

Ep #131: What To Do When Drinking is a Ritual



Full Episode Transcript

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 131.

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. Welcome to another podcast episode. If you are a long time listener, thank you for joining for another episode. And if you're new to this podcast, welcome as well. My goal with this podcast is to empower you so you are always confident around alcohol whether you choose to drink or not.

So today I want to get into a topic that I hear that comes up a lot and that is drinking as a ritual. And we know that our society enforces this. We have happy hours and we meet up for drinks or we meet up for cocktails and even meeting up for coffee can be a ritual. And I want to start off by reading what Seth Godin puts in his blog, you know I follow Seth Godin. He's got such pearls of wisdom and I love sharing things that I learn from here with you all on the podcast and here's how he describes rituals.

So rituals are things that we do each day, every day and oftentimes without intent. That was my drinking at least, it was daily. Maybe your ritual isn't so daily. By the time we realize that this ritual is now a habit, these random behaviors that have become part of how we define ourselves and the time that we spend. Bringing intent to our rituals gives us a chance to rewire our attitudes, but first we need to see it. And the reason I wanted to share that is because it is so much truth.

And it is what I teach and walk my clients through inside of EpicYOU and I want to talk more about that on this podcast. So notice that he mentions, we must first need to see it. And that's the starting point my friends. I talk about a lot about it on the podcast, I talk a lot about it with the ladies inside of EpicYOU. We have to see the habit or the ritual that is already there.

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

Ep #131: What To Do When Drinking is a Ritual

And what I like to think about this is if we want to go somewhere else, we don't want this ritual. We don't want this habit. It's too much or I want maybe to decrease the ritual from four nights a week to two nights a week.

Whatever it is that we are going towards we need to know where we're starting. And I don't think many of us want to or consider that an important part of the step. So if you're thinking about a map and you want to go somewhere, you kind of need to look at the x, where you are now. So when I'm hiking, I always love those when I go up to a trail or a new trail. It's this big red x that says you are here. And that is important to recognize where you are so that you know where you're going. It's part of the process.

And so without accepting where you're at right now, we're missing a key part of the entire process and the key part of the journey. So what I see, when most people come into the program and they say, "I want to do this to my drinking. I want to drink less or I just want to drink two nights a week or I want to just have a take it or leave it attitude with it, so help me get there." And they just want to start drinking less. They want to start moving forward and all of that is fabulous.

However, where I want to start you and everyone else that is going to have more impact is why are you now here and what does here look like for you? Now, a lot of people don't want to do this and you know why? I didn't want to do this either, because it's full of shame. It's full of embarrassment. I don't even want to recognize how bad my drinking has gotten. That's what I hear a lot and that's where I was too.

Because the reason it's so important to know where you're starting is because that shame that you have or the embarrassment or the disappointment. Even when you get to your goal you'll still have the shame because you haven't broken through it. You'll still have the embarrassment around alcohol that you won't even be able to create a peaceful relationship with alcohol. It will continue to haunt you, it will continue to follow you unless we deal with it and process it and eliminate it. And this is why it's so important to recognize where we are at right now.

Ep #131: What To Do When Drinking is a Ritual

I used to have so much shame around my drinking. I didn't even talk about it. The only person I talked about it with was with my husband. I didn't want to tell my friends. I didn't want to tell healthcare workers. I was afraid of it going on my medical record. I was afraid of it becoming a preexisting condition and then I couldn't get certain types of life insurance or anything else or it's just going to follow me around or that my employer can see it and it was discoverable in some way, shape, form or fashion.

So now, I'm not saying that everybody needs to know about it, but you need to be honest with you. And recognizing where you are at just with yourself, you don't have to do this with somebody else although I find it extremely helpful and incredibly helpful if there is a confidante with you on this journey. It just helps rid the shame and the embarrassment so much quicker. When I would work with my coach and I would hear, "This doesn't have to be shameful", my brain was breaking. I'm like, "What, it doesn't have to be shameful?"

I thought this was a character flaw. I thought I was flawed and none of that is true. So when somebody else can help move your brain and your feelings along, I'm all for it. But I think it's really important for you if you are doing this journey solo is you getting really honest with yourself and really honest what the drinking looks like. So for me it felt so good, it felt so wonderful in the moment. I looked forward to it.

I would often say it was the best part of my day, when I got done with work and I entered the kitchen and that's how my ritual would start is just by ending the workday and starting drinking. It was a delightful part of my day, one that I looked forward to. I deserved this moment, it was my reward. It felt like a small slice of heaven. And I have to tell you, when I walk my clients through this, there is so much guilt and shame.

They feel like I shouldn't feel this way about alcohol. I shouldn't be thinking this way about alcohol, I'm bad. I'm morally flawed. All of these feelings that come up, we have to let them go and release them. We have to eliminate them from your body so they don't keep perpetuating the cycle if and when you do decide to drink in the future. Because therefore you will never

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

Ep #131: What To Do When Drinking is a Ritual

create an environment where you can feel at peace with alcohol, you can feel that you can take it or leave it with alcohol.

There's is always going to be this pent up energy that comes along with it that you're feeling bad or that you can't trust yourself around it or that it has more power over you, none of that is true. And I want to remind you that the body remembers these sensations. The body remembers and has recall when it's exposed to something over and over. It's the mind body connection that we learn and we know exists, it's just the fact of life.

Now, I was just going through this ritual with my daughter last week. And oh my gosh what a trying week that was for us. So my daughter wants to try out for this new soccer team. Well, let me take that back. My daughter is interested in playing soccer, she likes it, it's fun for her as long as it's not too competitive, too aggressive. And so there is this new soccer team at her school and she wants to be part of the team. However, she does not like soccer tryouts, they create so much anxiety for her. And this is a relatively recent phenomenon.

She used to go out for soccer in the past. She's been playing soccer since she's been four and it never really bothered her until the past two to three years. And I maybe even mentioned on the podcast even last year or the year before when she tried out and she had a panic attack. She had to come running off the field and how we owned that and worked through that. And she got back out there and then she was told that she could come and join the team.

So all that to say is that she does enjoy soccer but she does not enjoy soccer tryouts. And her self-concept around her ability to perform soccer compared to others is very low. And her body now has this conditioned response. It's a ritual. It's kind of like she hears soccer tryouts and a flood of anxiety fills her body because she doesn't think she's good enough, she won't make the team. All of that comes up and she gets very, very anxious, I mean extremely anxious, not a little bit of nerves, we get a *wapow* set of nerves.

Ep #131: What To Do When Drinking is a Ritual

And so she was supposed to have tryouts last week. It was supposed to be three days last week and we didn't know until one o'clock if they were going to be occurring because in California here, in southern California we're just getting a ton of rain. So she would go to school crying. She would have to go to the guidance counselor's office during school because she was so anxious about these tryouts, that she couldn't even focus on school.

And so by the end of last week with me helping her through this, talking with the guidance counselor, managing her anxiety before school and her emotions before school and after school. And at night time they would just prevent her from going to sleep because she was so anxious the next day, what if tryouts are going to happen the next day. I was so emotionally spent after going through this all week with her last week.

And let me tell you, by Friday I was ready for a drink and I had one. But I noticed with her, just the words 'soccer tryouts' creates this response inside her body. It's this remembered response, conditioned response. It's her way of being when she hears soccer tryouts. It's kind of like a ritual. Now, it's not daily, which is good, it's just certain times of the year. And so I did what I do for the women inside of EpicYOU and the process I'll teach you here in this podcast.

And that is acknowledging why you feel the way you do because that's propagating the ritual. So what got you here? Why do you feel this way? Why do you behave this way? Why does this ritual occur? What benefits does this ritual have for you in your life? How has this ritual served you in the past? And once you go through these questions and sincerely answer them for yourself, now you will begin to recognize why it happens. And if you do this right, I will tell you it will start to diminish and eliminate the shame that comes up.

And if you can't do this process on your own, I highly encourage you to get a therapist or a coach who knows how to eliminate beliefs and make sure that this leaves your body so it can free you for the rest of the years that you have here. Because what you should start seeing is that this is not a sign that something is wrong with you, that this habit, this ritual came to be

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

Ep #131: What To Do When Drinking is a Ritual

because it served you, there was benefit to it. And something about this ritual helps you.

Now, if something in life helps you, wouldn't you want your body and your mind to remember it? I mean that's how the human species learns how to get food and how to camp near water. Because wait, if we camp near water, we have access to water and access to fish and access to food and things that keep us alive. And so this is the amazingness of our human condition. I want you to see that. It's the amazingness of our minds to remember something that serves us and that helps us in life.

And, of course, of course you would want to do more of that. So it's not, I should or I shouldn't. It's, no, my body is created this way such that I get enjoyment and fulfillment in my life and I am able to survive. Notice that this is not a character flaw. This is a survival mechanism. This is a thriving mechanism. This is how you would want your body to work, to survive and to thrive.

And let me tell you, getting rid of the shame, the disappointment, the embarrassment is the biggest part of this journey because we are creating new neural pathways of the thinking and feeling that the action will take care of itself once this part is done, my friends. This is why we need to start where are you now and what is going on for you now and work through that before charting the next course. Now, we can chart the course of where we're going, that's fine.

But this is the non-negotiable part of the step and I believe that's where so many people miss the opportunity to change their drinking forever and where a lot of programs get this piece wrong or don't even include this piece. So in the case of my daughter, going back to what we experienced last week, we looked at how that anxiety was helping her, what meaning was she giving to tryouts? What would happen in her mind if she made the team? What would happen if she didn't make the team?

And what meaning was she giving to the tryouts and what might other people be thinking about tryouts? How might they be seeing tryouts? And

Ep #131: What To Do When Drinking is a Ritual

how would your brain like to see tryouts? And then from there we take that information and we start to incorporate it into her body. We start to have her embody that because we want to change not just the mind but the mind body connection. And without the mind body connection it won't last because remember, our thoughts create our feelings, our thoughts create what's happening in our body.

And so we need to create that upfront to start that new neural pathway to wire that in so that the anxiety starts to lessen. And I say this all the time to the ladies inside EpicYOU, it can't be just a head game because if it's just a head game, it won't last. And it will feel like an internal struggle and an internal fight within your head all the time.

This is why people will come to me and say, "I know drinking's not good for me but I still do it." "I know all the information to break up with alcohol but I still drink more than I want." "I know all the amazing benefits of drinking less but here I am drinking more than I want." And I want to tell you, I can help get you to the place where you can take it or leave it, where it's not even on your radar and it's about doing that mind body work because we have to modify the ritual that's been already created by your mind and your body. We have to modify that or change it.

And so over the weekend I kept repeating the process with my daughter. I kept rewiring her neurocircuitry and creating those neural pathways and that's neuroplasticity so that she can have a different response. And I have to say, this work is deliberate, it's intentional. And by Friday I was exhausted for pouring into her so much, completely emotionally exhausted. But I also know that I'm building such a gift for her, such a skill set that she can apply this to other areas of her life when emotions get charged up, when they start to affect her more than she wants.

And for me what I'm learning too, I am emotionally poured into her. I was emotionally spent. I went and got a massage on Friday to work out some of that tension that my body was holding onto. And then when I had a date night with my husband on Friday night I had a tequila drink to relieve some of that. And I'm also proud I had one tequila drink, it didn't lead to one

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

Ep #131: What To Do When Drinking is a Ritual

tequila, two tequila, three tequila floor. You've seen those t-shirts, because I know how to manage my emotions.

I have learned how to regulate that in my life so I no longer overdrink because think about it, when you drink less you have more energy, you sleep better. You don't mindlessly eat or snack or do things that put on more weight. You feel less bloated because you're not drinking as much. And you're not obsessing over alcohol, thinking should I have a drink, should I not, should I wait to have one over dinner, should I start before? If I have one now, should I have one over dinner, should I not? When should I start? When should I stop? None of that.

Not only that, ladies, when you drink less you become way more creative. You start asking and going inside your body and saying, "Okay, I have this tension that has built up inside of me and what can I do to release it?" And another side benefit is you become so much more compassionate and loving to yourself. And I was able to be so much more loving to her than my past self who would be drinking during the week. When I was drinking all the time I was getting mad. I wasn't handling my emotions well and I was taking it out on her.

There is no way I would have been able to have poured into her and her life as my past self did when she was still drinking a lot. And because of this I'm able to experience new joys that I didn't even see in the past. I didn't even consider that this would be such a joy, that I'd be able to know how to manage this moment. I was spinning out and I don't know how to do this, I feel inadequate as a mom. And not to say some of that doesn't come up because it certainly does but when I get there it's like, wait a second. I just have to know the next step to take.

I just have to know what response I would want to hear as a 12 year old girl. And when you live that drink less lifestyle you become that role model you want to be for your kids. You're modeling to them how to take care of yourself mentally, emotionally, physically. You're someone who cares about their health and wellness because you're intentional about it. And so

Ep #131: What To Do When Drinking is a Ritual

we talked a lot this weekend on what this upcoming week was going to be like and it's still raining here, folks.

This soccer tryout thing might be going on a lot longer than we both anticipated for. But when she left today she says, "Mom, you're really teaching me how to manage my body. And I'm just so thankful that you take the time to do that for me." And that's my wish for you, ladies, is that you take this information so that you can learn more about yourself, learn more about this ritual and learn how to break that shame, disappointment, fear and all those negative emotions that holds you back from creating that epic version of yourself where you feel better, you are more alive.

And just like my daughter, you're proud of yourself for overcoming this. So use this information in this podcast. Go back and listen to it. Write down those questions. Use this as your time to be epically you and find what works for you around alcohol. Alright my friends, I love you all and I will see you in the next episode.

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 And become a woman who And 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 goals and live their best life. Come join us over at epicyou.com/epicyou. That's epicyou.com/ E-P-I-C-Y-O-U. I can't wait to see you there.