

Ep #8: The Excuse Generator



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 8.

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. We are in the middle of November. And have you been joining us for the Self-Care Challenge inside my private Facebook group? We are doing daily challenges, focusing on our mental health, our spiritual health, our physical health, our emotional health. So come join us and stop the overdrinking habit and take time to take care of yourself this month, appreciate yourself, self-gratitude. Focus on taking good care of yourself before the holidays come and hit. We'd love to have you there and support you on.

And did you know I launched an online course earlier this month called How to Get Your Off Button Back? It is amazing. Five key modules will teach you exactly how to stop overdrinking so you can find your off button again. I invite you to come and check it out. You can find it at my website sherryprice.com or I'll drop a link in the show notes here as well.

Okay, so before we dive into today's topic, I'm super excited to announce our third winner of our \$100 Amazon gift card giveaway. Remember, all you have to do to enter the contest is to rate the podcast and write a review. Then you submit your review via the link that I'll place in the show notes, and as we head into the holiday season, who couldn't use a \$100 to use on Amazon? So be sure to rate, review and submit your review so you can be the winner on next week's podcast.

So our winner today is Gerry from Ohio and here is what she wrote. "Beginner, I'm starting my journey to drink less and this is exactly what I've been looking for. Somewhere that fits me in what my drinking habits have

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been. So far after listening to a couple of the episodes I no longer feel alone and I'm inspired to think about my drinking. Thank you Dr. Sherry Price." You are so welcome Gerry, and I'm loving watching your progress in our Facebook group. And I'm so excited that you're the winner of this week's Amazon gift card.

So what are you waiting for ladies, come on over, join the free Facebook page, it's so much fun hanging out with other ladies on this journey to drinking less.

Alright, now moving on to today's topic. Today I want to dive into the topic of the excuse generator. Oh yes, my friends, we have all been there. It's like your brain will generate excuses to drink. Have you experienced this? It's like my brain when I was a drinker would constantly look for another reason to pour a drink, or to have a drink, to start drinking, to continue drinking, but never to end drinking. Now, if you think about it for you, how many excuses do you find that your brain comes up with to drink?

Our brains love finding, creating, making, inventing, concocting and borrowing excuses to have a drink. And we even look to others saying, "Ooh, if they're drinking, that means I get to drink too."

And it's funny because when I look back and I analyze some of my famous go to excuses they weren't even true. It's not like they were factual, but I didn't even analyze them. I didn't even investigate them. I didn't even question them. I just listened to the excuses that my brain would generate. It was like I'm used to this excuse, I've heard it before, let me just believe it and pour a drink. It must be true.

And because I had that excuse running for so long in my brain, again, I didn't stop to question it. And the more I thought about that excuse over and over, it just became this fact in my mind. When in reality it was not factual at all. So let me give you an example of my favorite go-to excuse when I was overdrinking. My favorite one was "I had a long day." Anyone

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with me on that, anyone else say, “I’ve had a long day?” And it kind of gives yourself permission, an excuse to have a drink.

When I said this to myself it was almost like I was justifying that because I had a long day now I get to symbolize that I had that long day with pouring myself a drink. It was almost like yes let me congratulate you for making it through a long day. But when I began to analyze that, and I began to question that, and I began to ask myself, did I have a long day? What is a long day? What do I mean when I say I had a long day?

Now, let’s think about that. Aren’t all days the same length? Aren’t they all 24 hours long? So why was I continually telling myself that I had a long day? It’s not like the day was any longer than the previous day, again, they are all 24 hours in length. And I typically work the same hours each day. It’s not like having a long day meant I worked longer or that I worked any harder than the previous day.

It was just that when 5:30 came around and I ended my workday and I walked into my kitchen my brain would say, “You’ve had a long day”, even though it was simply the same kind of day I’ve had the previous day, and the previous day before that, and the previous day before that.

But now my brain just automatically had the thought, it’s been a long day or it’s been a hard day. And that would justify, that would generate the excuse that I get to have a drink. It’s like my brain was trying to tell me that I deserved a reward because I worked a day, because I put in some work of the day. It was like my brain’s like, “Okay, now it’s your turn to have a treat.”

So here’s another one of my favorite excuses that my brain would generate. Well, so and so is having a drink, I must be able to have one too. So my flavor of this was, well, my husband’s pouring a drink, I get to have one then too. For some of my clients, they say, “Well, my girl friends are pouring a drink, so that means I get to drink too.” So just think about that in another context, it’s like saying, “Oh, my husband’s deciding to eat steak or

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order a steak, I should order one too.” Or even sillier, my husband decides that he’s going to wear boxers today, so I should wear boxers today too.

And you have that same thought if your friend was to say light up a cigarette, do you look at her and say, “Oh, my friend is lighting up a cigarette, I get to have a cigarette too?” When we see it in a different context we see the silliness that our brain comes up with. We see how silly this excuse is. It’s like if my husband decided to do heroin, would that mean I would join in as well? No, because I don’t like heroin, at least not that I know of, I have never tried it and I have no desire to try it.

So it’s interesting that why does our brain make other people’s decision mean anything about us and the decision we should make for ourselves? We don’t have to make other people’s decisions ours. We don’t have to match their decisions that they make for themselves. But yet my brain would find that to be a reason to start drinking. And we talk about this regularly on my group coaching calls. A lot of the women will come and say, “Well, I went out in the cul-de-sac and all our kids are playing together and all the moms were drinking, so I just joined in.”

It’s just something that I should do, it’s almost like they think it’s expected of them to join in. That somehow going against that would somehow be socially not acceptable. Or we’ll talk a lot about, “Hey, my husband came home from work, he poured himself a drink so I followed suit. It’s the way we connect. It’s the way we bond at the end of the day. It’s the way we talk about our days. He has a drink and so do I.”

It’s almost like we allow other people’s decisions really influence our own. And yes, it could, but it doesn’t have to. We should question our brain and say, “Brain, do we really want this for us? It’s okay if other people in our lives are drinking, but how about me, do I want to be drinking in this situation?” And I get to make that decision for myself. But we often will do that with other things but not with alcohol. And I think the reason we don’t do it with alcohol is because it’s so normalized in our culture. It’s like it’s what society does.

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It looks so normal that when other people are drinking we should just join in. It's like when other people are eating, we should just join in. But we really have to question that because overeating, overdrinking, those do have ramifications on our body, our mind, our health, and it's like we keep going on believing the excuse that it's okay. It's okay to keep acting this way. It's okay to keep believing the excuses.

But then we have to ask, at what point is it not okay? Because if we keep overdrinking, or overeating, or doing things that don't feel good for our bodies and they have negative repercussions on our bodies, then we have to stop and investigate. Okay, if I continue thinking this way and believing the excuse generator of my brain, this is going to keep repeating the same habits and the same pattern. And I probably don't want that for my life, at least that's where I got to.

Because an unchecked, unexamined relationship with alcohol is for sure going to creep up on you, it did for me. And just because it's socially acceptable doesn't mean that it's right. And it doesn't make it healthy. And while it may not have affected you a lot in the past, maybe now it is. Our biology our changes, our metabolism changes, we enter different phases of life, so it begs to question that we really need to examine if we should be believing these excuses, plus as we get more information about the damages of alcohol.

I mean think back in the day, any of you lived through the 90s where fat was super bad and we just did these carbohydrate diets? And I was buying SnackWell's chocolate chip cookies and making sure I avoided eggs and anything with a lot of fat. And now we find that information was completely wrong. And then we look to scientific evidence recently where they're saying women can have up to one drink a day or a man can have up to two drinks a day and be okay. But now we're finding newer evidence to say maybe that's not okay, maybe that is even too much.

If you consider what the American Society of Cancer did in their latest guideline changes earlier this year, they now say that it's best not to drink

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any alcohol, because we know alcohol in women can increase estrogen levels. We know it can lead to certain types of cancer, particularly breast cancer. So we need to be our own best patient advocate. We need to stay up with the knowledge. We need to know exactly what is recommended and why, and know the latest science so that we can stay well and healthy.

Let me move on to another excuse generator that my brain would come up with all the time. And I find a lot of us get sucked into this one. It's Friday, it's the weekend. So just because it's Friday or just because it's the weekend, all of a sudden our brains interpret that to mean, well, of course now I get to drink, it's the end of a work week. Literally this is how my brain thought for years, just because the day was called Friday, just because the day was called Saturday, that that gave me the reason to overdo it with my alcohol.

It didn't even matter if I wanted to or not, it was like, well, yeah, you should. Hello, it's Friday. Hello, it's Saturday. This is what you do. I couldn't even imagine not drinking on a Friday or Saturday whether or not I had desire for alcohol, it was just something that was habitual, something that was so routine that I didn't even question it.

And what's interesting is if I was laid up with an illness or I wasn't feeling well, and I really didn't feel like drinking, you know what my brain would say at the end of that weekend? Is like, "Wow, you had to get sick over the weekend didn't you, because you really missed out on that drinking opportunity." It was like my brain was like, "We live for the weekend, so that we can drink. And you were sick and you didn't feel like drinking, and maybe you were throwing up or whatever illness you had and you really missed out on the opportunity to over-drink."

And it's funny because it's not like my brain said, "You missed out on the opportunity to meet up with friends. You missed out on the opportunity to have a date night with your husband. You missed out on the opportunity to go to the movies with a friend." No, it would just focus on, "You missed out on the opportunity to drink." It's funny because it's like my brain was like,

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“Your weekend wasn’t complete, Sherry, because you didn’t get to drink.” That was the only part it seemed to be concerned about for many years. Isn’t that crazy?

When I think about now how my brain used to think I feel like that was such a different version of me. And I have so much love and compassion for her because I didn’t really know. I didn’t really analyze. And I didn’t really investigate all those excuses, I just believed them. As these thoughts popped up into my brain, I just assumed they were fact. I just didn’t question them. I mean I was measuring my joy, my success on if I got to drink over the weekend or not. Notice how it wasn’t about truly connecting with others, how it was really not about what activities we did.

It was really about if I got to drink, it was like my brain said, “Here’s an excuse to get together with someone else so that you can justify drinking. Here’s another opportunity to engage in drinking. And it just so happens, it’s with this person at this place.” So it really wasn’t about that person, and it really wasn’t about that place. It was about wanting and finding an experience to enjoy alcohol under.

And then once you got there you’re like, “Now that we have alcohol, now what are we going to talk about? Now what are we going to do? We’re going to order food. That sounds great.” But the primary goal of my brain was, ooh, there’s alcohol involved, let’s do it. And that was my truth for a long time. And then I wondered why I felt so disconnected with myself, and I felt so disconnected with my values. I valued health, but here I am not choosing that for myself.

I value quality relationships, but why was I surrounding myself with shallow ones where we didn’t really talk about meaningful topics? And if I really am honest, if you took the alcohol away from that night, I wonder if I’d even enjoy myself. I wonder if I would consider that fun. Now, I’m not saying you have to change it all up, or you have to change your friends, but I am saying that if you’re feeling disconnected from yourself or from your values,

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isn't it worth giving it some thought on why that is? And maybe just investigate for yourself, why and how you feel right now about alcohol.

And start questioning that brain of yours, that excuse generator, and really saying, "Does this excuse, is this working for me? Is this factual? Is this even true anymore? Maybe it was fine that I would just drink every Friday and Saturday just because it was Friday and Saturday in my past. But is that who I want to be today and is that who I want to be tomorrow? And is that a reason, a good enough reason for me to drink?"

Because you know how we know? It's when we start listening to our bodies, when we start tuning into that inner voice. When we start hearing, "Yeah, maybe I want to do it right now." But then you wake-up the next day and you're like, "Yeah, I shouldn't have done it so much. I should have found my off button. That amount of alcohol, that amount of overdrinking doesn't serve me. Maybe I should learn the tools to stop after one. Or maybe not even have it at all for a while."

Because trust me, as we age, we do change. We morph, as I mentioned previously, our metabolisms change, our biology changes, our hormones change. Our chemistry inside of our body changes, there's so much going on, so if we can't tolerate the same amount of drinking as we did in the past, that's no fault of ours. And maybe it is time to do some deep self-reflection and investigate what is your current relationship with drinking and does that need to change? Would it serve you if it changed? Would you be a better version of you? Would you feel healthier?

Would you feel more vibrant, more alive and not like I'm just getting through these Covid times?

And let's look at one other excuse that my brain would generate and serve up to me all the time. And that was, one more won't hurt, you can have another one, one more won't hurt, it's just one more. Some flavor of that is a lot of what my brain would serve up to me. And you really have to question that because when you think about it, yes, one more can hurt, one

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more can cause damage. One more can make the hangover worse, yes, absolutely.

But we look at that excuse and we're like, "Yeah, let's just believe it for tonight. Let's investigate that in the morning." And that's not when it's that useful. Yes, we can investigate it the next morning but we have to investigate the excuse when it's happening. That's when we're going to get significant change.

I have to tell you this story; we were talking about in my group coaching program about alcohol abuse. And I'm like, "What are you talking?" They're like, "That's leaving alcohol in the glass, or leaving one glass of alcohol in the bottle and not finishing it. And we joke and call that alcohol abuse in my family." And then some other ladies joined in and said, "Yeah, so we call it that too." And I'm thinking, wow, you call that alcohol abuse, by leaving it in the glass or in the bottle. I used to call that sandbagging, when you leave it behind.

But really what is that our brain is telling us if that's alcohol abuse and that's the way our brain thinks, then of course our brain is going to say, "Let's finish all of the drops in the glass. Let's finish all of the drops in the bottle." We really have to start questioning what it is that our brain is telling us, because alcohol abuse is when we put too much of it in our body. It's when we can't control it. It's when it's controlling us. It's when we're having too much and we are getting negative consequences from it.

We get the terrible sleep, we get the waking, we get the sluggishness, we get. I'm not motivated to do anything. I'm just trying to get through these times. We get the increased anxiety. We get the increased stress. That comes from alcohol abuse. So we really have to start questioning that excuse generator in our brain.

And think about a generator, what fuels a generator? Gasoline, propane. If we keep fueling our excuse generator with more thoughts, which is the gasoline, guess what we will continue to create? Just like a generator we

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will continue to create more electricity, we will continue to create more drinking. The more we fuel that excuse generator the more we will fuel our drinking. So there's a direct correlation there, my friends.

But you know what I hear a lot from women? It's like, "Okay, I get that, I get that intellectually, but I'm just waiting to get motivated. I'm just waiting for the New Year. I'm just waiting till the holidays are over. Or I'm waiting till Covid's over. Or I'm waiting till I get my job back. Or I'm waiting till I stop working at home and I get to go back to the office." And that keeps waiting and that keeps generating more excuse to keep fueling the excuse generator. It doesn't work that way. Motivation rarely just shows up.

I say create motivation, and do you know how you create motivation? It's by taking action. It's not by sitting around and waiting for it just to dawn on us. It's deciding and committing to do the work, taking action. And while you're taking action to do what you want to be doing, which is drinking less, or taking a break, and while you're taking action steps to be that woman who drinks less, guess what happens to that excuse generator? It starts to get ignored. It starts to die down. It stops being so loud and so needy.

And let me tell you, the excuse generator will go away. We often think we're going to have to fight with ourselves the whole time through this journey of drinking less, but that is not true.

If you're breaking down the excuses, as I mentioned in my previous podcast, the think, feel, act cycle, I will tell you, those excuses don't keep coming back. They don't keep making an appearance in your brain. And that's why that think, feel, act cycle is so key and so effective to get permanent change. It's a skill you have to learn. But once you learn that skill, it changes everything, including your relationship with alcohol.

Alright my friends, that's what I have for you today. But before you go, I'm excited to celebrate the launch of this podcast by giving away four \$100 Amazon gift cards to lucky listeners who subscribe, rate, and review this show on Apple Podcasts. Of course, I do hope that you love the show, but

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it does not have to be a 5-star review. I want your honest feedback to make sure I continue to provide you tons of value.

So, visit sherryprice.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode. Bye for now. I'll see you next 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.