

# Ep #124: Drinking Because of Parenting: Live Coaching with Alli



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Dr. Sherry Price**

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## Ep #124: Drinking Because of Parenting: Live Coaching with Alli

You are listening to the *Drink Less Lifestyle* podcast with Dr. Sherry Price, episode number 124.

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. Today I have a special podcast episode for you. On this episode, I'm going to coach a woman who I met through the free and private Facebook page that I have, the Stop the Overdrinking Habit. We were dialoguing there as I was asking what idea people wanted to hear on the podcast. And one of the issues that came up was drinking because of parenting.

She was talking about having a full-time job and then coming home to two little ones and them not listening and sometimes fighting and just creating chaos. And her temper would go up and she would start yelling and then that was not the mother that she wanted to be. And so she would turn to drinking for relief. So I brought her on the podcast so you can see what coaching is like and how helpful it is to get really clear on the stories that we're telling ourselves.

You'll notice that as I'm coaching her we are getting really specific about what she's thinking, about what she's feeling, and about how she's acting. And she's not acting in congruence with her values and how she wants to show up as a mother. And so you'll see how we transition into that and then the tools to help that will get her out of this pattern of thinking, feeling and acting. And I love this topic so much just because I believe that so many of us face this. This is real life.

This is I have a work life, I have a home life. I'm trying to make it all work and do the best that I can without needing to rely on drinking to help us. So

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have a listen to this coaching and see what learnings you can apply to your life.

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Sherry: Well, hello, Alli, I am so excited that you came on the show. And as we get into the coaching that we will, I just want our listeners to know a little bit about you. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Alli: Yes. I work in the medical field and I have a very demanding job where I am working for 24 hours straight or more sometimes. I am married and have two young kids that are five and eight years old. And overall have a great life but just have struggles like everyone else.

Sherry: Yeah, very common. Thank you for that lovely introduction. And your two little kids, I remember when my daughter was small and it's just a lot. It's a lot to be full-time or more employed and raising kids and feeling like you have to do it all. I'm sure that's kind of what's going on or maybe what's leading to your drinking. So let's just start there. I was just going to ask, what do you think is leading to your drinking?

Alli: Yeah. I feel like from listening to your podcast that I have been able to significantly reduce it. And I never felt like you said, I never felt like I was an alcoholic or had an addiction but just that I had created this habit of wanting to drink all the time. And so I was able to stop at any point and not drink on any given day. But my brain was constantly telling me that I wanted a drink. And so there'd be this constant internal battle of just wanting to drink but not letting myself. And so I just got so tired of that internal chatter all day to the point where it was getting to all day every day.

And so I think it's just a lot of stresses in my life with like you said, being a full-time working mom. And at work I feel I stay calm and patient but then I get home and I have to deal with kids fighting and whining and bickering and not listening and having to yell which I'm not used to doing. And so it's just very overwhelming at times.

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Sherry: Yeah. And so when is it that you pour your first drink?

Alli: Usually either at dinner when we're sitting down to eat or sometimes on the weekends with the kids, halfway through the day when they're just getting to the best of me.

Sherry: Yeah. And when you say they're getting to the best of you, what does that look like? What's going on inside of you when they're getting to the best of you?

Alli: I guess I feel I'm losing control of the situation or them. I'm trying to stay calm but they're fighting over a toy or yelling at each other. And I'm telling them to calm down or to do this or that but they won't do it until I start to raise my voice and then I start raising my voice and then I feel bad. And I don't want to be yelling and so then I try to think of other ways to punish them or discipline them and it doesn't work. And so at that point, I feel like I'm just signing out the same, just let them do whatever they're going to do because I can't get control of the situation.

Sherry: I find that's huge. I find a lot of people in healthcare, we're so good in our daily jobs whether that's in a hospital or for me in a pharmacy sometimes, or a hospital when I used to work in a hospital. We can kind of control the chaos but when it comes to our house it feels like I don't know, we lost the skill of controlling it. And then we also lose the skill of managing our emotions which we are so good at it at work but somehow I fell apart at home. It's like, wait a second, I would never yell at my patients the way I'm yelling at my kids.

Yes. And so it's kind of I feel and tell me how you feel about this, it's kind of like I wouldn't act that way over there, why am I acting this way? And for me it felt crazy, why am I acting this crazy over here in this part of my life when I wouldn't do it in that part of my life? And I think that disconnect was like, well, screw it, I don't know how to stop yelling and how to act

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differently so I'm just going to get some relief from a drink. Does that sound like something that's playing out in your head?

Alli: Right, yeah, exactly. And there's so much guilt that comes from not being able to maintain my composure at home versus at work. And I feel like the people that are not even my family are getting the best of me. And yet when I come home there's nothing left and that brings me so much guilt that I can't be a good mom basically.

Sherry: Yeah. I know. And that oftentimes hurts. It makes us feel sad. It makes us feel disappointed. It makes us feel, for me it made me feel less than, how do other women do this and I can't? Or how do other people manage more kids or other things and I can't seem to manage this? Yeah. So when you're thinking about all of that, raising your voice, yelling and then you want to try to stay calm and you're not, what is in the drink that you're going for? What's the desire that you drink for? What is alcohol going to give you in that moment?

Alli: The ability to just let it go, let things go and whatever I'm trying to control, to just not, you know, most of the time it's things that are not life and death situations. So it's just releasing that need to have control of the situation. And so I think with the kids, they'll keep doing it, better have a drink then it doesn't bother me as much. I don't feel so upset about it anymore.

Sherry: So I just want to repeat back what you said because I think sometimes when we're talking we're thinking about what we're saying rather than what actually, we just said. So you mentioned you want to learn to let it go because when you let it go it doesn't bother you as much. And so you're kind of releasing that need for control. And I think that's so critical to know why we drink. And this is what I find a lot. People don't say, "I desire the taste or I desire this." They want some emotional thing inside of them to change.

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And I think that's great to recognize. And that's where I want to start because then if we know what we're going to the drink for and we know that emotional shift that we want, we can look at other ways to get it, healthier ways to get it. Yeah, so let's go after that. Let's go after I want to let it go. I want to lessen my need to control them and lessen my need to yell. Because I yell because I want to control the situation. What are the things can you do that would allow you to let it go?

Alli: I don't know. I guess that's a skill that I need to work on because working in healthcare I feel like I have a lot of control over most situations, not how patients do but the staff and people listen to what I say. And I have control of many things in my life. And so with kids, it's just so different because they have their own little minds and needs and so even though I feel I know what's best for them, they don't always agree. And so I don't have that skillset of learning to reason with them without getting angry.

And I feel the anger inside of me is uncomfortable and so that, I want to just get away from that anger right away.

Sherry: Absolutely. And look what's causing the anger. You can be a superstar at work and I want to make you a superstar in your home life as well. You just need different skills there. And one of the skills is going to be thinking about it differently. It's not going to operate as efficiently as a hospital or a job where there are protocols in place. There are people who have jobs, the people who know, the nurse has their job, the pharmacist has their job. The person over there has their job. People know.

Kids don't know they have a job. They just know they're here to play. And when somebody gets in the way of their playing, they want the toy 100% and then brother or sister comes along and says, "No, I want that toy." They don't know sharing. And I know you're teaching this. But think about they don't know their roles and here they're just here to play. And they're going to struggle to figure out who gets charge of that toy, who doesn't. And they're going to get emotional about it because that's what humans do.

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We get emotional when we don't get our way. You just mentioned you get emotional, you get angry when you don't get to control the situation. So I just think it's fun because when we see it in ourselves and we see it in others it's like, yes, this is how humans act when they don't get their way. So your kids aren't getting their way with their toy or whatever. They're bickering. How else can you think about that interaction with your kids rather than I need to control it and I need to stop it?

Alli: Yeah. I guess trying to just let them work it out or trying to, honestly, I don't know. Because sometimes it leads to grabbing it and pulling it away from each other. Or they're screaming and slamming doors or being loud or those things. And so it's hard. I don't even know what the right answer is sometimes. So I guess I think that's probably where I struggle.

Sherry: Yeah. Alright, so that's great. I'm glad you gave me that feedback. So let's start with two adults arguing over something. Let's take it out of your kids' context and let's put it into adults. If two adults are arguing over something and say it's a toy, what's the best approach to mediate that, do you know? Well, what's one approach?

Alli: Yeah, I'd say staying calm, talking through the problem. Letting each person have a voice in the scenario to work out the difference.

Sherry: As a mediator, I would see if my husband was arguing with his best friend and they come to me saying, "We can't figure this out." I'd just say, "Okay, tell me your side and tell me your side." And I'd make sure that each person was understood. And then I would invite them into where are we going. So you mentioned you have two kids, are both the same gender?

Alli: Yeah, they're both girls, very emotional.

Sherry: Of course. And there's nothing wrong with being emotional. And I really want to change the viewpoint we have on emotions because I think when we see other people have emotions we get uncomfortable with that. And if we don't allow people to express their emotions then they're going to

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turn to alcohol or drugs. So we've got to let our kids express themselves. Now, I'm not saying banging their head against a wall is something we shouldn't intervene with or something that's hurting them or if they get physical with each other.

I'm not saying just let it go. I'm just saying we have to give them space to express their emotions so they feel safe expressing it and they develop in a healthy way and don't have trauma from it. So we allow them to express themselves. And if you say to your five or your eight-year-old, "Hey, I understand you want to play with this toy and I understand your sister wants to play with this toy." And then we can say, "Okay, let's look at something that we create where you can both play with the toy on your own, for some alone time." If that's what they want if they don't want to share.

And when you're calm with adults, just like if you're calm with kids, they are most apt to listen, however, if you've been a screamer or a yeller like I was, my daughter almost didn't hear me when I would use a lower voice. So if she didn't listen, the first couple of times when I started learning these new techniques, not yelling. Because she would wait till I would escalate like, "Get on your shoes for school." Nothing. "Get on your shoes for school." Nothing. "Get on your shoes for school." Then it's like, "Get on your shoes for school." And then she'd get her shoes on for school.

So she knew she didn't have to act or do anything until my voice went all the way up because I've trained her that way. I would just keep doing that and keep doing that. And so I had to train her to listen to me after the first or second time. And there's definitely, a way you can do this and we can talk more about this. But it's about taking consequences after you've said something and they don't hear you or don't act the way you've asked, that you make the consequence pretty severe, maybe take the toy away.

And you're like, "Well, you didn't listen to me. You didn't tell me how you were going to play with it." Because an eight-year-old can come up with a

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solution. Maybe five it's a little young. We could try. We could see how she reacts. But an eight-year-old certainly could come up with, "Yeah, well, we'll set a timer." Or you could give her ideas, we could set a timer for five minutes, your sister gets it for five and you get it for five. And empowering them to take action when you first say it or maybe just repeat it one more time.

And never repeating it a third or a fourth, they're going to learn you mean business because then that toy goes away if they're not willing to comply on the first or second time. But you're not taking 100% control of the situation. You're taking some control. But you're actually, giving them some control and that's what kids really want. They want to feel empowered in their lives. Nobody feels good being disempowered, that's why I hate the concept of you're powerless against alcohol. That to me kept me drinking, for me.

We like to feel empowered in our lives and using tools like that. So what do you think of this tool that I just talked about, training them to respond to you when you're calm in the first or second time? And making the consequence for them not listening to be what really changes the wiring of their brain to say, "Well, mom is operating differently. If I don't respond the first or second time I realize I lose all privileges to play with that toy or to do what she said."

Alli: It's a very good skill that I probably need to work on. I have had feedback from my husband. He said, "When you tell the kids something, then a lot of times you give a consequence but then you don't follow through with the consequence or stick with it, what you said." And so he's like, "That's why you have problems." And so I've seen that. But I feel like it's still, for some reason that's still something that I struggle with a lot. So I definitely, think I need to work on that to get better at being able to stick with whatever consequence I say is going to happen.

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Sherry: I love that you recognize that. I love that your husband's a team player and he recognizes that. He's trying to help you so you are more calm, so the household is more clam. And I'll tell you, in my boundaries workbook inside of EpicYOU I go over these three steps. It sounds like you do step one and step two but step three is where it falls apart. And if you don't do the consequence, and I'm not saying slapping. I mean I would slap, I would punish but I realized that didn't work for my child and nor did I want to be doing that.

So I had to look at a different consequence that I was willing to do but when you do it even if it feels painful for you or it feels difficult for a couple of times and it works, your brain feels better. Their brain feels better, everybody's more calm. And it's like whoa, and it's just by you doing that step one and step two which you already do. And just doing that step three that's going to change it. And that's going to have a consequence for you where you're not going to feel like you need so much alcohol.

You're not going to feel like you need a drink just to numb it out, to let it go, it's numbing it out, right?

Alli: Yeah, exactly.

Sherry: Yeah. So in that scenario what consequence would feel good for you with your girls?

Alli: I don't know, maybe a timeout or to just take a step back. Like you said, removing, if it's a toy or some issue like that, removing that is an option for both of them so that they see if they fight over it, it's going to be neither of them are going to get to play with it kind of thing.

Sherry: Yeah, and I think that's very important to act on it right when you see it. If they're not coming to the agreement you just take the toy away. If they are still fighting and you said, "Hey, we use a lower voice when we talk to people or we talk to each other. We're a family that speaks with love and not aggression", or however you want to phrase it and they start speaking

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that different way, you can remove them, like you said, a timeout or take them away from the play activity.

And then you monitor. When I'm coaching it's always, let's try this and see if it works. And we try it a couple of times because the first time, we're learning. And maybe we didn't execute appropriately, but as we learn we're getting feedback and we're like, "Okay, that did work or that didn't work or part of it worked but here's where it didn't work." So I need a different tool when they are not fighting over a toy, what do I do then? Yeah. And if you imagine that playing out, how does that make you feel?

Alli: Yes, I feel when I do have small times when I am able to handle it, I would not overreact and stay calm and come up with a solution that works I feel so relieved at least for the few minutes until the next scenario comes up. But it is such a positive feeling of just knowing that I was able to handle it well on a certain occasion.

Sherry: Yeah. And it's all about making choices. We can choose the drink because that's quick, that's easy. We know it works. We've done it, it's habit. Or we can choose to uplevel a skill that we haven't been utilizing. And so that might be that step three in the boundaries, is actually enforcing the consequence. And the good news about doing the latter, enforcing the consequence or up-levelling in that you're no longer needing to escape the family you love and disconnect. They're learning new skills.

They're learning how to get along, treat a sibling, listen to mom. And when mom speaks, she means business. So all of that up-levels not only your life but theirs.

Alli: Yes, because I don't want them, like you said, to grow up yelling at people or not knowing how to handle their emotions. And so I really want to be able to help them learn those skills. But I feel I haven't mastered them myself.

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Sherry: Yeah. And managing their emotions is so key because I think a lot of adults can use that tool. I know I could have but I didn't know how with my anger. And so I love just giving them that space, "Hey, you're having a lot of high emotions right now. And it's not good to interact with people because you might say things you don't mean. You might yell." I would even tell my daughter, "I used to yell so much and I don't want to be yelling. That's not who I want to be and that's not really effective. It doesn't feel good in your body when I yell at you, right?"

And she'd be like, "Yeah, it feels terrible and I just want to yell back at you." So I would actually, acknowledge and own where I wasn't handling my emotions so that I can be an example for her of what I didn't want to do. And I also wanted to show her, I don't do life perfectly. And I also wanted to bring awareness to why I wanted it to change because feel that in your body, does that feel good to yell at somebody or to be yelled at?

Alli: I don't think it feels good either way.

Sherry: Yeah. So I would honestly have that discussion and she was five or six at the time. So likewise with your kids, they can kind of get it because they know what feelings feel like. But what kids don't have is language. So you actually, speaking that language to them you are actually causing more or creating more awareness around emotions and giving it the language that they yet don't have. They haven't learned it yet. And anybody can understand when something feels good or something doesn't feel good in the body.

And say, "Hey, if you're going to have these emotions, hey, they come up, sometimes I yell and I don't want to yell. I need to give myself a timeout then and I'm going to give you a timeout because we just need to separate so we can calm ourselves before we interact with others." And you demonstrating that in the household they're like, "Wow, she's practicing what she preaches. She's talking the talk. She's walking the walk."

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And I think there's nothing more powerful than to have a leader in the house that actually shows the people they're training or teaching how it's done. We could say a lot but if we don't actually practice it ourselves they don't learn as quickly. But when we start practicing it ourselves they learn so much quicker from our behavior and our reactions, yeah.

Alli: Yes, because I see it in the negative perspective the way that I treat the kids when I get frustrated, I see my older one treating the younger one that same way. She has that same reaction that she's seen me do and that's so heartbreaking to me that she's learned that bad behavior, bad example from me who is trying to be the good example but it's very challenging at times. And I think like you said, setting the boundaries should hopefully help and following through with the consequences and just sticking with that is difficult.

Sherry: And I love what you said, sticking with it, it is hard to make new habits, absolutely, 100%. And for me, it was super hard because how I'd been raised was a lot of yelling in our household. So I just thought that was normal. But I'm like, "But that's not how I want to parent but I can't seem to shake it out of me." So it is a process of learning and it is a process where even maybe starting with yourself. When I get angry I'm asking them to change their behavior but let me start changing my behavior.

When I get angry or I start yelling I'm going to either say, "Oops, sorry, I started yelling and start speaking calmly." And if you're so riled up and you can't do that in the moment you said, "I need a timeout." And you go and demonstrate that for them and they'll be like, "Wow, that's new, I haven't seen mommy do that", or, "That's new." And so they'll start to pay attention because they're always paying attention to what we're doing, what we're saying, particularly what we're doing. We could talk a lot, the kids like to now when they're like, "Yeah, but you don't do that."

I hear what you're saying but yeah, when I was telling my daughter to get on her shoes I'm like, "Mommy's putting on her shoes. What does that

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signal to you?” So I was training her that I don’t always need to say it, just watch what I’m doing. And when I’m putting on my shoes we’re getting ready to leave the house to take you to school. And that’s the time you should be putting on your shoes. Now, it took weeks of doing it. But when they learn it, they learn it and you don’t have to teach it anymore because it’s learned. It’s a learned behavior.

So, Alli, I wanted to ask, what if it is just that easy, that you just need to do step three and implement that consequence and follow through on it? What if it was that easy and it would change a lot with your drinking, what if it was that easy?

Alli: I really hope it’s that easy, my kids are at the age where I think they can start to understand consequences better than when they were say, toddlers. But I think just that daily practice of following through and setting those boundaries and breaking the old habits of yelling and having them follow that pattern of behavior is challenging to break the cycles of behavior that we’ve kind of already set up.

Sherry: Yeah, exactly. The brain expects mom to act this way. Your brain expects your kids to act this way. Dad acts this way. And so when I do a big change I let everybody know. And I almost make it like I’m a judge. And I hit the gavel and I say, “Okay team, we are changing it up in this household. Here are the new rules or here’s what we’re going to do.” I don’t like to use rules with kids because they’re like, “That’s boring.” Rules always sound punitive. So I say, “Okay, here’s what we’re going to do as a family that’s going to be different.”

And I give different actions to myself first. So they’re like, “It’s not just me being bad, they’re not just punishing me. Mommy’s going first. Okay.” And I present it in a good way. I present it in an energetic good way. Mommy is done yelling. I don’t like it. I don’t like the mom that I’m showing up as. I don’t like how I feel. I don’t like how it probably makes you feel and I’m done doing it. And so they get excited. My husband’s like, “What’s going

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on?" Or I might tell him beforehand. And then I say, "Dad, this is what you're going to do."

And then I say, "Kids, this is what's going to happen and what you're going to do. And we're going to all do this because we're going to feel better and be together and more bonded as a family." And I won't use bonded with kids. Let's see. I'd say, "And we're going to have more love for each other as a family." And if you present it in this excited way and it's like a declaration, on this day things are changing. And even if they falter or your husband falters, you can't. You stick to it as much as you can because they're going to sense that you mean business.

And then when you start showing up differently they are going to start showing up differently. And you're going to expect them to show up differently. And if they don't, there's a consequence. So I love making it a bold statement, getting it out in the open, getting everybody onboard in the household. And even if dad's role doesn't change, just make it sound like it slightly changes just so it sounds like we are all doing this. And it's not punitive. It's not that I'm a bad person. It's not that mom expects me to change but there's nothing going to be happening different with them.

Alli: Yeah, I think that's a really exciting thing to think about because I know when I listen to your podcasts that's how it makes me feel, this is a good exciting thing to try to change. And so I feel for them they love new exciting things. So that if I am able to portray it in that way I think that could really be effective.

Sherry: Yeah. And then always looking to do that positive reinforcement when they actually do, do it differently. Or when, the first time your five or eight-year-old says, "Mom, I'm feeling like I need a timeout because of my energy." Or my daughter would say, "Mom, I'm going to put on my shoes because I see you putting on your shoes." And I'd be overjoyed and I'd create a little dance party for it, you did it. Awesome. And we do this little

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dance party and you make it positive. That's inviting people in to change. Yeah, rather than I have to do this.

That's what I work towards, making change in your drinking positive rather than I have to drink less because it does feel like such a slog especially if we don't know how it's going to look on the other side. And so if you're portraying how it's going to look on the other side for your kids and it's positive they're going to want to embrace that change even more, and so are you.

Alli: Yeah, for sure. When I do something positive and it turns out well and I'm not drinking it feels very good for sure.

Sherry: Yeah. And that's the life we want to create for ourselves, a really good one. And I call it epic. It just feels good to be alive and doing life and feeling like you're doing well at it. Yeah. Well, I love it that you came on the show, Alli, to just help our listeners, to help yourself to improve so that we have less reliance on alcohol. Anything else for me, Alli, today?

Alli: No, I think that's it.

Sherry: Okay. Again, thank you for coming on the show. It was so great to help you, so great to meet you and let's stay in touch about how you are implementing the consequences and the boundaries.

Alli: Thank you so much.

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Well, that was a sample of a coaching session and I ended it a little early to keep it in the timeline for this podcast. But notice how I think for us moms we have to navigate conflict with the kids that we have, conflict between siblings, conflict that we find that is challenging after a hard day's work. And it becomes so challenging when we are emotionally charged. And I think it's so helpful to know we're not going to do it perfectly all the time but it's

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important to recognize when we're emotionally fired up and that's causing us to do things that we don't want like overdrink or yell at our kids.

And what I love about coaching so much is about where you're at now and where you want to go. We don't have to go into the deep past if it doesn't apply or it's not relevant. And it's also taking into consideration what other people, and how they're going to benefit from the tools that we implement.

We want to make sure that everybody in the household is winning, not just the mom, not just the kids but everybody in the household is winning because we know conflict is going to happen. We know siblings are going to fight but yelling and numbing and wanting to check out of it doesn't help anybody. Doesn't help the mom, doesn't help the kids, doesn't help the marriage, doesn't help the family unit. And if we play out this scenario and don't do anything about it just think of what years and years and years of overdrinking yelling does to the family over time.

This is why I believe coaching is so important. Making these small tweaks to how we show up in our lives changes how much we love our lives, improves our lives, improves the lives of others, particularly the people closest to us. So thank you, Alli, so much for coming on the show. Thank you so much for being willing to be coached and not knowing what to expect and what questions were going to come.

And I really appreciate how much this podcast is going to help other women navigate the stress of raising kids in their own lives. Alright, my beautiful friends, I love you all and I will see you next week.

If you want to change your relationship with alcohol and with yourself, then come check out EpicYOU, it's where you get individualized help mastering the tools so you can become a woman who can take it or leave it and be in control around alcohol in any situation. EpicYOU is the place for women who want to be healthy, confident and empowered to accomplish their

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