MOTHER MAYHEM EP.16

COMPANION GUIDE:

No More Solace Sipping:

Overcoming Alcohol Dependence in Narcissistic Abuse Recovery

DaughtersNPD

Daughters of Narcissistic Mothers, You Belong Here

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Hey, It's Heather.

This episode was a doozy. It's filled with hard truth and hard things to do.

If you are questioning your relationship with alcohol, you might be feeling shame and that shame is likely trigger enough to drink.

I want to remind you of a clear truth that I know very much to be true: An abnormal behavior in response to a series of abnormal events is normal.

It is not at all uncommon for people who have been through trauma to develop problematic relationships with alcohol, other substances, or other behaviors.

Learning to cope with the hard feelings that accompany a childhood marked by emotional abuse, neglect, and abandonment isn't easy.

You've done your very best with the tools you have had. I really, truly believe that.

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My goal in hosting this conversation, laying out this frame for recovery, and sharing these strategies is to offer you more tools than perhaps you have had before.

Let me be clear, though. Alcohol dependency is tough to conquer all on your own. White knuckling your way through it is not recommended.

If you are struggling with your relationship with alcohol, drugs, or other behaviors, nothing can replace the help and support of a trained professional.

I sincerely encourage you to find a trained therapist, structured support group, or program that can help you with a more personalized plan and approach.

It's your best option for success.

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In the mean time, I offer you this companion guide with a suggested recovery structure and tools to keep you company through the journey, from whatever point you are starting.

This conversation is not easy. Nor is this work. But recovery is possible.

You are not alone. You are in a community of women who are all working to find their way to peace.

I am in it with you, too.

Heather

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Checking in on Your Relationship with Alcohol:

- **Frequency**
  - Are you drinking more often? Drinking higher amounts in a single sitting?

- **Tolerance**
  - Do you need to drink more to get the same effect you used to get with less?

- **Preoccupation**
  - Are you thinking about when you are going to be able to drink again? Deciding what time would be appropriate to start? Counting down until you can have your first drink of the day?

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Checking in on Your Relationship with Alcohol:

- **Personal lapse**
  - You promise yourself you won't drink tonight or for X amount of time but struggle or fail to keep that promise

- **Drinking Undercover**
  - If you find yourself drinking in secret, it's best to start paying attention. Perhaps you're hiding the evidence or covering up the increased spending on alcohol. These are warning signs that your relationship with alcohol is problematic.

- **You're in Problem Territory**
  - Your drinking isn't just becoming a problem. You know it's a problem and whether you are ready or not, it's time for help

GOAL SETTING

- This is about getting crystal clear with yourself about what your goal is.
- Are you willing to consider sobriety, even if you're not yet sure how you will achieve it or doubt your ability to do so?
- If sobriety isn't for you at this time, what feels good? What feels like healthy control? Choose that.
- What are some long and short term goals you have for the role of alcohol in your life?
- What other goals do you have for your overall physical health and mental wellbeing?
- It’s of course ok if addressing the alcohol use is your only goal. Just make your goals specific, measureable, and observable so you know when you meet them.

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SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

- You are used to taking on everything and doing it yourself and you are used to making yourself the answer to every question.

- It can be hard to admit to someone outside of your circle that you are struggling. Sometimes, that is the hardest thing to overcome but sharing your burden with a trained professional who can be the expert on it for you will take the pressure off of you so you can focus on your own healing.

- Consider getting a therapist, joining a support group, connecting with AA, or joining an online community dedicated to helping you have a better relationship with alcohol.

- Professional help also helps you get to the root of the problem. For this community, the root of the problem is childhood trauma recovery, narcissistic abuse recovery, or cPTSD recovery. Likely a combination of all of the above.

- If you do the work to heal your trauma and rewrite your narrative, the desire to drink and self medicate will decrease because you will feel more empowered to manage your own feelings instead of feeling like you have to numb them.

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FIND YOUR PEOPLE

- Who are your people? Your support network?
- Who can you share this with?
- Who will root for you without judging you and who can you falter in front of?
- The shame of alcohol dependency or other poor coping mechanisms keeps people private and isolated but the evidence shows that support and encouragement go a long way in healing and recovery,
- Without it, you are in an echo chamber of your own thoughts and correcting your thinking errors is hard to do on your own.

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COLLECT YOUR COPING SKILLS

- Start collecting your coping mechanisms:
- Any tools or strategies that have worked in the past, make note of them.
- As you collect new things that work, make note of those, too.
- In moments of indecision, when you're tempted to drink, it will be hard to recall that other things besides alcohol work so having a concrete list of things that help will be invaluable for you.
- The end of this document will list more options., as well.
- You have been drinking to cope with all of the mad, sad, scared feelings you have been living with through your whole life. If we don't start listing out and making alternatives accessible to you, you will only want to drink more.

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CONSIDER YOUR LIFESTYLE

- Are there certain places or situations that trigger or instigate drinking behavior?
- What do you need to start avoiding in order to be more successful?
- You may need to avoid situations with drinking altogether, at least until you get your feet under you and feel like you have a handle on the problem

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GET PHYSICAL

- Trauma recovery involves so much head work. You can be in your feelings and in your thoughts all the time.
- Sometimes, your only awareness of your body is when it's dysregulated so you start to see it as part of the problem.
- Of course exercise helps with all of those feel good hormones in the brain but also getting physical gets you out of your head altogether.
- Finding a physical activity that engages your mind, distracts you, and helps you connect with other like minded people is a really good recovery tool.

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CONSIDER YOUR DIET

- When we take care of our bodies on the inside and are working out regularly, we're less likely to want to ruin it by drinking.
- Also, a healthy diet helps balance us out and can help moods stabilize.
- Sometimes, you'll opt for what isn't going to hurt you first so instead of the drink, you might opt for potato chips and that will be the better choice.
- However, if you're in the right brain space to manage drinking and diet, you'll set your goals up to decrease drinking for better success by maintaining a healthy diet. Just do the best you can with the tools you have access to now.

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MAKE TRIGGER PLANS

- Get ahead of tricky and dicey situations by planning ahead.
- If you know something is going to be hard for you to manage without alcohol, question whether or not you really need to go.
- If you do need to go, who can text you and check in on you, what will you ask to drink instead?
- Don't make sobriety miserable for yourself. Allow yourself a pleasurable alternative to drinking. Ask for a mocktail. Ask for a ginger beer with lime.
- You might find that there's nothing you want more than a drink but give your best shot to have something else enjoyable.
- Ask yourself: what do I need to get through this situation sober and allow yourself to have it. Ask for help. Accept help.

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PLAN FOR RELAPSE

- Relapse is part of recovery. Sometimes you only learn your triggers or soft spots when you falter. Relapse isn't failure, It's part of the process. Learn from it.

- Chase the tail, look at the contributing factors, where you could've taken a right instead of a left.

- What did you try? What didn't you try? What worked? What didn't?

- Relapse offers you so much data so be willing to reflect on it and ask yourself the hard questions.

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PLAN TO LET OTHER THINGS GO

- If you stop drinking, you might start eating. You might start binging trash tv or sleeping more. You might stop cleaning the house or distance yourself from people.

- Examine your expectations of yourself. Your desire to be perfect in recovery will likely outlast common sense. So if a friend of yours was trying to get sober, how much would your expect of her?

- If your younger self were trying to get sober and take better care of herself, how much would you have her asking of herself?

- How much would you want her to lower her expectations by?

- Hold yourself to that same standard.

- Once you get your feet under you and collect a period of sobriety, whatever that looks like for you, you can get back to meeting all of your other expectations but for now, one thing at a time, one day at a time.

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CELEBRATE WINS: BIG & SMALL

- Collect the days, weeks and months of sobriety,
- Make note of the times you wanted to drink but didn't.
- Make note of times you thought you would falter but didn't.
- Catch yourself being good and notice it.
- Dwell on your wins. Write them down,.
- Collect observable symbols of your success that you can hold and remember in times when you might falter.

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COPING SKILLS TO CONSIDER:

Mindfulness, Meditation, and Visualization exercises:

- These come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. Be open to exploring what kinds of stillness appeals to you.
- You want to be open to trial and error and stay curious about yourself.
- If something doesn't work for you, it doesn't work for you and that's ok.
- All you have to do is a search for meditation and mindfulness exercises and a plethora of them will come up.

Get Physical

- So many of your feelings don't actually need to be processed or analyzed. Whatever the reason, you very likely have a habit of not seeing your feelings through so they have just been stored in your body.

- Physical activity releases them without having to process them.

- Taking care of yourself matters.

- Giving yourself permission to take care of yourself and watching yourself invest in your wellness and recovery will undo so much damage done by your narcissistic mom.

- Get moving. Find your thing. Find your swing.

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COPING SKILLS TO CONSIDER:

Find a Creative Outlet

- You might enjoy crafting or needle work. You might like writing. You might like photography, gardening, painting, or working with clay.

- Your feelings just need to be released, They don't always need to be processed through words. Release is whatever creative outlet moves you.

Body Work or Muscle Relaxation

- You might try considering assisted stretching, reiki massage, acupuncture, or trauma informed yoga practice.

- I am not at all well versed in this enough to offer any amount of expertise but if it sparks something in you, give yourself permission to be curious, to look around in that space, and to see what you might find.

Get Out in Nature

- Open air, the woods, mountains, water. Whatever floats your boat.

- Get yourself outside whenever possible. It's grounding, healing, and restorative

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COPING SKILLS TO CONSIDER:

Try Random Acts of Kindness or Volunteering

- When I work with treatment resistant depression, I often suggest that clients stop focusing on themselves and their misery and instead focus on other people.

- It's actually a research backed clinical intervention so I am not just making this shit up. Promise.

- If you can't get out of your own way, can't think about anything other than drinking, maybe consider how you can help others with a good deed.

- Be weary of not making too big of a financial or time commitment but my observation is a few good deeds a week can often change our stories of who we are and what we are capable of while it cements who we really want to be.

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COPING SKILLS TO CONSIDER:

Keep your friends close and closer, still

- Having a circle of friends who have your back, who you can share with and be unapologetic with is everything.
- Friendship might be something that's hard for you as many daughters of narcissistic mothers can struggle with peers but if you've got them, hold them, keep them close, let them know how they can help you, let them help you, and focus on helping them right back.
- Nurturing those relationships and watering them so they grow will give back incredible dividends into your emotional wellness banking account.

Journaling

- Write it out, vent it out, get it out.
- There are so many kinds of journals and ways of adding a journaling practice to your life.
- Do some looking around at what people are doing and how they use journaling and see if any resonate. Whatever works for you will work.

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COPING SKILLS TO CONSIDER:

Deep Breathing

- Like journaling, meditation, mindfulness, and visualizing, there are so many ways to go about this. Best to have a look around, see what styles are out there and pick any deep breathing exercises that you have buy in into.

Don't forget about therapy or professional help:

- Yes, I think of it as critical to the recovery and prevention plan but I also think regular meetings with your therapist or group should also be considered a coping strategy and sometimes when the urge to drink is so intense, you forget that. I am making this list for those moments so wanted to be sure to include it.

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COPING SKILLS TO CONSIDER:

Check in on your self care:

- If you're a mani/pedi girl and you haven't been in a while, get it taken care of.
- If you prefer to be well manicured or groomed, get that facial, give yourself one at home, do an intensive hair conditioning treatment,
- Schedule a morning when you can sleep in
- Make sure you're stocked up on all your creature comforts if it's coffee, tea, lotion, perfume, body wash.
- Maybe you like candle light or baths or baths in candlelight. Whatever floats your rubber ducky.
- Grab the music that moves you and heals you.
- Get curious about what you see as self care and then get to letting yourself have it.

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COPING SKILLS TO CONSIDER:

Pick a mantra:

- We're all such suckers for those quick quotables but what are the ones that motivate and inspire you?
- Is there one that sticks out above the rest?
- Keep a collection of them somewhere that you can access easily.
- If there is a guiding light kind of one that really moves you and drives you, put it as the screensaver of every screen you have. Keep it near your bathroom mirror, on your nightstand, on your refrigerator.
- Surround yourself with the sentiment and feelings of how you want to think about yourself and your life.

Your boundaries are a coping strategy, too:

- You won't be as driven to drink if you're protecting your limits and boundaries.
- Check in with yourself about your boundaries, see if they need adjusting and give them attention, if you have to.

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COPING SKILLS TO CONSIDER:

Puzzles and games can be great distractors:

- Pick a jigsaw puzzle, grab a game, check out an escape room, pickup a crossword, join me in my daily Wordle.

- Whatever works to get your mind off drinking will help you get through more minutes, hours, days, weeks, and months of not drinking

Cleaning and decluttering:

- Pick a drawer, pick a closet, pick a corner, pick a countertop, pick your car, pick anything, and bring it to something that feels good, clean and new.

- Then, pick something else.

- If this whole idea is something that feels like it would drive you to drink, obviously skip it but it's my observation that a lot of my clients struggle with holding on to clutter and disorganization in their lives as a maladaptive coping strategy for their trauma.

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COPING SKILLS TO CONSIDER:

Start making decisions and plans for things you've been avoiding:

- A lot of people are triggered to drink because they are avoiding dealing with things, are skipping conflicts, or are dodging hard conversations.
- Kicking the can feels like the solution in the moment but you might be seeing now how it has created a bigger problem for you.
- So get honest with yourself. What have you been avoiding? What needs to get addressed? Where can you stop the buck?
- Use your therapist, use use your friends, use your group, use whatever you need and get whatever support you need but start checking those things off that list so they can stop following you and dogging you while you are trying to get well,
- Anything that is getting in the way of your wellness is a threat to your sobriety so let's just take care of it once and for all.

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COPING SKILLS TO CONSIDER:

Is gratitude your thing?

- Research backs up the idea pretty well. I am no good at offering a solid gratitude practice but if you have one that works for you, for sure, use it.
- If you don't have such a practice but it appeals to you go ahead and search.
- There are so many options there for you. Don't be shy about using them. Remember what I said, anything that you have buy in into will work.

Make sure your social is working for you.

- Make sure you are only following social media accounts that make you feel good, offer healthy distraction, and support the kind of life you want to be living
- Whatever you are hoping to see when you turn on social, seek more of that.
- Unfriend, unfollow, and block anyone or anything that fails to protect your peace and sobriety

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COPING SKILLS TO CONSIDER:

Remember it's ok to laugh and find humor in the hard.

- Welcome in moments of levity. Seek them out. Share them.
- Sometimes, this shit is just funny. It's ok to laugh. I highly recommend it.

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