

Ep #31: Deprivation



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Dr. Sherry Price

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You are listening to the *Drink Less Lifestyle Podcast* with Dr. Sherry Price, episode number 31.

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 am recording this podcast on a Monday after I had a fabulous weekend. So this past weekend was my husband and I's 17th anniversary on April 17th. So we had celebrated 17 years of marriage on the 17th and we just had such a great weekend together. We had the opportunity to go out to dinner while our daughter was at church experiencing joy and playtime with her friends. And when we got to the dinner my husband pulls out of his pocket a piece of paper.

And I just started laughing because this piece of paper is our bucket list that we keep and we like to update every now and then. And we haven't updated it in a while. We have been locked down and a lot of things on our bucket list include travel because for us we love to travel. We love to experience new things, new places, new cultures, new foods. And it's just so fun for us, it's kind of our thing, wine used to be our thing, drinking used to be our thing. But we love to travel.

So it was just such a fun little surprise that he brought out and we got to read through it and cross things out that we have done since we've last looked at the list a few years back and then also modified the list to see if things that are on there that we don't want to do anymore. And also add things to the list which we do. We used to joke that before we had our daughter that we would love to just travel the world for a whole year, take work off, be nomads, rent our place and how fun that would be.

So I don't know, maybe the future holds something of that nature once she goes off to college. But we just love to talk about travel. And here's the

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thing, just talking about the list and not actually even doing it just provides so much joy and excitement. So I encourage you to look for those things that we think we need to be doing stuff to find joy and pleasure.

But a lot of times it's in the dreaming, it's in the goal setting, it's in just thinking about the future and what it has to offer can serve as a way to enjoy the now. So that anticipation, once you even do plan it is so exciting, but even just talking about it because really our brains do love to dream and they do love to think what is possible.

And this ties into the work that we are going to be doing in May inside my membership program called Epic You. I have been putting together the curriculum for that and it's all finished. And we are going to be focusing on getting things done. So the first part of that process of getting stuff done or getting that one goal that we want is really allowing the brain and allowing our brains to dream of what we want.

I find that as time goes by and you're raising families, and kids, and doing all the things, and you kind of get sucked into life and you forget to take that time out to dream, to think what is it that I want to be accomplishing? Am I on the right ladder? Is the ladder leaning against the right wall? Is this the path I want to be taking for my life?

So I think it's important as adults that we do take time out to see what's on our minds, what's in our hearts and what we do want to achieve and what we want to accomplish. Because if we just follow society's way we might get to the end and think that's not actually how I define success or actually how I wanted to live my life. So connecting with that part of us that has these desires and these wants I think is critical to really living the life that you want on purpose with intention.

And I believe we are all imprinted differently. What works for one person's brain and what they enjoy, and what they find to be successful, or enjoyable, or pleasurable will be totally different than somebody else's brain. I know there are brains out there that exist that don't like to travel,

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they find it onerous, or not fun, or they don't like much change and they feel so comfortable where they're at and that's fine too.

I just think it's really important to have the dialog with yourself, to get to know yourself and really explore what that means before the catastrophic diagnosis, or the end of life, or when we retire because a lot of us wait too long when we can actually be enjoying those things now. So that's what we're doing in May inside of Epic You. And it's really charting that course to get to what you want. It's the similar process I take my clients through in the Drink Less Lifestyle program because it's about the process to change the patterns that you have and create that path to get there.

I'm super excited to see what all the ladies create and achieve this month inside Epic You and I'm even excited for my journey and what I'm going to be creating in the month of May. And I'm sure I'll be sharing more of that journey of my journey with you on future podcasts so stay tuned.

So in today's podcast we're going to be actually talking about I think the flipside of desire. It's when we have desire and we don't meet it and we can make that mean something negative. So that can turn into not feeding the desire. And for a lot of us if we don't feed that desire for alcohol or insert whatever you want, candy, chocolate, chips, cake, food, maybe it's clothing, maybe it's spending money on something that you really enjoy too, but in excess. So when we don't meet that desire what can happen is that we can feel deprived.

So sometimes feeding the desire is good if it's in alignment with your long term goals, if it's in alignment with who you want to be. And then other times we have desires where if we keep feeding them it's not good. And a lot of times we keep feeding the desire and you know in previous podcasts I've talked about if we keep feeding that desire it turns into over-desire. We really want it to the point where it feels like we need it.

And that's where I allowed myself to get to with alcohol is I just kept feeding the desire and keep feeding the desire so the desire kept growing. And it

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felt like over-desire to the point where if I didn't have a drink at night I'd feel deprived.

So I really want to break down depravation in today's podcast. So as we take a look at what depravation is, it's defined as the state of being kept from enjoying or using something. And what I want to be crystal clear about for depravation is we're going to be talking about it as a feeling. It's a feeling. It can also be a sensation in our body. But we're going to be focusing on the feeling part of it. And it's really when we want something or we crave something and we don't get to enjoy it. We don't get to use it. We don't get to have it.

And when it comes to focusing in on depravation with alcohol there are two types of depravation. So I think of it as there is physical depravation as well as psychological depravation when it comes to cutting back or abstaining from alcohol. And I consider this to be similar in terms of dependency. Our bodies once we consume alcohol in any type of routine or consistent type of basis we develop a physical dependency on it as well as a psychological dependency on it. So when we remove it or cut back we can experience the depravation part of that.

So first let's talk about the physical depravation. So physical depravation I think is more of a sensation in the body. It's what the body experiences when we don't give it what it is desiring, what it wants. And let us just remind ourselves why that physical dependency is there, it's because we created that. We have developed a pattern or a routine, maybe it's around the weekends. For me it was a nightly thing where I would drink to relax. I would drink to take the edge off. I would drink to transition from work life to home life, all those things.

So I would consume alcohol, it would go through my bloodstream and it would get into my cells and my organs. It's like my body knew it was coming because that's how I was feeding my body for years consistently. So of course my body adjusted and adapted to the substance that I put in it. So when I chose not to drink, because drinking was my norm but if I

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chose to do differently and choose not to drink, guess what? Of course my body would experience symptoms like irritability, restlessness. I'd get mildly agitated like I'm not drinking tonight and get a little upset.

I'd get moody and I'd often feel like something was missing because my routine wasn't there. So most people who drink excessively fall into this category where they have certain symptoms when they cut back and they are considered more mild or not life threatening. And that's for most people fall into this category. Now, we know of course not everybody falls into this category.

According to the statistics on the CDC website which I refer to all the time, even on my website is that those who drink excessively less than 10% would be considered to have a severe alcohol use disorder.

Now, those who have a severe alcohol use disorder and we used to refer to that as alcoholics. If they just go cold turkey of course they could have severe more symptoms, life threatening symptoms called delirium tremens. And they get rapid onset of confusion, and shaking, and shivering, and an irregular heartbeat, and sweating, and hallucinations may occur. And of course this is a medical emergency and should be treated with the appropriate medical care. But that's not the category I'm referring to in this podcast.

I'm talking about the 90% of over-drinkers who don't meet that criteria, who are not in that classification or at least not in that classification yet. So that being said this podcast is not about medical advice. And it's really directed towards those over-drinkers who are in that 90% category, where they taper or cut back and they have mild symptoms.

And what I like to do is just liken this to the fact of if you've ever consumed at some point, or maybe now you consume a lot of caffeine and you go to cut back or just cut out caffeine, your body will have symptoms. I get headaches when I cut back on my caffeine intake or take a break from it at times, feeling sluggish, maybe a little more tired.

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Our body if it's used to getting a certain amount of caffeine and we cut back of course the body is going to experience some signs and symptoms of withdrawal, because our bodies become dependent on receiving that on a consistent basis, usually on a daily basis. And here's what I really want to point out about that. This is to be expected. When we cut back on alcohol it is to be expected that we will have symptoms. So in terms of physical deprivation we know that the body is going to experience symptoms when we cut back or cut it out completely.

And why I point this out is because I think it's a problem if we don't think it's going to happen. And what I find is when we cut back we think we are magically going to feel better right out of the gates. And that's not what happens. We have to wait and give time to the body to adjust to its new homeostasis, to its new normal.

And what I find to be a bigger problem is when we make a bigger problem out of it. We say it's so hard and we like to complain about all the symptoms we have. And how it's unfair, this shouldn't happen. No, it should happen. Your body adjusts, your body adapts. And I want to convince you that that is a good thing. But oftentimes I'll hear people complain about it like they're in a torture chamber.

And let's put this really into perspective my friends, it's not as painful as giving birth, or breaking a bone, or passing a kidney stone, or having your appendix rupture. It's not that painful but we talk about it as if it is. I don't know what to do with myself. These urges keep coming. I just don't know what to do. I'm so bored or I'm so lonely, or these feelings that I'm now feeling for the first time, I don't know how to cope. And I just have to remind you of course you don't because you haven't trained your mind and your body to cope. Of course this is all going to come up for you.

And I want you to think as this is part of the process to healing because it is. That doesn't mean it's bad. It actually means it's good. Just think how you feel after surgery. Your body is healing, it's recovering. Does it feel good? No. Is it necessary? Yes. Will it be good one day? Absolutely. And

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really here's the thing. This takes the body a couple of days to a couple of weeks max. It's short lived, it's not like you're going to feel this way for a long, long time. And that's the beauty, the body adjusts and heals.

So the best way to handle it is to plan for it, to know it's part of the process, to know you have to go through that to get to the other side. There's no way around it. But thinking that it's wrong and it shouldn't happen, causes more pain. And here's the thing. If we don't deal with that pain and that healing process and we look to food or something else to ease the process, guess what happens?

Then we develop another habit that we don't want. Something again external and outside of us we depend on to for our happiness. And that's not how it works because that doesn't provide true happiness and true joy. It's short lived. It's a dopamine hit. And what's the half life of that, 10, 15 minutes? And then we keep chasing that dopamine hit and keep eating more, or drinking more, or shopping more, or spending more, looking to keep that hit up.

But we know it becomes the law of diminishing returns. So it's not sustainable and it doesn't make us feel good about us. So that is the physical depravation that our body will experience, nothing wrong with it unless we have severe symptoms which those I'm not going to talk about further in this podcast. But we should expect some symptoms. We should expect our sleep to be a little erratic for a few days, into a few weeks until again our body can adjust. This is to be expected and it's a good thing.

Now let's move on to talk about the psychological depravation. Now, this is the type of depravation that I think we have a lot more control than we think. And this is the depravation that we create with our minds. So you may want to call this psychological depravation, mental depravation. I also refer to this as emotional depravation because this type of depravation is truly a feeling and we know that all thoughts create our feelings. So if we have a feeling it is created by our thoughts. So, psychological depravation is created by our minds.

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I'll often hear my clients tell me that they experience feelings of feeling deprived. And it's always by how they think. So when I ask them, "Why do you think you feel that way?" This is what I usually hear, "Because my friend, or my spouse, or my husband gets to drink and I can't." And I just have to remind you that you can drink, you're just telling yourself you can't drink. You always have the option to drink. You always have the choice to drink. And may I remind you, you chose not to drink.

So we have to go back to the reasons why you're choosing not to drink. And a lot of those reasons are empowering, and uplifting, and truly the version of you that you want. So I love having my clients write that list for themselves and keep it handy for when their mind is acting up and creating deprivation because truly there is no deprivation. You can decide to drink. No one's telling you, you can't drink. And I always like to dig in a little deeper to that question.

And I've talked about that on different podcasts. But really why is it that you want the drink? Because knowing that truly can change everything. Now, sometimes I hear my clients say, "I feel so deprived because I had a stressful day, or I had a long day, or this happened, or I got this bad news and I don't know how to handle it and I should be able to drink." Is basically what they're saying at the end of that sentence. But here's the thing, having a stressful day or a long day is not an entitlement to drink. It's not the hall pass that we should get to have alcohol.

And not every brain handles stress or a long day that way. The only reason your brain is handling it that way is that is because that's how you conditioned it to handle it. It's because that's how you've operated in the past. It's because that's what the brain has learned that is the go to way to handle stress, or a long day, or disappointing news. But again I want to remind you, not everybody handles stress or bad news the same way. Some people when they want to manage stress and they feel really stressed out they go for a run.

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Some people when they feel really stressed out they start yelling at everybody around them. Some people when they feel stressed out they go to the pantry and overeat, and look for cookies, and refined carbohydrates for that dopamine hit right away. Some people rub their hands raw. Some people bite their nails. Some people consume alcohol. And it's all just how you patterned your brain to handle stress. It means this is my go to way of handling stress and this is what I have done in the past.

So your brain is just trying to be efficient, it's like I know it works, this is what we do when we feel this emotion. And it's this conditioning that makes it all seem automatic. So the brain has come to expect a drink because of the way you were thinking. Here's one I have heard recently. "My husband is out of town therefore I get to drink. My husband's back on his work trips, now I get to drink." Or here's the ultra popular one that I used all the time, "It's the weekend and it's how I celebrate and relax and unwind."

Just thinking it was the weekend that's conditioning from my college years. It's the weekend, we can go to frat parties or we could go out to the bars now. And there's no class the next day or any reason to wake-up early and I was still behaving that way decades later because that's how I trained my brain. Not because I have a bad brain, not because I'm a bad person, not because I'm a good person, and not because I have a good brain. It's just the way I've patterned my brain.

So when you don't drink guess what you will feel? You will feel deprived if you currently have these thoughts because what your brain is telling you is that there's a pattern interrupt. We are not operating as we normally do and if my thoughts haven't caught up to the new thoughts that I want to be having of course it's going to make it mean I feel deprived. I can't have what I want. And here's the ultimate message I want you to get from this podcast if it's not any other thing it's this one thing. That if you don't change your thoughts you will always feel deprived.

If you don't change those thoughts that you should be able to have a drink when others drink, or that's what weekends are for is to be able to drink, or

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this is what we do on a girl's night. And that's what a girl's night is all about, or a trip to Nashville, or whatever else it is where you want to change the way you operate around alcohol because you are causing your own feelings of deprivation with your thoughts.

Now, most of us aren't taught this think, feel, act cycle so we don't even realize that we are the ones creating our own discomfort and creating our own emotional deprivation. And that's okay because guess what? Now you know. Now you are empowered with this information to get your transformation. So while we can't do too much about the physical deprivation as we learn to cut back or as we cut out alcohol from our lives, because we know that the body needs a period of time to adjust.

But we do know that the physical deprivation is very short term, totally expected and relief will come soon once our bodies reacclimate and adjust to less or no alcohol. And I love to think that our bodies are brilliantly designed this way. I mean just think about it, they heal all the time. You break a bone, the bone begins to heal whether it's set right or not, the bone automatically starts to heal. You break open your skin with a cut, or shaving your legs, or something, your skin will grow back and heal, broken bones heal, broken skin heals.

The body always puts itself back together. It always seeks to go back to the normal. It wants to be healthy. Isn't that a great thing? If you over-feed it, it doesn't feel good. It's sending you signs, it's like hey, this doesn't feel good, let's eat less. If you over-drink it sends you signs and signals and say, "Hey, that was too much. I'm cloudy minded. I forgot some things." Your brain's not operating quite as well. Your sleep is interrupted. It's telling you all these signs that that was too much. And it has its own innate ability to heal.

But now moving on to the psychological deprivation, we don't have to experience that if we don't want to. There is a way out of that type of deprivation. We can simply change the way we think about alcohol so that we don't desire it, so that we don't feel deprived. And when this happens

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guess what? We don't miss it and it's just not that important to us. It's just not a big portion of our life and we stop thinking about it so much which means mentally we've changed our relationship with it, just like our bodies, our brains heal.

Our mental space and our mental capacity heals and we've seen this time and time again on PET scans and MRI scans. The brain grows new brain cells. The brain can regenerate to a certain degree. Isn't that the best news ever? And here's what I love is that we can direct this healing process to happen faster with the cognitive tools that I teach here on the podcast and in my programs. We have the tools and by doing them correctly reduces our healing time. We're able to recover so much quicker. We're able to forget about alcohol and just make it so non-important to our lives.

We can become these women who can take it or leave it with our drinking. And that way we free up our mental space and our mental capacity to think about other things, and do other things, and accomplish other things. And most importantly not experience pain and suffering around our drinking. We don't have to manage life with this crutch. We can heal our minds and our bodies. So the physical deprivation is short lived and some people really never get over the mental deprivation of it.

And this part needs to be healed so you're no longer feeling deprived, or resentful, or bitter when somebody else is drinking around you and you're not. Or you're so angry and you don't know how to handle your emotions and you're not equipped with the skill set to handle them appropriately and you're doing other things that make you feel not good about yourself. So you can stay trapped with your thoughts and not make progress or you can do this work and get progress quickly and effectively.

This is why thought work is the thing that works because it heals and ultimately changes how you feel about alcohol because no one wants to not drink and still think about alcohol all the time. Have you been there? I have. I felt this way when I did a cleanse or I just took a break for a while. I'd feel so accomplished not having alcohol in my system for whatever

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number of days I was taking a break for. And while that was such a good thing I secretly was so excited to go back to drinking again. I looked forward to the day when I can reintroduce it again.

And yes, it is a good thing to take a break. I advocate that wholeheartedly. But if you're not doing the thought work around the way then you're going to fall into the same pattern again. And we're going to use terminology like there's a slippery slope, or I can't handle it, and once I start I can't stop because we haven't changed the programming and the relationship we previously had with alcohol during that break. So taking a break is just one right action but we also need to do the cognitive work in that time as well, that's how our brains heal.

I like to think of it as same brain, different action does not create a different result, maybe in the short term but not for the long term. I think you need a different brain and different action to create a different result. And by a different brain I don't mean a brain transplant, what I mean is doing the thought work, different thoughts that create different feelings that lead to taking different action. And maybe just a 30 day fast from alcohol works for you. Great, maybe that's changed your relationship with alcohol.

But I find for so many people that they just feel guilty when it didn't change their relationship with alcohol and they think something is wrong with them. And then they get mad because they say, "Why didn't this work for me when I've seen it work for other people?" Because one modality doesn't work for everybody, you've got to try different ways to make it work.

And what the science shows is that when you change your relationship to alcohol, alcohol is the same but it feels changed to you. And that is done by thought work, managing your thoughts, doing the cognitive therapy that's required to change your brain. So commit to your health and to feeling better, and to changing your brain because staying stuck is an option but so is breaking free. And people break free of things all the time.

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And I love knowing that the mental, or emotional, or psychological deprivation is optional and that you can choose a different way. So why not choose not to have any of that psychological deprivation? And as always the choice is yours my friends. Alright, that's what I have for you today and I can't wait to see you next week.

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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.