the moment that my husband said, "It's already been decided?" I decided that I'm going to start standing confident in the decisions that I make. I want to have my own back. And I get to choose to have my own back. But given that point in time before July 30th, knowing all the information I knew, and knowing my daughter's personality, and knowing that she's an only child, I felt that I made the right decision for her. And that's it, stop, be done, it's decided. So move on and don't think about it again.

It's all about managing your mind. It comes back to that think, feel, act cycle that I mentioned in a previous episode. Because I'll tell you what, ruminating, worrying, it only begets more ruminating and worrying. It's not like you come to a different conclusion. And if you did you would still worry and agonize over that because there's no way to fully know and predict the future.

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And I'll tell you what, all that energy of ruminating and worrying, and that head space it occupies, it just doesn't feel good. And when you don't feel good because of your worrying and your ruminating, and the anxiety and the uncertainty, guess what? That's why so many people now are escaping that, wanting to escape all that emotion by numbing out with alcohol. Because we're not taught how to calm our own mind, we look to external things for that comfort, for that numbing, for that opportunity to relieve the stress, the anxiety, the worry, all of that, that we've self-created.

And I get it, because who wants to feel worry, anyone out there with their hand up? I doubt it. Nobody's going to raise their hand saying, "Yes me, pick me, I want to feel worry and agony." And here's the thing as well. A decision is made right or wrong only by you. You're the only one who gets to decide if the decision is right.

So back to my example with my daughter, we're about one-third of the way through the school year. There happens to be no cases of Covid at her school, she is learning, she is progressing. But does that make my decision the right one? Well, I guess it depends on what factors I use to measure. Is it that she gets some peer interaction Is that a measure that I'll use? Is it that she's doing well academically? Is it that there are no Covid cases at her school? Is it about me getting some free time to actually focus on my work and knowing that she's in a safe learning environment?

Or is it just knowing that there's some normalcy of what I expect school to look like, given my experiences of school and wanting that to match hers? So it comes back to me saying, "What are my criteria that I'm using to say if this is a right or a wrong decision?" There are so many criteria I can be using.

So I want you to see by this example, it really depends on so many things if we're going to call something right or wrong. And I will say there are many factors, but do you weigh them all equally? Are they all equally weighted? Probably not.

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And here's another thing to consider. If you ask my daughter did I make the right decision? You know what she would say? "No." She'd rather be in the cohort that gets to do all online learning. And what is the basis of her making that decision? Because when she does the days of all Zoom learning and all remote learning, she's actually done a bit earlier, so that frees her up to do other things she'd rather be doing than school. So to her I made the wrong decision.

So you see, everybody's going to have opinions, there is no universal right and wrong outside of a court of law. So you have to take your own back and have your own back when you make a decision and know why you're making it. And you can just declare ahead of time it's the right decision. And I think there's so much freedom to that, because you can choose to believe at any time that you've made the right decision.

So why not just decide right when you make the decision, that you've made the right decision? After all, I think that's what we all try to do is make the right decision when we make a decision at the time of the decision-making process. So then that begs to question why do we think about the decision yet again? Why do we continue to go back and forth with ourselves over a decision that has already been made?

And I know for me, I have been trained to look at and think about a pro con list. And oftentimes when I am deciding on something I will think of the pros and the cons, particularly big decisions. And as I was thinking about this more, does the pro con list matter? And I would argue that it doesn't, and the reason being is because everything that's on the pro list and on the con list is not equally weighted. There might be something that we put more value on than just a numbers game?

So we have five on one side, four on the other, so instantly the five on the one side wins? I don't think that's how it works. I don't think that's how humans operate. Actually I know that's not how humans operate. So let me give you a hypothetical situation to point this out.

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Say you come and offer to me that, “You can move to this other state and you would make five times more money. And you would have a bigger house, and we’ll throw in a free car, and you’ll be in a great school district for your daughter.” And you have all these pros. So there’s a lot of pros on this list.

I’m getting a lot of materialistic things and a good school district so my brain should go great, let’s do that. But I wouldn’t take that, not in a heartbeat. It doesn’t even show a blip on my desire meter to do that. Do you know why? Because I love my city, I love living in San Diego. I’ve wanted to live here for a long time before I got here. I visited in February; I have to say February because I’m from Pennsylvania. So when you take me to San Diego in February it’s going to feel a lot different than Pennsylvania.

I visited in February 1996. You can ask my parents, my friends at the time, when I came back that’s all I talked about. “I’ve got to move to San Diego.” I fell in love with this city. So you can offer me all those pros but to me it doesn’t matter. I want to be in San Diego, at least at this point in my life. I love it here. So when we talk about a pro con list, not everything is going to be equally weighted.

And I think knowing what you like and what you want is so freeing and so comforting. And I think the brain finds such relief in making decisions, even small ones, because I know staying in confusion, like I don’t know what I should do. I don’t know what to do in this situation. None of that feels good. So even when we have small decisions to make like what’s for dinner, or should I drink tonight, that creates a sense of uncertainty and a sense of confusion, and that doesn’t feel good.

And should I drink tonight was one that came up for me every night for a long time. And I’ve shared with you on the podcast before of how this will pan out. I would make the decision that morning and decide I am not going to drink that night. Done. I thought I’d made the decision and it was good as done. I mean I had no emotional physical desire for it in the morning, so I

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thought, great. I made the decision. We're not going to drink tonight. But as the day rolls on and 3 o'clock, 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock starts coming I started to think about that decision I had made earlier in the day.

I mean the decision, mind you, has been made, however, here I am as it gets closer to the end of my workday. I am thinking and reconsidering that decision. I begin dwelling on that more and more. Well, should I drink? Should I stop at the store? Should I pick up a bottle of chardonnay? I began to second guess that decision and began revisiting that decision. Now, mind you, I don't have any new facts, nothing's changed. But what I did have is a new emotion, a new feeling and feelings of desire that weren't there in the morning.

So it's not like I revisited a pro con list, it's not that, the cons of drinking we know outweigh the pros of drinking. But did that steer my decision? Absolutely not, totally worthless, just like in the example I gave you earlier, totally worthless to do a pro con list.

And this is what I'll hear from a lot of the women that I coach, they'll be like, "I know it doesn't make sense, but why do I keep doing it?" Well, you're thinking logically and a lot of the human decisions we make are based on emotions. They are decisions not based in logic. They are decisions that are emotionally based. So it's not you got new data, it's not that you got new knowledge. It's just that now you're experiencing a different feeling and that's causing you to revisit the decision again.

So when I would revisit that decision, I always came to a different decision. I always chose to buy the bottle of chardonnay. I always chose to drink instead of not to drink. So what did that mean about the decision I had made earlier in the day, my original decision? It made it pointless, it made it meaningless, it made it not count. But my brain didn't see that it didn't count. You know what my brain saw? That I went back on my original decision. My brain saw that I changed my mind not for the better for me.

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And guess what? When you do this over and over like I did, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, guess what happens to your self-esteem? It drops, self-confidence, it drops because I'm not following through on my word. And I'm teaching myself that the decision I made in the morning bears no weight to the decision in the afternoon. And so I never followed through on my word to myself on the original decision. And that was telling me I didn't have my own back.

I didn't stand firm in the decision I made in the morning. And that made me feel like I don't have good decision-making abilities, not in the area of drinking. I knew I had good decision-making abilities in other parts of my life. But I didn't feel I had good decision-making ability in my drinking life. And when you constantly go back and forth on yourself like this and it becomes this pattern, you lose again that self-trust, that self-confidence around alcohol because deep down you know you wanted to stick to that original decision.

You had that inner compass, that inner voice telling you what is the right decision for you, but at the end of the day we went with the feelings, we went with the emotional decision. And we overrode the logical choice that we wanted to make for ourselves earlier in the day. So I want you to think about this. What happens when you run your life making decisions based purely on how you feel? Well, I'll tell you what. You don't get the results and the goals that you want in life.

When you just go with the feeling and the emotional state, you'll overspend, you'll overeat. You'll over-drink. You may have affairs and relationships outside of your marriage. You're basically saying yes to whatever feels good in the moment, and that leads us to overindulge. And that's because your feelings, which are guided by your primitive brain, which we learned about in previous episodes.

Your primitive brain is always going to lead you to seek pleasure, to avoid pain, to do what's easy so that the brain can conserve energy. That's the motivational triad. So if you keep giving in to your feelings each time, you

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keep giving in to that primitive brain each time, you'll maintain the habits that you don't want. You'll always feel entitled to relax and have alcohol at the end of the day and numb out. At least that's what it was for me.

I felt entitled to relax with alcohol because I have a job. I feel entitled to relax with alcohol because I have a kid I have to take care of. I feel entitled to relax with alcohol because I had a long day, the same 24 hours that every other human on this planet has. It just started to not make sense to me, all these justifications of why I was choosing alcohol. I mean I'm privileged to have a job. I am privileged to have a daughter and a child. So why am I using that as reasons to feel like I should be able or entitled to drink?

And there's so many other ways to relax. You don't need alcohol to relax, there's so many other modalities that can get you to relax. So if we're always going to drink because we feel like it we're going to have a behavior of overdrinking and that's highly unsatisfying in the long run. Now, if there were no consequences to it I'd say, "Great, there's no consequences, there's no harm to yourself or to others, so keep doing it." But we know that there's harm in overdrinking. And we know that when we over-drink it actually feels quite miserable over time if we're truly honest with ourselves.

We get the weight gain, we get a bad mood, we get worse anxiety, worse stress, worse depression. All this is proven in the literature, poor sleep. We disconnect with our families, worse, we disconnect with ourselves. We don't know what brings us joy. And so we just keep drinking because we're lacking in joy, we're lacking in pleasure, we think we need it to relax which is just hocus pocus, we don't need it to relax. Yes, it could help you relax but so can so many other things.

And on top of all of that now we don't have the self-confidence that we want that we could take care of ourselves the way we want to be taking care of ourselves. None of us are proud when we over-drink because it doesn't feel good. And as time goes by, that feeling becomes more miserable. It's like the scales start to tip and drinking feels more awful than it feels good.

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So how would your life look if you did it the Michael Jordan way? If once you made that decision you never thought about it again. You make your decision to not drink tonight and you don't think about it again. You don't second guess yourself, you don't revisit the decision. You stand firm in your decision. You have your own back, you know what you want. And you have the power to do that.

It's one of the skills I teach in my Drink Less Lifestyle program, how to keep your power. How to have your own back, because once you learn the skill, how much better will your life be? How much mental chatter will you be giving up around your drinking?

I had one of my clients work with me in the Drink Less Lifestyle program and one day she said, "I got back three hours of my day by not thinking about should I drink? How much should I have? Should I stop to buy it? Where should I get it? How much should I get? When does the liquor store close? Should I get one bottle or two? Should I get the sale bottle which is the bigger bottle and save more money?" Just all that mental drama she had every day about her drinking.

So when she learned to make a decision and move on and stay in her power and the tools to do that she got back three hours to her day. What could you get done in that amount of time? What amazing conversations, what amazing memories can you make in that time? How much more real self-care can you give yourself in that time? I know for me, I used to try to read after drinking. And that was a horrible idea because I never remembered a sentence that I read the next day.

Now because I don't drink frequently I get to read at night, it's a pleasure, I love it and I remember what I read the next day. And I fly through books which is something I enjoy, much more than I ever did in the past when I was drinking. So make a decision and give yourself the gift that it's done, it's finished, end the agony, end the worry, end the struggle. And when you do that you are free my friend, you are free to be you.

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Alright, I love you my friends. Have an amazing 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.