

Annie Grace: 00:17 This is Annie Grace and you're listening to This Naked Mind Podcast where without judgement, pain or rules we explore the role of alcohol in our lives and culture.

Annie Grace: 00:31 Hi! This is Annie Grace and welcome to This Naked Mind podcast. I'm so glad that you're here. Thanks for being here. Today, I'm here with Meredith Atwood, and Meredith has just amazing sort of story because... Hi, Meredith, welcome... She has so much success and she has a great podcast that I was on called The Same 24 Hours. And so we're going to get into what that's all about because it's such a cool concept. And she also has an online community, Swim Bike Mom, for triathletes and it's just such a movement that Meredith has created. But before we get into all of your success and what you do today, I would love if you'd just like take us back to kind of the beginning and tell us your story, sort of with drinking.

Meredith: 01:09 Yeah absolutely. So thanks for having me. I'm glad we're doing this and face to face is so much fun. Okay, so I had my first drink when I was 17. I went to South Africa for weightlifting competition because that's what I did my teenage years. And I remember it like it was yesterday like this drink was just it was a margarita. And it transported me. I was somebody else. I felt like someone else. And it was the beginning of the end. I mean immediately it was something I had to have. And I, you know at 17, it's not the easy thing to get unless, you know, you have parents with a liquor cabinet, which I did not. I had very churchie parents and non drinking parents. So this was I was never around alcohol growing up. So it was all very new. Fast forward a little bit to college and college was nothing but a giant binge. I mean there was access. It was, I mean I don't want to date myself, but it was quite a while ago and it was really easy to just go to a bar you know in the late '90s and just drink till 5:00 AM whatever. And so I did. And I had no off button, like none whatsoever. And I ended up going, graduating from school, went to law school, still no off button. But my off button was really completely not off in law school. Like it was so, it was so bad.

Meredith: 02:49 And I know people say oh, well how bad was it? And you know for those of us who have struggled with drinking we can kind of nod and say yeah I can understand that. But you know a big ole thing of vodka or a bottle and a half a wine, two bottles of wine, like that was standard. I mean that's just what I did every night. So in 2004 I was, how old was I? 24. I quit drinking for a year. It was like my year of sobriety and I went to AA and I lost like 50 pounds and I stopped drinking in April and I returned to law school in August and people did not recognize me. Now I dyed

my hair red but literally I was talking to my friends in the hallway. And one of them was like...there was a light bulb went off and he was like oh my god. Meredith?

Meredith: 03:46 I'm like, yes. So like the drastic change from April to August, and you know my appearance and my attitude it was enough for someone not to recognize me. So for me that should have been like a giant clue that maybe I didn't need that in my life but it wasn't. So I had and I had my year of sobriety and then had an incident that you know I was very stressed out I went and had one margarita again.

Meredith: 04:13 Are you detecting a pattern? Then I woke up in 2015, you know 17 years later, I'm not math is not my strong suit, 12 years later and you know that's like how it happened for me, I just never stopped. You know and during that time I had a legal career and I did four Iron Man triathlons, I started a blog, I wrote a book, I had two kids, like all of that happened around me. But drinking just was what I did you know. And so I had this incident happen I guess and 2015. And so I woke up one morning and the kids needed to get to school, lunches needed to get made, life had to you know move forward. And I did not care. Like I just was like meh, and I put the covers over my head and I went back to sleep.

Meredith: 05:11 And that was that you know that was not me. I was the responsible drunk. You know I drank til passing out but I was up with the sun and you know taking care of my kids. But this particular morning, I did not. And you know I woke up a couple hours later and I assumed my kids got to school, either that or they were missing you know. And there was a note from my husband on the counter and it said you need to get your \_\_\_\_\_ together. And I was like you know who are you to tell me like have you seen my resume? I look amazing on paper you know it was like... I do all these things. But I knew.. you know that was the first time after almost two decades of drinking very heavily that I dropped the ball. And I did it knowingly. And you know I had dropped the ball a few times with people and relationships and I would fight with people.

Meredith: 06:14 And you know all the things that standard, standard drinking behavior. Especially like the Internet. I mean you're going to get in internet fights with people. You know that's probably the best thing for my business ever was me stopping drinking for the internet fights. But yeah I just and I didn't stop immediately but that was sort of the you know everyone talks about a rock bottom and you don't have to hit it. And I didn't necessarily hit it. But man I could see it coming. And another thing during that

time was and this is kind of morbid but it's it's the truth. I would drive down this familiar hill every day and then there's this huge tree at the bottom of it.

- Meredith: 06:57 And I would think I could just drive into that tree. Like it was part of my consciousness like life was kind of sucking so bad that perhaps I could just drive into that tree one day and it was a big hill. So it would have done me in or just made me very messed up. But so it was kind of the build of those things. And I came to the realization that I was either going to have to stop drinking or I probably wasn't going to make it out of 2016 alive. Like I just had this sense, you're probably not going to be alive in a year if you keep this up. And so I I stopped. I made the decision, I picked a drop dead date. And yeah I just, I knew that December 12th 2015 and I quit two weeks before Christmas. Who does that?
- Meredith: 07:53 I knew it was going to be my last day and it was. And I know for a fact that I will never have a drink again. And I know a lot of people say oh, don't say that, but that's the way I have to live. I have to live as if it is an absolute certainty. So yeah that was a long winded version.
- Annie Grace: 08:14 No that's awesome. That's funny because I also was like a few weeks before Christmas. Same thing and it was just like this is this is the time like I'm tired of not remembering different Christmases. You know I'm not remembering the best time of the year. All the family is there, right. I don't, I don't know. I was just so sick of losing my memories so we had that in common. That's very cool.
- Meredith: 08:39 Yeah. Well you know the funny thing was I could and I also knew that it had to stop because we have two sinks in our bathroom. There's like a doorway separating them. And when I would get up in the morning I'd be brushing my teeth and I'd look over at my husband and I could tell. Like if the drinking from the night before was really bad. Just from looking at him across the toothbrushing because I could just I was not remembering. I was drinking to blackout every night. And maybe I was really fun or maybe I wasn't you know. And I could tell it was really starting to take a toll on him. You know not just our relationship but him like as a human and he was tired.
- Annie Grace: 08:39 And so did he stop too?
- Meredith: 09:30 So he's not, he doesn't have a problem with it. He doesn't have a problem with a glass of wine you know. Two glasses of wine he's if he gets really crazy he'll have three. But he's just never

been.. you know I've always been 10 levels above him. I'm the one up drinking with his friends that come over to party with him. You know what I mean like I just, he never had a problem and I never asked him to quit. I didn't ask him to quit when I did because I think that's a major part of this is your sobriety journey is truly your sobriety journey. And a lot of people say you know I don't have the support and I understand support is great and he was totally in support by the way. He was like yes please stop. But I think you have to be just ready to quit on your own no matter what is going on around you because there's not always going to be that support and the way I did it is I just stopped making eye contact with alcohol.

- Meredith: 10:34 And that sounds like a funny thing but I pretend like it's someone I don't want to see. Like you're at the grocery store and you just move your cart around the island, don't look at them. And I literally live my life like that to this day. When we go out to dinner and you know the wine is open and it's poured, I don't look. I don't go oh gosh I remember how wonderful that was, I don't look at it. I don't I romanticize it. I don't make eye contact with it. I mean to the point where if my husband drinks and I don't, I don't see it, I don't hear it and you know he'll sit down I'm like you know I'll smell it cause I don't even realize that it's been happening around me because I'm so just put my blinders up to it because the worst thing ever is... and I'm not immune to it.
- Meredith: 11:24 You know like I can go to a bar and I'll hear a martini get shaken I'm like you know I'll hear it. But I have to.. because I love those...but I have to bring myself back and just be like don't look. Nothing is happening there, you know. Bad, bad.
- Annie Grace: 11:45 Nice. That's that's interesting. I've never heard that before. Just stop making eye contact with alcohol. That's cool.
- Meredith: 11:45 Don't look at it.
- Annie Grace: 11:51 So well what would you say like I mean what is kind of the benefits that you've you've experienced then?
- Meredith: 12:01 Oh gosh that is such a long list. I mean you know I think when you're standing on the wrong side of alcohol you think alcohol is going to give you courage. You think it's going to make you more outgoing. You think you're going to be better in social situations. I didn't realize how much anxiety alcohol inserted into social situations for me and how how much I sweat drinking. You know what I mean like I would go to a party and have my fancy dress on and I would get my wine because I was

going to relax but I would start sweating because you know alcohol raises your core temperature and I would just be a sweating, soon to be drunk, mess. And so what I have gained from not doing that is one I'm not like in a cocktail dress, sweating.

- Meredith: 13:01 I'm clear on everything that happened. Every single thing I said and the funny thing is I'm equally as awkward drunk as sober. But I don't tend to say things that I regret. You know and then one interesting thing that I thought like my weight would just fall off of me. I thought oh I'll quit drinking you know I'm not ingesting twelve hundred calories a day. And that wasn't the case because I did a really good number on myself for drinking for 20 years. And when you do that you become insulin resistant and you get all these other fun health scenarios that you have to spend a lot of time working to correct. However, it's been so much easier to get my workouts and to eat well because you don't wake up with alcohol balm in your stomach craving a greasy biscuit, just like anything to absorb this booze. You know that doesn't exist. Just being present with my family, my kids, everything.
- Meredith: 14:06 Everything is better as a sober person. I really don't think, I really don't... is there anything better as a drunk person? I don't think so. I mean do you?
- Annie Grace: 14:19 No, I don't think so. I mean yeah there's nothing that I miss now. I mean I certainly like the times of my life when I was drinking a lot were times of my life that I mean my whole life you know from childhood whatever you're like oh you know you have nostalgia for times and places and stuff but it's never for the alcohol. It's never for the feeling of being drunk. In fact I wish I could sort of rewind and have experienced and remembered more because I do feel that there was you know really some years especially when my second son was quite young that are just like blurry and muted and they're very gray. I can't... It bums me out actually. Sometimes I go and when I'm feeling really like masochistic and I'll go back to like you know the years and I'll look through old photos and just be like can I remember? Like try to get it back.
- Annie Grace: 15:15 Like I probably do it once a year and I try to try to look at this and be like okay, do I remember this and I can't still. And maybe it will come back sometimes or maybe I'll stop doing it and stop torturing myself. But you know that feeling of regret of just not being able to remember certain things that I really, you know... But equally now I have everything so now it's like okay, you can't spend time in that place of regret like you just can't. So I'm

really careful about that too. But no I agree. I think there's... I mean everything's over here. So to speak, really.

Meredith: 15:15

Yeah.

Annie Grace: 15:15

That's so cool.

Meredith: 15:52

I always tell everyone that I don't remember my daughter until she turned 3. And now she is the younger. And my kids are 14 months apart so I don't know that even a sober mom would remember because it was really crazy. But yeah I know what you mean I have the uncanny ability just like I don't look booze in the eye, I don't look the past in the eye either. But I can recognize that I lost many years of my children to... and it wasn't necessarily to drinking because I really didn't...maybe we go out to Mexican with them, margaritas again, but I really didn't drink until they went to bed. But what I think I missed was just being able to handle the middle of the night wake up. Better to take those moments when you can be quiet with your children or to really nurture them as a mother. And I was like, oh my god, you know.

Annie Grace: 16:55

Or like this is such a.. sorry to.. such a thing. Okay, last night was my son's ninth birthday and I feel this most nights now where when it's bedtime I'm like really you just got home from school and now you have to go to bed. And we were just playing this game and like super bummed. And I remember when I was drinking it was like okay, if I can just make it to bedtime so I can pour the.. you know.. open... I mean I was drinking before they went to bed. But but it started more in earnest, like it was kind of like a token drink before and then once once they were in bed then it was like okay, now we can really you know whatever. And I remember really looking forward to bedtime and I haven't thought of that.

Annie Grace: 17:42

Every time I talk to you Meredith, you know, you bring something up that is so so cool and true last time it was us sweating and I was like that's true. I totally don't have to use those intense like antiperspirants. It's amazing. Can't believe you sweat so much less. It's awesome. And now it's the bedtime thing. I had never considered that but I my entire perspective shifted from you know like I like to soak in the time in the morning before they're in school and I soak in the time before they have to go to bed because I know it's just a few hours a day and then they're in school the rest of the day. And now before same thing it was just like I can't wait for you to be in bed.

Meredith: 18:20 Yeah. It's just incredible how much time was wasted, you know, how many moments were wasted. And like I said I try not to dwell on it because it really bummed me out. And I tried to shift my focus more toward I guess a sense of gratitude that I stopped when I did because my kids they're the same age. Close to yours. My son just turned 10 and my daughter is almost nine and they I used to ask my son to get something to drink for dinner. Like go get the drinks for dinner you know like I meant fill up the water and he would go to the bar and get a bottle of wine and bring it to me. I was like oh you know and of course that didn't actually stop me from drinking at that time but it was definitely like okay. Duly noted. This kid sees you with wine all the time, but something happened a couple of months ago about booze and we were in a restaurant maybe my husband ordered a beer and my son said Mom, do you ever drink? And I was like oh my gosh. You know he doesn't remember.

Annie Grace: 18:20 Oh, that's so awesome.

Meredith: 19:37 I was like, it was almost, and this kid... the crazy thing about the son, my son, is he has this incredible memory like he'll say stuff like mom, do you remember when? And I'm like oh god he remembers everything. So the fact that he made maybe he tied me being a jerk of a mom, you know he knew that that was happening, but at least he didn't tie it to me having an alcohol problem. Not that I would ever hide that from him and I never will. I mean obviously even if I wanted to once he figures out Google it's all out there. But you know I try and when I get sad about not remembering and not being the best mom I can I could have been. I just, I'm just grateful. And I think if we can always shift our current situation to gratitude no matter where we are it can kind of dig out of that dark place. I mean because I did a number, my lord, and I know you did too.

Annie Grace: 20:43 Yeah, we could.. it's really, it's really like that, that quote "Which wolf do you feed? You know do you feed the wolf of regret by spending your time and energy thinking there and guilt and shame or the wolf of gratitude and and you know the more that you do feed the good wolf so to speak, the more that that kind of perpetuates like you think on what you focus on, you know? And everything happens through kind of what you focus on and then you change kind of your programming. We all have the same thoughts day in and day out every single day. And if they're intensely negative thoughts you're going to have an intensely negative emotional response. If we change that to be grateful and positive thoughts...what I love about this is that all the science we knew this because we started practicing this and it made sense and it made us feel better.

- Annie Grace: 21:23 And I see my mother and my grandmother some of the most grateful people I've ever known ever. also some of the happiest people you know and like my mom was never a drinker and I see them being so grateful and. And they always told me this. But then for me like something about me I'm like okay, whatever until there's a few studies about it then I'm like oh this is cool.
- Annie Grace: 21:48 You know some science comes out and confirms that you actually rewire your brain when you start to experience gratitude and you awaken all of these feelings of just joy and happiness in your life. And it's like amazing. The thing.. I'll say one more thing about gratitude because I think it's really important is that I used to think that gratitude was a like a personality trait. Like you were grateful person or you were not. And that's so false because that especially when you think that's true you feel like okay, well I'm just, I wasn't a grateful person. Gratitude is a practice, like a practice, like you practice typing, or playing the piano, or doing music. You have to practice and you know what I do and I'd love to hear what you do. Not only do I try to just stop a few times a day and just observe like where I am and what I'm doing and what I appreciate about it but I also every single morning I have a little one sentence journal where I write what I was grateful for. And every single night I try to do the same thing. I'm much better in the mornings than at night, I will admit that. And then at meals we try to go around the table and do it because when you start to practice it that's where the brain shifts that's where you start to recognize more things to be grateful for. When you're thinking of more things to be regretful for or shameful you start to see more things to be shameful of. And so shifting that. But I just for years I thought it was a personality trait. And it's it's not it's something you learn. Which is so hopeful. I mean I'd love to hear what you do.
- Meredith: 23:24 Well, I do think some people are... I call it the goodie gene. You know some people you go to a park and they're like goodie, we are at the park and then there's some of us who are like eh, it's the park, you know. I mean I, I get what you're saying. But I think some people have the goodie gene. You know they're born with it and maybe those of us who drink don't have the goodie gene but that's exactly true. That's why we need to practice gratitude. And it's funny you mention your little one sentence journal. I started doing that about six or eight weeks ago where my one thing I'm anxious about and two creative things I want to accomplish each day and I'm such a non goody Jean person that literally my gratitude list on some mornings is like I'm grateful for my tooth brush.

Meredith: 24:14 I'm grateful for coffee and I'm grateful that these kids are going to school in an hour. You know like I know it was like wrench journal but then some days it's really powerful. But yeah I think I'm just a bit of a scrooge, deep down, even though people that people that know me would say I'm a very positive and grateful person. Those who really know me and know where I come from and say oh you're much better now than you used to be. But yeah it's definitely it's a practice and it's a conscious effort. I mean if you're not born with the goody gene you have to train yourself and it's an easy learn. It really is.

Annie Grace: 24:14 Yeah, it's very easy.

Meredith: 25:03 And it comes with just opening your eyes. I think a lot of times I'm always stuck in the future. Like I don't tend to be stuck in the past because I just ignore that, I put my head in the sand for the past. I don't tend to be very present minded. I'm very future oriented and I think those of us that are very future oriented and task driven and you know Type A personalities, we are not able to bring ourselves to the present. And if you can't get yourself to the present it's hard to be grateful. So I think all of that is kind of tied in and I think that's why I drank. I think deep down drinking allowed me to just not be present and also not deal with the future because I wasn't heading in a good place with my future. I wasn't going to hit any of my goals or my dreams or my aspirations because I was too busy drunk, so drinking was just this cycle that fed itself.

Annie Grace: 26:02 Oh yeah totally. And I also think it's much easier to be grateful when you feel physically good. Yeah that's the thing is feeling physically bad and I, I don't even.. you don't even realize how bad you feel until you start feeling good.

Meredith: 26:19 That is so true. And I'm such a baby now it's like you know I don't get 2 hours of sleep and I'm like ugh. And how did I get up and ride 100 miles on my bicycle drunk? You know like now I just don't get my sleep like oh, I'm just so tired and crabby. I don't know how I did it.

Annie Grace: 26:42 Yeah. Because your threshold for pain was was crazy you just kind of made peace with..

Meredith: 26:42 I guess.

Annie Grace: 26:51 ...crap. To be honest about it. I know I did. And I did crazy stuff too it wasn't as much in the athletic space but it was certainly like marathon travel. I did one trip that was seven countries in

18 days around the world. So L.A. to New York like full circle. And it was completely, completely insane. And I remember just saying yeah you know I got a method for this it's caffeine in the morning, alcohol in the evening, carb rush at night, caffeine in the morning, alcohol in the evening... And that trip ended me up... I remember I was I was in China and I had hurt my finger and it kind of got a little bit infected and then I was in Paris a few days later and it was looking quite infected and it was a combination of the paranoia and stuff, I ended up in the emergency room in Paris at 3:00 in the morning.

Annie Grace: 27:42 And this doctor she's looking at my fingers just like okay, yeah, you have a little infection. But like how much sleep have you had recently. She just looked at me and she's like and like what are you drinking like what is going on with you? She could probably smell it like after 18 days. And I mean I just broke down and she's like okay, like this whatever you're doing it is not working. It was a big wake up call for me actually I haven't kind of remembered or told that story but it was one of these things where we subsisted like we our kind of baseline and normal was so incredibly painful that I just thought oh my fingers just hurt and she took one look at me and she's like there's so much more wrong with all of you then what's wrong with your finger, you know. But it was really interesting. Really interesting.

Meredith: 28:38 Yeah. Isn't that that the case? I mean drinking is a problem right. But if it's not even the whole picture. I mean there's so many more... and that's the thing, you can quit drinking and then you just uncover more stuff, like that's the thing about sobriety. I mean I think a lot of people think okay, I'm going to quit drinking and everything's going to be great and it is, but you drank for a reason like you wanted to avoid something for a really long time and to go through the sobriety and have to work through those feelings like yeah your finger hurts, but like everything kind of hurts too right. But on the other side you know you get your finger fixed, you fix your shoulder and everything is a thousand, million percent better.

Annie Grace: 28:38 Yeah.

Meredith: 29:25 I just can't imagine waking up that way ever again.

Annie Grace: 29:31 No. Me neither. I really I say it all the time but it's like I never think of it like I don't get to drink. I'm like I don't have to do that ever again. There is nobody that's going to force it down my throat. And I am so grateful for that. Like I just feel like wow I don't have to do that. I don't have to be there. I don't have to

be that person. I don't have to feel those feelings. I don't have to feel that physically. It's honestly like the best.

- Meredith: 29:56 Yeah. So I'm actually coming up on two years, in a week. So a week will be my 2 year. Yeah.
- Annie Grace: 29:56 That's so cool.
- Meredith: 30:04 And that number keeps me going too because I you know I'm like a overachiever so it is like well if I drink I'll have to start over. I'll have to start my clock over.
- Annie Grace: 30:15 Oh that's very cool. I think people have all sorts of different feelings about numbers you know and I think again to what you said in the very beginning is like there's no right way to do this. You have to find what works for you. You know we didn't drink in similar ways like I was not a margarita person, I drank red wine. You know I don't really count time. But like that's what works for me because I feel and I feel more free saying I don't have to drink again. And no rule just like not today. And you feel more free saying never again. And I think like I'd love listeners to just hear that because I think it's tendency to say this works for me this must be what works for you and if not you're doing it wrong. And I think it's something very upsetting about the entire alcohol free movement to be honest because I I feel like there's no wrong way.
- Annie Grace: 31:02 You know. Yeah this is about you. You have the power you have the key. Nobody's going to do this for you and you have to find what works for you. Absolutely. So what are some of your best tips for people? You know I know you talked about I love that stopped making eye contact with alcohol. It's brilliant. Do you have any other things that you can of your go-tos? Do you still go to meetings or what sort of things?
- Meredith: 31:30 So I did AA back in my year of sobriety in 2004 and I didn't do it this time. Honestly the main issue was time. Like I know everyone uses that as an excuse but I just I couldn't figure it out with the kids and the schedule. Like how do you even get to a meeting? And I know that sounds weak but it just I didn't feel like I needed it because I... you know you said everyone comes to sobriety differently. But I do think that everyone has a core similarity in that decision. It is a decision you know and it's a decision whether to drink or not to drink, this hour, this day, or in my case never again. You know and I think one of the tips is when you're ready and you'll know when you're ready is just to make the decision and then repeat that decision.

Meredith: 32:18 You know I say on a daily basis I'm not going to ever drink again. My decision is you know I'm not going to drink today. I'm not going to drink this hour. Just repeat that decision because I did an interview with Lauren Zander. She has a book called 'Maybe It's You' and one of the things she talks about is how decisions and dreams and goals are promises that we make to ourselves. And so when we make a decision we need to keep the promise that we're making to ourselves because if we get in the habit of breaking our own promises, like to ourselves, like then who can we trust? So I think that's a major trick is just you know when you get to your decision, recognize it as a promise to yourself and keep it. Whatever it is.

Annie Grace: 33:07 That is so important. Because when you're making the decision, okay, now it's forever. But you're not all in, you're not certain, you're not sure, you don't even know if you can do it, and you break that decision, you get in the habit of breaking decisions to yourself and you stop trusting yourself. But that's what I love about my newest project. The Alcohol Experiment which is at AlcoholExperiment.com, but it's just a 30 day thing. And if you can make a decision for 30 days, then people want to go another 30 days, or another 30. But I would say the decision is absolutely by far the most important part of absolutely everything. You have to make a decision that you can commit to. You know, honestly, it has to be if it's a one day decision, it has to be a one day decision. Or if it's a this party decision, because if you can't commit to it and if you can't if you start... I love this okay, so I have a good friend Alex Charfen.

Annie Grace: 34:06 And he says when he learned to shoot a gun, which I know can be controversial whatever but let's just put that aside for a second, he said his coach took him one foot away from the target. So he was shooting one foot away from the target. And he was like okay, this is kind of ridiculous you know because obviously I'm going to hit the target and he was like, yeah, that's the point. You want confidence. You want to build the habit of hitting the target, of achieving the goal, of making the decision, and then you move back a half a foot. And you move back a half a foot and Alex can now out shoot like sharp shooters in the CIA. I mean this guy is a really good shot, but that's because he instead of building from correcting mistakes he built on a foundation of wins. And I think that, what you just said Meredith, is like powerful. I mean make decisions you can win. And if you have to go closer to the target, go closer to the target. I mean that's huge.

Meredith: 35:01 It's all about consistency and building upon you know it's the same thing with working out. You know you can look at this

incredible goal a year down the road and go how can I ever finish a marathon? How can I ever do an Ironman? Well you don't do it that way. You do it one day at a time. One workout at a time. And if you put it in that context, I mean drinking is the same thing. It's just a reverse instead of an action it's an inaction which I think is sometimes hard. But something that was really actually helpful for me when I was toying with.. well there's two things actually. Number one I came to the realization that moderation is not available to me. It's not available to me with certain substances and certain foods. And what I mean by that is if I have the... I mean I had two decades of research that showed that Meredith Atwood was unable to have one drink. I don't think I ever did. I don't. I would go to a party or be in a situation and say okay, I'm going to have one drink. No. Research shows Meredith Atwood cannot have one drink and so I looked at that really objectively because I tried to moderate. I think everyone goes through that process like okay, I'm going to just drink on the weekends and then I'm going to just drink at parties and then you know ten months later you wake up and you've had a drink every night or ten drinks every night. So I recognize that pattern. I just looked at my life and I said moderation is not available to me. And then I made a pro and con list.

Meredith: 36:37

And this sounds so simple and so silly, but I literally took my yellow legal pad which I always have with me. I drew a line down the middle and I wrote here are the pros of continuing to drink, here are the cons. And I was like okay, pros... What are they? Like okay, I'm I'm going to fit into social situations you know but I already covered that, right? So I made a list. I had some stuff on the on the pro side. All had to do with social and what everyone else thought of me and then I made a list of cons and the con list went on for two pages. It just kept going and I looked at it and then I realized that all the all the items on my pro list were not real.

Meredith: 37:25

They were you know I want to be more social, I don't want to be left out. The things on the con list were I will remember my life. I will not get a DUI. I will not kill someone. I will not kill myself. You know I will have more money. I think drinking is not a cheap sport. You know I'm already in a very expensive sport of triathalons and I don't need a second one. So that pro con list was like the turning point because I like to think of myself as an intelligent creature and when presented with the proper evidence I go you know the earth is round, isn't it? And so I did that and then the final thing that really helped me was because I kind of went into my sobriety like here I go, I'm going to be sober.

- Meredith: 38:11 This is amazing. And day one was great. I mean I didn't feel great but mentally it was like you know I'm making a change and you get this high. Day two is like this is kind of hard because I think it was physical detoxing and emotional detoxing. By day three, I mean it was like a dark cloud of death had descended upon me and I was like I'm going to die. Like I am. There is no way out of my thoughts, my emotions, my feelings. These children are here. My husband is here. Everyone is looking at me. It was intense. I thought I'm going crazy. It's official, I'm just losing my mind. And so what I did was I got a journal and I just started writing. Like any time the crazy was really loud, I would get that out of my head and onto paper and then I would hide it very deep in my house somewhere where no one could find it because I don't ever want anyone reading this stuff.
- Meredith: 39:12 It was terrible. But I noticed after about ten days the journaling got a little lighter and the purpose of the journal changed. It wasn't dark anymore it was just life and you know maybe there's some darkness sometimes and maybe I feel down sometimes and I hate people and I don't like myself and I feel fat and disgusting. I mean these are all things that are residual and leftover from the many years of drinking that I still have a lot of self-worth issues and you know all the stuff, but I'm getting those emotions out of my head and just out of my head, you know onto paper, onto the blog.
- Meredith: 39:53 You know, when I wrote my sobriety blog I was I think twelve weeks sober when I came out as a sober person. And now when I feel really weak, I write and I tell people. And I think that's a big key to you know so many people are embarrassed. And I get that and some of us aren't in professions where we can really tell. But the second you tell someone... I mean someone really close to me just stopped drinking. They're on day like four or five and they told me, Meredith, the best thing has been just admitting this. You know they're like this is the biggest relief is just saying it. And I think there's a lot to that because it's like keeping a promise to yourself, you're finally standing in the light.
- Meredith: 40:42 You're being authentic, you're not hiding, you're not sweating in public. You're just, you're just you standing there with all your vulnerability and weakness. But it's not weakness, it's strength. And I think transferring that shift in your thought like hey, I'm just a human. And everyone's got a problem. I hate to break it to you. People are messed up. Everyone is hiding something and everyone is messed up. And it's just you know, you're messed up is not any more special than Bob's next door. So you know I just I look at it as hey, I'm human and if I can tell someone.. and

they're either going to do one of three things, one of 12, I don't know. They're either going to judge you and think you're weak. Well those aren't your people anyway. Or they're going to go wow, that takes a lot of courage and strength, rock on, fist bumb or they're going to say me too.

Annie Grace: 40:42

Right.

Meredith: 41:37

And that's what was always shocking like when I wrote my blog the messages I got from people that are like yep eight years sober here, way to go. And I'm like I never knew.

Annie Grace: 41:37

Right.

Meredith: 41:50

And it's a huge community. Everyone's got a problem drinking, is like how I feel sometimes. It's like we're all recovering. But we are. We are all recovering from something and just because you know our drug of choice is alcohol, everyone's got something. And so I always try and remember that there's you know I think Brene Brown says that shame cannot grow out in the open, that shame grows when it's hidden and kept secret. And so when you say this is who I am, this is what I'm working towards, there's no more shame associated with it. I mean maybe you have regret with all the crap you did. And that's something you gotta work through. But the shame like of I am a bad person, I am not worthy of love, is gone. It's almost like it just evaporates. And so it's really a wonderful gift. I can talk for days, Annie.

Annie Grace: 42:44

No, I love that. I think you said so many like really powerful effective things. I mean and I think you're right. Telling other people.. so many people don't use that as part of their journey and they're like I'm afraid to tell because I feel like what if I fail or you know I say get the support now you know so that when you do you have the support and positive peer pressure is amazing.

Meredith: 42:44

Yeah.

Annie Grace: 43:08

That was amazing. That was great. I love that I took notes actually. I was like yeah this is good stuff. But tell us about...I've kept you for a long time, but I have a few more questions. So tell us about about your work. Because I know that this story has been incredible but so you talked about your blog and then tell us about the podcast.

Meredith: 43:36

So I have the podcast 'The Same 24 Hours' which you are... I meant to look up what Episode you were. Were you 17? I don't

know. But that was a really it's one of the most popular episodes that you are on, Annie. But yeah, the podcast is just interviewing interesting people and finding out kind of their stories and what makes their 24 hours great. You know the idea is we all have the same 24 hours in our day. But it's what we do with those 24 hours that makes us happier, healthier, more successful. And I've found that most people meditate and most people are grateful. On episode 55 I think I've got recorded now that is the big, big summary. Yeah, so I mean I do motivational speaking. I do the blog it's Swim Bike Mom. I actually have a sobriety group that I just started on Facebook. I mean I'm not a trained professional but we have just a free secret Facebook group called Grateful Sobriety.

- Meredith: 44:27 And you can go to GratefulSobriety.com and click Request to Join. And sometimes it's a rigamarole because Facebook really hates the secret groups, apparently. But I'll get you added to that. And it's just a support group. You know we just, I don't put up with any crap. I don't put up with any preaching, like it's just a place where people can you know it's like an AA room but it's available any time just to share your story. And a lot of people come in because you know they sent me an email on it says I think I have a problem, but I don't know if I need to be sober you know and I'm like okay, here we go. Like you know you're cranking up the roller coaster.
- Meredith: 45:10 And it's awesome because you watch them come into the group where they are and then you know it's like a week or it's a year, but then they're like I'm on day 60 and I can't believe how good life is. But it's such a great group because everyone comes in and the ones.. we've got 27 years sober here that's always propping everyone up. You got me, you know that's telling it. telling it as it is. It's such a great group. I mean I just you know it's not AA oriented but people a lot of people are in AA and so and people are big fans of you, Annie. We have to have you come into the group and do a thing.
- Annie Grace: 45:49 I'd love to do that. That would be great.
- Meredith: 45:52 They would love that, yes. Your book is always brought up. The podcast we did is always brought up. Several people said you know once they read your book, that was the switch and it's and it's so true. Like once everyone has to hit the point when they're ready. But your book is very much like the pro con list. It's like once you see it, you can't really un-know it. You gotta face it.
- Annie Grace: 46:16 Awesome. Oh thank you so much. Okay, my final question for you. So Meredith of today, what would you tell the Meredith of

before when you were freaked out and you thought alcohol was just the key to life and what would you tell her about what life is like on the other side?

- Meredith: 46:36 To say like life is better just doesn't even seem like it does it justice. I don't know what I would tell her because she was so stinking stubborn. I don't you know I think I would I would take a picture of my face because I think that's because she wouldn't listen to words and she wouldn't listen to her mother, who was desperately trying to break through. I think I would take a picture of my face because the interesting thing I can see now is when I put a picture side by side... yes there's some weight loss because I've been working toward that forever. But you know not only is my face not as big but my eyes, the skin, I would just be like here's what not drinking looks like. And I think that would have been enough. Like, oh! No kidding! This is pretty amazing.
- Meredith: 47:26 And it's not it's not anything other than it's just clarity. Like I feel like when I see a picture of myself now verses ten years ago, I just it just looks like clarity. I don't want to say it looks like happiness because I don't know I think happiness is such a tough thing. But I think it's more of grace like I'm at a point of grace with myself, with people, with gratitude. So yeah, I'd show her a picture.
- Annie Grace: 47:56 That is so cool and it's so funny because this entire time, I even wrote it down, but like you sparkle. Like honestly, like you just do and your entire presence and you're beautiful and you just sparkle. And so that's so cool that that that is the one thing about this that I'm just cause last time we were just on the phone and so we weren't face to face. But yeah it is... I think the picture would do it. I think you should put that up in your group before and after. Be really powerful I think. I think it's amazing. Well thank you so much. Thank you for joining it's been such a pleasure to have you, Meredith.
- Meredith: 48:35 Absolutely and thanks for everything you're doing. You're really, really helping people and you know I think just as we go through life and just tell our stories I think it makes such a huge difference so I'm very grateful for you.
- Annie Grace: 48:47 Oh, I'm grateful for you too. Thank you so much. Have a great day.
- Meredith: 48:47 Alright, talk to you soon.

New Speaker: 48:47 Bye.

New Speaker: 48:47 Bye.

Annie Grace: 48:55 This has been Annie Grace with This Naked Mind Podcast. Thank you so much for listening. You can learn more at [ThisNakedMind.com](http://ThisNakedMind.com). And please remember to rate, review, and subscribe as it really helps us spread the word.