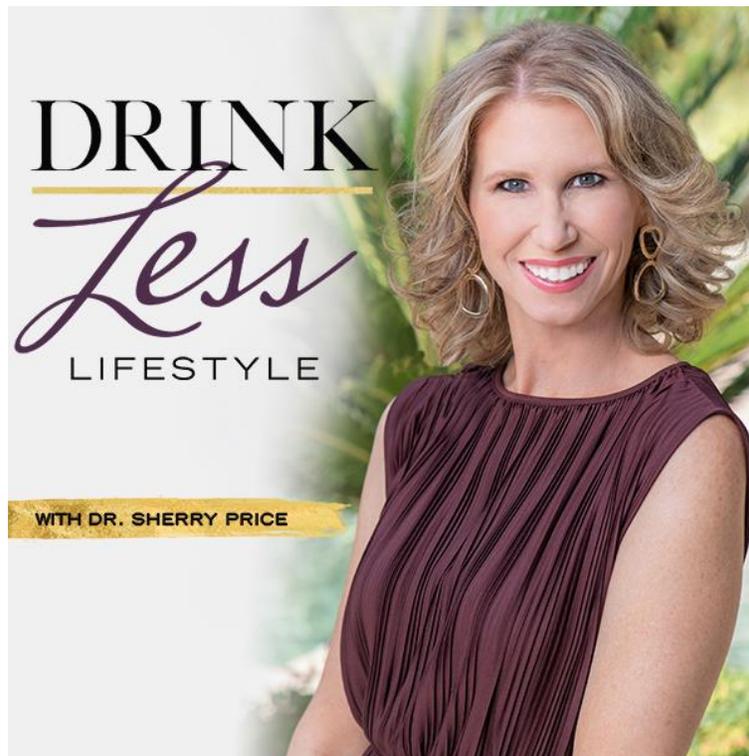


Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dr. Sherry Price

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays

You are listening to the *Drink Less Lifestyle Podcast* with Dr. Sherry Price, episode number 65.

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. I hope you are having a lovely holiday season and it's filled with so much joy and cheer. I know that gathering together with friends and family, it can be and bring a mixed bag of emotions for people. And I want to ask, does this influence or does the holidays influence your drinking at all? I would say for most people that their drinking patterns, their drinking habits, the amount that they drink definitely changes in the holiday season.

And I would say for most people that they would say that their drinking increases significantly around the holidays. And I think this happens for a variety of reasons. We might be experiencing excitement to see everybody or almost everybody. Or there might be some tension or some anxiety around seeing a certain person that we maybe feel obligated to see but deep down we really don't want to be spending time with this person.

Or there maybe I have to tolerate this person because my daughter, or son, or we married into this relationship. And so I want to be supportive of those that I love but not necessarily joyous about hanging around with lots of people or certain people. And I know around the holidays there's a lot of emotions running high. And sometimes there's a certain pattern to certain people when they show up.

So I know for a lot of people they're talking about, well, I don't know what kind of mood this person's going to be in because usually around the holidays when this person shows up, they're in some kind of mood or they change the mood of the whole party. Or maybe you have a family member

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays

that you just know all too well tends to overdo it on the holidays and that their drinking just turns into a crap show by the end of the night. And maybe you've handled that stress with drinking yourself, kind of like that mentality, if I can't beat them, might as well join them.

Some people have stress over driving somewhere. Some people have stress over flying to get where they want to go. Some people are experiencing the stress of actually hosting the party, planning for it and all the questions that come along with hosting like what food should I make? Are there any allergies? Are there any dietary restrictions for people? Will there be enough food? Will it turn out okay? Will it all be done on time? What will we talk about while I'm focused on cooking?

Or you have all these expectations that you really want to host a nice party, a nice get together. And you really want everybody to be happy. Oftentimes when families get together it could be there is this sensitive topic that keeps coming up. Or we have to walk on eggshells on a certain topic or we can't bring up a certain topic because we know it infuriates people or it gets them on their bandwagon or their soapbox. They start talking about it incessantly. And these are just the adults we're talking about.

Then there's the whole thing with all the kids. So we're like, "Oh goodness, do I need to protect them from so and so? Should I bring them? Will everybody get along? Will all the kids get along? Will there be rude comments? On, and on, and on. We have all these worries, all these emotions about how the holidays are going to go. And here's the truth about it all, with the holidays we all have our own preconceived ways that we want the holiday to go. We have some ideal version of how the holidays should go.

And we think, wouldn't it just be great if everybody else thought like us, if everybody else just wanted to have the holidays go just the way we wanted to, eat what we wanted to, start and end when we wanted to. It would just all go magically easier but we know that's not what happens in the real world. We know that people come with their opinions, people come with

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays

their agendas, people come with different opinions about how the holidays should go. And oftentimes we look to alcohol to cope.

We look to alcohol to cope with somebody's difficult behavior, or different ideas, or different opinions, or to manage the stress, or all the anxiety, or all the tension that's building. So when somebody else is being difficult or they have difficult behavior, why would you allow that to influence how you take care of you or how that influences what you choose to do and your behavior? And I think that's what a lot of us drink for.

We think we need to cope and the way to do that best is by having more and more alcohol because we don't train our brains to think that, wait, I can cope with this situation without requiring and without needing alcohol. So what we're saying in that regard is that we drink to escape our emotions. We're not drinking to escape their behavior because we can't change or drink away their behavior. They're going to behave the way they want to behave.

So it's not that you're drinking to change their behavior because that's not how it works. What we're really doing is drinking to numb our emotions, to not feel the tension, to not feel the pressure, to not feel the anguish, or the disgust, or the anxiety. That's the real reason we're choosing to drink. And I think it's really helpful to really get to the root cause of why we're drinking. It's not their behavior, it's because we can't handle the emotions that come from their behavior.

And here's the thing, if the behavior is truly that offensive we can ask the person to stop. We can send them home if you're having the party at your house. We can make rules and accommodations and change the way things are going down if someone's behavior is truly inappropriate. Now, when I'm coaching clients on this and I mention this, some people think that I'm a bit extreme. And my response to that is okay, then maybe that's not the action you want to take. But if the behavior is truly offensive why would you want to tolerate and be around that behavior?

Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays

Because here's the thing, we're always training people on how to treat us, what's acceptable in our presence and what's not. What we're willing to tolerate and what we're not willing to tolerate. Otherwise we really can't influence their behavior or control it.

And here's the thing, if we start drinking because of it we're actually adding to the agony of the situation by overdrinking. Because it doesn't even make logical sense that we're going to partake in this habit or this behavior to try to change their behavior when this behavior of overdrinking for ourselves does not change, or reflect, or control, or even influence their behavior. It's totally irrational and it's just causing ourselves self-harm. We're harming our health by overdoing it. We're not doing anything to their health.

So it seems so silly, doesn't it, when we break it down logically? And I have to say it is. And I did patterns like this in the past, never saw it from an illogical standpoint. It always made logical sense to me. And what helped me see it more clearly was taking absolute responsibility for how I behaved. By taking responsibility, if you look at the word, response ability. It means you have the ability to choose how you respond. That's what responsibility means.

You are able to respond the way you want to respond which means you're not in reactionary mode, which means you learn the skills to be able to respond appropriately. And humans need to learn how to be response able. These are skills that we acquire throughout life. These are skills that we teach kids. These are skills that we teach adults.

I mean just think if you were to call 911, when you call 911 it's not some random person picks up the phone call and says, "Hello, how can I help you?" No, they are dispatchers who are trained individuals. They are trained on how to respond, these are first responders. They are trained on how to respond best. They've learned a set of skills on how to handle certain types of situations. So again they've learned skills on how best to respond. That includes not reacting. That includes not overreacting, not panicking, not yelling into the phone unless the person is hard of hearing.

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays

They are trained specific skills to be able to take care of the problem, to respond appropriately. But that's not how most people handle other people. We like to go at it, we like the disagreements because when we're having disagreements usually one person's thinking, I'm right and the other person is wrong. And when it comes to a lot of the stress and the tension around the holidays it has nothing to do with who's right and who's wrong. Most of the time it's just opinions about how things should happen.

And so if you're thinking it's a right or wrong, or it's a black or white strategy, it's never going to go smoothly. And it's going to be harder to actually find resolution because there's not a clear right answer. When people have opinions, that's very subjective and that should be handled differently. So for instance, one person may say, "Hey, I want lots of stuffing." While another person may say, "No, I want more protein, I want ham and turkey." And that's kind of silly but hey, people do fight over the types of food offered.

One person in the family may believe in doing gift exchange whereas someone else in the family may be like, "No, I'm over this, this is silly. We just exchange gift cards back and forth, it's not feeling meaningful." Could be differences of opinion of even where to celebrate or when to celebrate. Somebody wants it Christmas Eve, somebody wants it Christmas Day, somebody doesn't celebrate Christmas. I mean it could be all kinds of different reasons for the tension and disagreement. Notice that they are all opinions. There is not one clear right answer.

There's not a universal truth, that this is how we should celebrate and this is how it should go. No, it's opinion based. So how do you respond to the opinions of others? Sometimes I like to ask this question to my clients. And sometimes they'll say back to me, "Wait, what do you mean? Do you mean how I want to deal with this person or this situation?" And yes, you could think about it dealing with, but dealing with kind of has a negative connotation to it, doesn't it?

Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays

I mean we can just really boil it down to say, “How do you want to respond or not respond to this person or in this situation?” Because when we phrase it like how do I want to deal with it, means that you are mentally and emotionally taking on this problem which may not actually be your problem to take on. And I don’t know about you but I have enough of my own problems. I don’t need to take on other people’s problems, thank you very much. So if I’m asking myself how am I going to deal with this, to me that’s like I’m taking on that problem.

But if I ask myself differently, how do I want to respond to this? I don’t necessarily have to take on the problem. I just have to look at what’s the solution. How do I want to handle this? And I think this is a key difference because when I think I have to deal with something I get more emotionally attached and more emotionally involved. And that can cloud my opinions and that can cloud how objective I’m able to be. And like I said, I don’t want any more problems, I don’t want to take it on as my problem if it’s not my problem.

And I don’t want to put more tension in my body thinking it’s my problem to solve. And here’s the thing when we carry on that tension, when we carry on stress and we don’t know how to release it guess what we then yearn for? We start desiring the drink. We want that emotional release that the drink provides. And that’s why for a lot of people their drinking goes up dramatically around the holidays because they’ve been training their brain that when they get tense, when they get stressed, this is the way I handle and get my emotional release is through drinking.

And for me I’m done with those days of training my brain that this is how I handle my stress, that this is how I handle my tension. And that this is the only way I know how to get relief from all the emotional tension that I am carrying. Because if you think about it, it’s really not a relief because you rehearse that conversation, you rehearse that problem then next day when the alcohol wears off. It didn’t really solve the problem.

Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays

And here's what I love to also help you with is that you don't need to keep bottling this, bottling this, bottling this and feeling like a pressure cooker that at the end of the day you just need that release valve to go off. Keeping that stress in all day long whether it's building up at work from all the projects, and all the deadlines, and all the things that need to be done, or it's building up from all the kids and their wants, and their emotional outbursts. And you just hold it all in and keep it all together. And then you wait till five, six o'clock for that release.

And if you're looking to alcohol at the end of the day to provide that relief, guess what? It's not really pleasurable drinking. You're not really drinking because you're happy. You're drinking because you're disappointed and stressed out. And drinking that way does not feel pleasurable at all. Oftentimes I'll ask my clients, "Does it feel rewarding to have that drink at the end of the day?"

And when I ask it in that way a lot of them say, "Actually, no, it doesn't feel rewarding. It feels like I need it. It feels like it's the only thing I know how to do to get quick relief. But it doesn't feel rewarding and enjoyable." And I love this because then they start shifting their thinking, and thinking, wow, I've been doing this thinking it was enjoyable and now that you ask me directly, I can see that it's not really that pleasurable. And so now what you've done is really primed your brain to say, "I'm really not deriving that much pleasure out of this."

And now you're receptive to trying things where you can truly derive pleasure, and reward, and feel good. And get out of that habit mode of this is what I do to relieve stress. And you know what I also like to promote? Is that we don't have to wait till the end of the day to start implementing stress management techniques. We can bring that up into our day much earlier so the stress doesn't have to build, and build, and build, and build. No, we can take care of the stress throughout the day so we don't have to feel like a pressure cooker at the end of the day.

Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays

So I call these mini stress relievers that you want to implement throughout your day, whether you're working at home, whether you're working at work, whether you're not working. Just doing these ways that you can release some of the tension throughout the day because you want to let down, you don't want to wait until the end of the day if you don't have to, if you can start doing these little mini sessions throughout the day.

So throughout this podcast I've been talking about all the areas where I see are common places for stress to come up. So when it comes to the holiday season for you, what's causing you stress or tension? Or what's driving your drinking behavior? Is it increasing? What's causing that increase in drinking? Pinpoint all those stresses and learn other ways to respond and reduce the tension if it's coming from stress and the tension of the holidays.

Now, on the flipside maybe you're drinking a bit more because you're not drinking for stress but truly for pleasure. I know for myself I have allowed my drinking to increase a bit during this holiday season because I'm drinking more for pleasure. I'm also allowing different foods into my diet that I don't normally have because it's this time of year. I want to enjoy them in moderation and feel like yes, I'm not depriving myself. So just like my diet fluctuates during certain times of the year I allow my drinking to fluctuate certain times throughout the year as well.

I mentioned in a few podcasts back that I allowed my drinking to increase a bit when we took our dream vacation to Italy a few months ago. And I chose to have a bit more for the experience during that time and I'm choosing to have a little bit more during the holiday season as well. But here's the thing, for me I'm very clear with my intentions and for my reasons for drinking. And when I'm very clear, this level of clarity is able to give me the control that I want to have. And when I have control it gives me the freedom that I want around alcohol as well.

And that's one thing that's been truly amazing for me because when I learned these tools, I'm not worried that when my drinking increases a bit over the holidays that I'm somehow on a slippery slope or on or off a

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays

wagon or any of that. The same goes with my eating pattern and my food intake. I don't normally have peppermint bark any other time of the year. But around this time of year I allow some peppermint bark into my diet. For me it's not about depravation, it's about control.

And through my journey I have learned what feels right for me and what feels like a good relationship for me because I've done a lot of work in this area in my life. And I didn't get here overnight. So for me I'm not fearful of my drinking going awry or going back to old patterns or old habits. I'm not afraid of any of that happening. And here's another thing that I learned about fear is whatever we fear we manifest. And I see this a lot in my clients, they fear a slippery slope and then oops, there it is, there is the slippery slope.

It's like whenever they fear they actually manifest in their life. Now, in the beginning of course slipups happen, that is the nature of learning. It's like riding a bike, you're going to fall a couple of times until you figure it out. And yes, I had a couple of fall-downs, or what I call, hey, I just overdid it and I learned from them. And it taught me where I didn't have the skills yet to perfect it or I didn't really learn this skillset that I needed. And it was clear to me where I needed to improve.

Now if I show up at a party I may choose to drink. I may choose not to drink. We actually went to a party this last weekend and they suggested I try this mulled wine. I never had mulled wine with bourbon in it. Apparently, it's a big thing in Germany so I decided to try some. Turns out, took a few sips, I didn't really like it, not a big fan of mulled wine. They asked me if I liked it and I think they could pretty much tell I wasn't a fan. So just said, "I just don't want any more but thank you."

And then they walked over to the wine bar and they show me their wines, I just didn't want any, just wasn't feeling in the mood for wine. The mulled wine kind of killed it for me, I wasn't just interested. And so I was at this party where I hardly knew anybody, didn't need to drink because I learned the skills. So now going to a party it's not my standard operating way of

[Drink Less Lifestyle](#) with Dr. Sherry Price

Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays

functioning in the world or on the daily anymore is to keep drinking. I didn't want that for me. I didn't want it to be my emotional salve. I just wanted to be able to handle my emotions myself.

I wanted that skillet. I wanted to be able to choose my response and be in my power. I wanted those life skills. And when I say that to people it's funny, they'll say, "If only you had Aunt Betty, crazy Aunt Betty, or if you had Uncle Bob in your family you wouldn't feel that way." And I lovingly say, "No, I really think I would be this way. I think that would give me even more motivation to be in charge of my own response." Trust me, I have some characters in my family too but their behaviors don't control my actions and they don't control my responses.

I don't do reactionary drinking anymore. But I do fully enjoy the pleasure of having a drink when I decide to have one. This feels clean and free to me. I listen to my body and I know when it's time to stop because for me it's not about escaping and running away. And it's not about changing how other people behave because I may not have that power to do so. So consider the why your drinking increases over the holidays if it does. Notice if you do any reactionary drinking.

Notice if that's the response you want to be taking to someone else's behavior or the response you want conditionally habitualized due to stress or tension in your body. Notice how this plays out in your life because if it's causing hangovers, and grief, and shame maybe it's time to clean that up. Because here's what I believe my friends, there is so much magic and so much beauty in the holiday season that you can't see when you overdrink, that you can't experience when you overdrink.

Alright my friends, I wish you and your loved ones the very best this holiday season. Cheers to staying in your power ladies, and I'll see you next week.

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*

Ep #65: Drinking Around the Holidays

Break the Overdrinking Habit at sherryprice.com/startnow. That's sherryprice.com/startnow. I'll see you next week.