



TRANSCRIPT: EPISODE 168

Episode Title: FACING MY ADDICTION

Guest: Lauren Makk

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Jackie MacDougall: This has been a long time coming.

Lauren Makk: Yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: You and I have been talking, I would say for months at this point, about sobriety, our own journeys, and there's a reason we didn't do it sooner. Can we talk about that real quick?

Lauren Makk: Yeah. So, I recently celebrated my first year, full, full 365 days-- Thank you.

Jackie MacDougall: Amazing.

Lauren Makk: -of sobriety. And, you reached out to me after an Instagram post that I had kind of discussed on social media; and I was anxious because I think I was at that point, maybe like seven or so months into my sobriety.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah.

Lauren Makk: And, seven months was a pretty significant head-start, but I was just so anxious and so trepidacious about like, speaking about it, where it sits somewhere permanently. Like an Instagram post, I could have deleted if I ever like fell short of the glory of the Lord, you know, but something like a podcast kind stays there forever.

And, I really wanted to see if I could maintain it, my sobriety for a full 365 days. I am the type of person who will be like, 'oh, I'm starting the diet on Monday,' and then by Taco Tuesday, I'm like scarfing them down, you know? And then--

Jackie MacDougall: [laughs] 100%.

Lauren Makk: Yeah, it's the perpetual I'll start on so-and-so date and then just keep, just kind of moving the goalpost for myself. And, this was a promise that I actually kept to myself for a full 365 days. So, in celebration, kind of as like a gift to myself, I said, "That's it, I'm putting it in infamy. And, I'm going to talk to Jackie about it."

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: I met Lauren Makk back in 2015 when I was working on a daytime syndicated TV show called FABLife. Lauren stood out to me at the time as someone who was very much, what you see is what you get, something I definitely admire, especially in that industry.

And, that hasn't changed in the past six-plus years. In this episode, Lauren shares her journey to sobriety, what life looked like when she was drinking, the excruciatingly painful moment when she knew something needed to change, and what she's learned about herself in the one year since putting down that *Jack Daniel's* bottle.

I'm Jackie MacDougall, and this is The Grown-Ass Woman's Guide.

I have been wanting to do this episode for a long time, and I have been terrified to do this episode for a long time. September 6th, 2021, nine months ago, 283 days, as of this recording, I decided alcohol was no longer something that worked for me in my life.

I'm just going to tell it to you straight; I, myself was going through a really tough, somewhat dark time, late last year. And, I knew I would not be able to cope with any of it

if I continued to drink, but that required a massive shift in my thoughts, because I had spent a lifetime around drinking, not unlike Lauren.

Lauren Makk: This for me, was like something so big and so personal because this sobriety thing, it goes back, for me, really, really deep. As I've been sober now, I kind of have a zoom-out lens of what's really going on with me and my dependency on alcohol. And, it is generational for us. In my family, I mean, I can't go back far enough where I don't see alcohol being pervasive in that generation. My great-grandmother used to make hooch.

They called it hooch back in Oklahoma, and she made it during prohibition when alcohol was illegal. So, she was like the party girl, the house that everybody wanted to go to because she had the liquor, was kind of like a wild, Wild West alcohol slinger, if you will. Good Lord. It sounds so funny to say.

And then, my grandfather, my grandmothers, and so many people in my family, like the cool people in my family that I thought were cool, the ones I wanted to go hang with that were smoking cigarettes and drinking beer in the garage. They were having fun and listening to music really loud. And, they were the people that I associated with or wanted to be like. And so, for me, when I think about alcoholism or an alcoholic, I think of someone who is like passed out on the floor and can't stand up and isn't functioning and--

Jackie MacDougall: Can't keep a job.

Lauren Makk: -can't keep a job, living on the street. It has somehow impeded on their life in a way that they can't function. I'm recognizing now that my dependency on alcohol was a lot more functional, but still just as dysfunctional in my life.

Jackie MacDougall: Alcohol was a big part of Lauren's daily life growing up. Her dad would retreat after work to unwind with his screwdriver, more vodka than orange juice. Her mom would turn to a glass of wine or two. While alcohol didn't become a regular thing in Lauren's life until her early 20s, it was not unlike her dependence on other things.

Lauren Makk: I've always depended on something, really, whether it'd be alcohol, marijuana, food, even relationships in my life, because I think there was, and I'll use the term as I can really clearly say it a 'disease' within myself. And, I just didn't know-- I don't know if it was a kid who didn't get enough attention or my exuberant personality dealing all of that, I can't decide now looking back as a parent now, was I not attended to enough? Or did I just need a lot of attention? [laughs]

Jackie MacDougall: Right, right, right.

Lauren Makk: I try to look back at that now, because I have kids of my own. I'm like, damn, can you sit down and shut up?

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah, we see a different, really.

Lauren Makk: Right. Exactly. So, there's that, but I was overweight during high school. I don't know if it was a result of my marijuana and then eating a lot of food, but either way I was very heavy. And so, I didn't have a dependency on alcohol at that point. I had a dependency on marijuana.

Jackie MacDougall: Okay.

Lauren Makk: And, when I turned 19, I had a gastric bypass and I lost over 140 pounds. So, as I was about 287 pounds going into my sophomore year of college. And so, when my restriction of food kind of like curbed my dependency on food and things of that nature, it quickly turned to alcohol.

And so, I think at about 22 or 23, I started recognizing now I had changed my habits to something that was a little bit more easy to consume and was all liquid and, you know, kind of fit the need for my now very small stomach. Yeah. And, that's how addiction changes; it just metastasizes into something different, right?

Jackie MacDougall: Right. Absolutely. I mean, unless we're willing to look at the core reason and beliefs about ourselves that led us there in the first place, it'll just move from one thing to another, right?

Lauren Makk: Yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: According to Psychology Today, a person with an addiction uses a substance or engages in a behavior for which the rewarding effects provide a compelling incentive to repeat the activity. But they also say individuals who develop an addiction may not be aware that their behavior is causing problems for themselves and others. And, the pursuit of the pleasurable effects may dominate an individual's activities.

Lauren Makk: I was a bartender and living in LA by myself. So, I had nobody to rein me in, and all of the freedom, and then this hot new body. So, it was like a great life. I was bartending in some of the best clubs in LA and you know, I was living my best life at 23 years old, as I should. I wish I could remember those 20s now. [laughs]

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. So, at this point, you're feeling good about your body, you're out there, you're drinking whatever and whenever you want; did you consider it a problem or were you just like, this is what you're supposed to do at 22?

Lauren Makk: No, no, no. Yeah. I thought it was what I was doing at 22, you know--

Jackie MacDougall: Same.

Lauren Makk: Adopted culture. Yeah, exactly. I was just--

Jackie MacDougall: I relate.

Lauren Makk: Yes. Okay, good. Yeah. I was just living my best life and listen, I still don't even think I had a real dependency on it at that point. It wasn't in the way. And, I was having a great time; was part of the lifestyle, the culture and everything that was happening for me in those days and age. And, I was able to go to work, and all the things that anybody would do normally.

And, I think I was a normal drinker at that time. Like I would have a cocktail on Friday, Saturday night when I was at the bars or whatnot. And then, Monday through Friday, I wasn't drinking regularly. It wasn't until, and I recall this very easily, a relationship that I was in, where I felt very trapped and isolated. I had moved to San Diego to be with this stupid boy and found myself very quickly like, what have I done? I had no girlfriends.

I was miserable. I had made a big mistake, and I was in over my head quickly. And, I remember at that point, Big Lots used to have wine, like by the jug, and I would go there. It was like \$3. And, I remember going there and just buying like \$20 worth and stashing it in my trunk or in the garage and like going to the beach and drinking that wine because I was just lonely and bored and miserable.

I think that's where it, kind of, just started to pick up for me. But again, it was so regular, so normal, it was so part of everyday life. But I also associated-- I also associated alcohol with social activities like being with friends and, you know, not being alone.

So, it was always a happy hour or a brunch or a Margarita Monday or a Taco Tuesday or a Hump Day Wednesday. There was always a special and a bar and a reason and an experience with it, and that for me was exhilarating. You know, I loved going out and having fun with my friends and having a Happy Hour after a long day of work.

Jackie MacDougall: Yes. I mean, that's where the connection was at that age, right?

Lauren Makk: Yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: It was, Ugh! You're just bringing me back because Monday nights we'd go to Happy Hour on Monday nights--

Lauren Makk: Yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: -and Barney's Beanery in LA and just like--

Lauren Makk: Yes.

Jackie MacDougall: Throw back

Lauren Makk: Margarita Mondays, Tuesday one special. I can tell you every place in town.

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: They know me too. You know, it was just my, like-- It was just so much fun. You'd meet cool people, and you'd have a good experience, and maybe you'd meet a cute boy, you know, go home. [laughs]

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah, yeah. Without bars, I don't think I would've dated in my 20s.

Lauren Makk: Exactly. Exactly. It was like the Tinder of the times, you know? It's just what I did, and I loved it. And you know, it always-- The thing for me was I never had a DUI. I never got in trouble. It was never, in standing in my way, at least, for what I thought. You know, I had never, got me in trouble. So, it was like, why is this a problem?

Jackie MacDougall: Right. Right. You were working, you were doing your thing.

Lauren Makk: Yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: When did you start to go, 'Okay, I want to do on-camera work. I want to be Lauren Makk?'

Lauren Makk: Oh sure. Well, actually, I had been doing, I had done *Trading Spaces* prior to that relationship. And so, that was my very first show ever. And, let me explain, going back professionally, I was working for a model home merchandising firm straight out of college, which we did all of the models for those big builds when you'd see a new neighborhood being built--

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah.

Lauren Makk: -in Southern California and Nevada, we'd do all the models, you know, you'd tour those first three houses with the flags hanging out in front. And so, for us, that was, I designed those in a firm back in LA. So, when the housing industry started to burst probably in around 2005, 2006, of course, all the models were not being built any longer.

And, I started recognizing some of the junior designer getting let go, and I thought, 'oh boy, I'm next.' Right? Like, that's happening for me. And so, I remember I had this sidekick phone, the one that swiveled around, you remember the first one with the internet?

Lauren Makk: Yes. Yeah.

Lauren Makk: I'm really myself, honey.

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: Hey, I'm 51, so you're good. You've got-- I'm got a few years on you.

Lauren Makk: Fair enough. So, I had this sidekick phone where I remember sitting in my car on a lunch break, looking at Craigslist, which is also antiquated website for, it was like the classifieds of the time. And, I was looking for a job, and I just typed in 'interior designer', and an opportunity to audition for a *Trading Spaces*, like television show came up. So, I said, you know what? I got all this great portfolio of all of my work that I had from my model home designs.

And, I just was like, let me just see what happens. I've never done television before in my life. That wasn't my goal. But I went down there, and I killed the interview. I killed the audition. And so, that's how that started for me, I got-- It actually turned out to be *Trading Spaces*, which was a huge show at the time. It was like the biggest Design Show. This was before HGTV and all of the other network that do that.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. I was a fun.

Lauren Makk: TLC. Yes, exactly. A Saturday Special on TLC, you know? And so, I auditioned, got the show, and that was my first ever television show. So, I did that for three seasons and it was great, but then they canceled the show. And it was like, 'okay, here's the end of that show? There's the end of that. A whole experience for me. What does that look like?' And so, I was doing some minor little-- I went back to what I knew best, bartending at a hot night club in LA, because I could make \$1,000 a night, you know, and drink, which you don't want to do that, you know?

Jackie MacDougall: For free.

Lauren Makk: And for free, and party with the best people, you know, in the world. I mean, I can't tell you it was so Hollywood, you know? I went back to that, and that's actually how I met the boyfriend that I ended up moving to San Diego to be with. Then I had been removed, so that was like this whole merger of like you know, loss of my career, not knowing what was next. I won't even say the loss, but not having the next step.

And then also, being in this relationship with this person, which is kind of, you know, at the time I thought drinking was fun. So, I didn't associate it with maybe even like grief. I probably just drank so I didn't feel bad about the uncertainness of things. Looking back, I recognized that probably was a main component that I probably didn't, probably ignored or just didn't have the maturity or the language to recognize at the time.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. And so, how long did you-- Did you just stay in that? Did it, sort of, implode? Did you decide--

Lauren Makk: No, please. I got the hell out of there. Yes. I got out of there one night. I said, 'let pack this all and get the hell out of here.'

Jackie MacDougall: Okay, good.

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: I took my butt back to LA. Yeah, but you know, in that, you know, after that there was a series of other television ups and downs, whether it be a stint on a show that I've moved at Philadelphia and whatnot. But no matter what, steadily, of course, my career was gaining momentum, and that was exciting and fun too. But I have to say that, that gave me another reason to also depend upon alcohol because I was nervous.

I felt yeah, like I was in the wrong room sometimes. I'm a black girl from Oklahoma, and here I am sitting next to, you know, X, Y, Z, you could name any big name and there they were, you know, from politicians to top TV stars, musicians. Like being on FABLife, which was my biggest, I guess, achievement or biggest I'd say name-brand show, which was a Talk Show on ABC as you well know. For are those who are listening, FABLife was a show that Jackie and I fell in love.

Jackie MacDougall: That's how we met.

Lauren Makk: Yes. [laughs]

Jackie MacDougall: I was doing promos for FABLife. And, I just remember you had been on TV, but you were also brand-new. I mean, here is a syndicated show next to Chrissy Teigen, Tyra Banks, and obviously, Leah and Joe; but at that point, I had been in this business since-- I started working on TV in 1993, syndication in 1999.

Lauren Makk: Wow.

Jackie MacDougall: So, like it had been-- I'd been doing this a while. I've worked with a lot of talent, and it was just like, my view was, wow. Number one. I could see your future in front of you. I could see you and I could see Leah and I could see like, 'oh, they've got a future in front of them.'

And, at the same time, I don't know if it was the mom in me or what it was, but I was like, I can only imagine what it feels like to go from what you're doing, working on camera on TV, but now being on TV, and what that might trigger in a person. I didn't know you at all. So, it was really just questions, like curiosity. And so, now that I actually get to ask you, what did that feel like now that like you'd be recognizable or--

Lauren Makk: Yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: I mean, daytime is, at that time still pretty big.

Lauren Makk: Yeah, it really was. I mean, gosh, you know, how do I put this? That was, and still is one of the best and most brilliant experiences that-- I feel so blessed that I get to say that I even did that. Even if it was for a year, I wished it had gone on for 25, like Oprah. [laughs]

But even if it was for one year, it was such an incredible experience to just be able to reach people. What I learned from that show is how not alone I am. I think though that I'm still processing that because I still feel like that's part of what kind of leads to me feeling like I need to depend on something other than myself, whether it'd be food or alcohol or any of the other things that I love to do, like shop. [laughs]

Jackie MacDougall: Right.

Lauren Makk: Whatever it is, you know, but being on that show, I could say something, and it felt like it was one-dimensional or there was just the audience there. But what I learned was that millions of people were watching it and would relate, and would be like, 'I felt that way too. I experienced that too. I felt like that too.' And, you're like, oh great, ah! It feels so singular because it's just you and you're going through it in that moment, but there was a community that was able to be built based on that.

And, what an experience, boy? As I explained, I'm from Oklahoma City, and there are not a lot of people that get out of that and be able to have a microphone that big. So, it was an incredible experience and still is, there's still some-- There's some great fans that still are friends of mine now on Instagram and from social media, we still talk. It's a high, that's hard to chase, but God, what a ride when you're on it?

And also too, just recognizing that I belonged because there's this something in me or in a lot of, I think regular people who haven't grown up in that business or industry that feel like, I don't fit in here. You're like an Emmy award-winning musician, and I'm just sitting next to you. Like, but those people are just people too. And witnessing that, people like Tyra who's grown up in this industry witnessing her regular humanity was really, really, really cool to see.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. So, did it contribute to any feelings within yourself about yourself? We talk about imposter syndrome, right? We talk about feeling not enough. Like here you are sitting next to these people who've been doing this for years. Did it trigger any of that? And, did it include alcohol at that time? Like, what did your relationship with alcohol look like when you were on that show?

Lauren Makk: I think at that point I did, I don't want to say, I was a drinker every day. I think it was safe to say that like after work, I would go well with my girlfriends and we would have dinner somewhere, and we would have a couple glasses of wine. And like, that was very regular. It didn't feel unusual. I've always had cocktails after work.

I mean, that's just, always it. It wasn't, didn't feel bad. I do know, however, that we went to a big meeting in New York City, ABC flew all of us out to New York City. I think it was, for all of the people who were like advertising on that show.

Jackie MacDougall: On like the upfronts.

Lauren Makk: Yeah, like an upfront. And we had had a big party. This is how green I am. I can't even remember the names. We had a big party at the end of the night.

Jackie MacDougall: Yep. Yep.

Lauren Makk: Tyra and Chrissy Teigen was there, John Legend was there, and Leah and Joe, and I'm sure room full of other people I barely recall, but I was nervous and to calm my nerves, I'm sure I had a couple of shots of *Jack Daniel's* in the hotel while I was getting ready. And I'm certain, I had a couple of cocktails at the party.

It was me and Chrissy and John and, you know, Chrissy was at the time, quite the drinker, and John would participate too. And, they were mine, knew everything. So, you know, I had to have a couple cocktails with them to steel the nerves. And, I also had on some huge platform shoes, which I had no business walking in, honey.

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: And, those New York streets were not kind because they were cobbly and wobbly and everything else. And so, let's mix the combination of the three, too many cocktails, the highest shoes on earth and the worst streets ever. So, I'm sure that at the end of the night, I was holding on to someone for steadiness. Okay?

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah.

Lauren Makk: Needless to say, it wasn't interpreted as if all of those three things existed. It was interpreted back on Monday morning in the headquarters that Lauren was drunk and needed to be dragged out of the club, and there could be an intersection of all of those truths, [laughs] you know?

I had a conversation in a meeting with some of the executives who warned me, 'listen, this lifestyle will chew you up and spit you out. And, it's important to not take it overboard when you're in a meeting or a special space where people are, where all eyes are on you.'

And, when that meeting happened, I remember sort of being like, 'well, my shoes are wobbly and Chrissy was doing it, why can't I?' And, you know what I mean? All of the other excuses, but none of those things mattered, you know? And that person who had that conversation with me is my dearest friend, Jill Mullikin-Bates, who--

Jackie MacDougall: And, also one of my closest friends. Right? [laughs]

Lauren Makk: Whom I have actually attributed so much of my success in sobriety to her because I didn't pay attention to her words then, but I didn't forget them. And she said, "You're not Chrissy Teigen. Okay? You're Lauren Makk. And, you're meant for more. And, you have to be aware of who's watching."

And she's like, "I'm telling you this because I want you to be the best you can be. I want you to see you win." And, it was very maternal. It was very loving, but it was very direct. And, at the time I was like, 'yeah, yeah. Okay. Note to self, don't drink in public.' [laughs]

Jackie MacDougall: Right.

Lauren Makk: Or put your ass on some flats. [laughs] Okay?

Jackie MacDougall: Maybe both.

Lauren Makk: All three.

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: But more importantly, I have taken that and now I really hear her message and that is people are watching you; and what someone else can do, that's on them. You need to be, stay in your lane and watch yourself and do what you got to do for you. And, I called her when I became sober and I thanked her. We continue to talk often, but I always tell her, there's a milestone in my sobriety.

I always let her know that she's a reason for it because she was loving and kind and very honest with me in times when people probably felt they couldn't be as honest; and I appreciate that, you know?

Jackie MacDougall: Wow.

Lauren Makk: But interpreted that then as like, 'Hey girl, calm down. It was, you know, I wasn't drunk. I wasn't as drunk as I could be.' [laughs] You know?

Jackie MacDougall: Right. Right. You're like, you have not seen anything yet.

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: Exactly. Exactly.

Jackie MacDougall: You have no idea how much I could party. Yeah.

Lauren Makk: Watch that. Oh, my beer.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah, exactly. I could totally relate to that. Yeah. On January 19th, 2016, FABLife was canceled, but in a surprising turn of events, that was not Lauren's greatest concern.

Lauren Makk: I had, at the time, a boyfriend, a very like non-important boyfriend. He was just somebody that liked to take me to dinner and tell me, I was pretty enough. That was enough for me. Food and compliments, carry on.

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: Where do I show up?

Lauren Makk: Yeah, exactly. And so, he was a guy that, I wouldn't even say dating. Like I said, I let him take me out to dinner and tell me I was cute. That was around, you know, the holiday time. So, right after the holidays, we came back to FABLife, and we found out that we were not getting picked up for Season Two. And, that was, say, like a Monday; and that Thursday, I found out that I was pregnant. [laughs]

Jackie MacDougall: What a week?

Lauren Makk: What a week, honey?

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: Oh my goodness.

Lauren Makk: Yeah. And so, needless to say, I had a new focus to really concern myself with post the show. Coincidentally, that person, my son's father caught me at a weak moment during that holiday season, you know, and during a few wine late in Christmas Eves, that's how I got pregnant because it only took one good time for he and I to conceive. And so, that was my new focus.

Jackie MacDougall: So, losing the show, wasn't the greatest thing on your mind at that time? I assume, you had a life.

Lauren Makk: That's correct. That's correct. No, it was not. Yes, I had quite a lot ahead of me. And you know, I really thought that some of the fuel of that show, I would instantly go into something else that was just as big. And, it's been a challenge to find something in that same level of, I don't even want to say success because there's been great successes. I just would say there's nothing been quite like that level. You know, that was a big level to get to.

Jackie MacDougall: But also, daytime 2015, 2016. I mean, there's still daytime shows on, obviously successful, but at the same time, I think we were in that intersection of like more cable, more digital, more--

Lauren Makk: Streaming. Yes.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. So, I think FABLife was one of those things where they were like trying to hold on to daytime and like spend all this money and have these big budgets and all this stuff going on, but the audience was changing.

Lauren Makk: Yes, it was.

Jackie MacDougall: And so, I don't know that there will be, my prediction, we listen to this back in 2030, right? [laughs]

Lauren Makk: Right, right.

Jackie MacDougall: I don't know that daytime, like, I don't know that that's where it's going to be.

Lauren Makk: I agree.

Jackie MacDougall: And so, where is the next big thing, is a great question, but so--

Lauren Makk: Podcast, hello? Of course, duh.

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: You know, you're pregnant. How did that-- By the way, you can tell me anything you don't want to answer or--

Lauren Makk: Sure.

Jackie MacDougall: -edit it out, but like, how did that look at your drinking? Were you just-- Was it easy to just stop? Did you struggle? What did pregnancy do?

Lauren Makk: Yeah. Pregnancy was, that's interesting that-- This is where it like gets, I'll be very honest because that's what my intention for this whole experience of being with you here on this podcast is about pregnancy, for me was not, stop drinking. Okay? Pregnancy for me was, one glass of wine, like my doctor said, it was okay. Or like I could read on the internet, you know?

I am in a lot of guilt about that looking back because God, that should have been an indicator then that there was a bigger thing happening here, but it was like, I think a lot of moms-- I mean, so many people would be like, 'oh girl, my mom drank six martinis when she was pregnant with me, you'll be fine.' And then, it would be like, oh, we could have one glass of red wine.

It was like this sort of like negotiation about how much you could do versus, 'Hey, why don't you just give yourself a break for nine months? Can you just take a time-out for

nine months? Can you just do that?' And, I do recall feeling inconvenient to be pregnant because it was slowing up my lifestyle, which was fun and going out. I could say that I definitely had a glass of wine. I didn't take it to the max like I used to, which was a bottle or two or a jug from Big Lots.

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: But I would have a glass of wine, you know?

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. Yeah.

Lauren Makk: And like, for me, if I had a wine spritzer, that was me, I could have two of those because it was just that whole aspect of being social and wanting to like, like I said, just cure the disease of the-- You know, I was listening to your podcast recently, and one of your guests was said mentioning how they take five minutes out of their day and just be with themselves.

And I thought, 'huh, I could do five minutes.' And then, as I sat there thinking more and more about, I thought, 'I don't think I could do five whole minutes of just sitting there.' I would feel and insignificant, or that I needed to, I could have been doing, I could have gotten this thing checked off my list in five minutes.

And, why would I just sit here for five minutes or-- You know, what's going on and check my Instagram. I haven't posted something. Let me see what so-and-so is talking about, let me read the news, let watch the news, let me do these dishes. Like all of these things in my head, sitting with myself, even in those five minutes, I would shame myself.

And so, I think, and that's now through therapy and healing, I'd still find a little bit of discomfort in those five minutes. So, imagine being unconscious and unaware of all of the generational shit, all of the personal feelings I had, and then loss and everything else. I don't know if I--

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. And then, pregnant just lost your dream job.

Lauren Makk: Right.

Jackie MacDougall: And single, I assume.

Lauren Makk: Yes, I was single. I mean, we were together and dating, but yes, not married and definitely, and still like, 'what the hell have I done? I got pregnant by a man I knew up for a month, and I'm having his baby. And, I got no job. Yes. And, I got a mortgage that's insane.' You know what I mean? And then, I'm like, doing it all on my own. Yeah. That was a lot of that. And, you know, but all--

Jackie MacDougall: Without the ability to go to your crutch.

Lauren Makk: Absolutely. Don't forget that I had all of the perfect reasons to drink at that time. You know, I was like, this is it. And so, I remember when Preston was born, the first thing that I said was like, bring me some *Jack Daniel's*. I wanted sushi and *Jack Daniel's*. I wanted a cocktail and food, [laughs] my two favorite things, right?

And again, I remember even reading in the mom blogs, like when you're reading like, you know, all the things that they-- There's all these blogs and the girls would say, I had my husband bring me a bottle of wine and a Turkey sandwich in the hospital. And, I was like, 'oh yeah, okay, I got my whole list of what I want, like a last meal,' you know?

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah.

Lauren Makk: It was my first meal.

Jackie MacDougall: Permission.

Lauren Makk: Exactly. And, a green light. And so, I remember that and like, it was just like right back where I started from, thank you. Here we are. My good old *Jack Daniel's* and Dr Pepper was my disgusting combination of drinks. [laughs]

Jackie MacDougall: But you didn't think at that point still like that there was much of a problem.

Lauren Makk: No.

Jackie MacDougall: So, where do you think it was that you were like, 'oh, maybe this is not serving me?'

Lauren Makk: Right. So, there's a lot of that.

Jackie MacDougall: Let's fast-forward. The pandemic has hit and Lauren is nine months pregnant with her second baby, her son born less than two weeks after the world shut down.

Lauren Makk: I had the baby and came home, and now everything had stopped. And, I had every reason on earth to drink anxiety, depression. I would think a little mild version of depression. I was never diagnosed, but I'm definitely, I was certainly sure I was depressed because everything that I had lined up for that year financially was wiped off the table.

Jackie MacDougall: Oh wow.

Lauren Makk: I have two kids that I'm raising and responsible for. And so, when I was drinking before to have fun and to engage and to be social, all of that was gone and now is just drinking at home alone, like a lot of people. And now in 2020, you can get it delivered. I'm not hurting anybody. I'm not driving around. I'm not out here in these

streets. Like now it's like a whole other thing. And, it turned from being this really fun, exciting, exhilarating experience to something a little bit more sinister and dark and sad.

And, that's not ever the reason why I picked up drinking, I picked up drinking because I wanted have fun and be with the cool people and like be pretty and beautiful and smart and funny.

Jackie MacDougall: Party Lord.

Lauren Makk: Yes. But you know, you're always the party girl until you're not. I was a 38-year-old sad drunk, and I was not a 21-year-old.

Jackie MacDougall: With two kids.

Lauren Makk: Yeah, with two kids. Right. I didn't realize that initially, I was just drinking at home, like everybody was. It was kind of like the funny joke in the world that everyone's at home drinking.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. Yeah.

Lauren Makk: It had now become like, even more cool thing to do, was drinking at home because everyone was doing, we're bored as hell and scared as hell and anxious as hell. And you know, I think everyone can relate to that.

Jackie MacDougall: And, the messaging from the culture was very much like wine, and you could have wine anytime. I mean, it was the pandemic, you could have wine at noon if you wanted to.

Lauren Makk: Exactly.

Jackie MacDougall: There were no more rules, right?

Lauren Makk: There were no rules.

Jackie MacDougall: And so, we'll get into it, the whole attitude of 'mommy juice' and all that bullshit--

Lauren Makk: Oh yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: -that's out there, but especially in a pandemic. So, I can imagine, that it doesn't feel all that off because look, it's the messaging out there. The world is like, it's okay.

Lauren Makk: Everybody's doing it.

Jackie MacDougall: You have a free pass.

Lauren Makk: Yeah, please. It kind of like leveled the playing field for everybody too. So, we were all broke. We were all sad. We were all discouraged.

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: Right?

Lauren Makk: Yeah. So, I was like, drink up.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. Cheers!

Lauren Makk: Cheers! Finally, you know what I mean, was the one thing that we could all agree, and we would get together and have Zoom drinking parties. Don't you remember, everybody would be in the Zoom?

Jackie MacDougall: I do.

Lauren Makk: Yeah. You just sitting there drinking wine, talking shit and laughing with somebody who was in Timbuktu. Yeah. It was beautiful. It was actually quite lovely to be really honest with you.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah.

Lauren Makk: It's fun, it really was.

Jackie MacDougall: I agree.

Lauren Makk: But there were also moments where it wasn't. It was like sitting in a shower, drinking, crying, you know, and it's like, 'This ain't that. This ain't what it used to be.'

But what really changed for me, was a moment that I also think that a lot of people can relate to, and that was betrayal. In 2020, my two children and I, we moved to Nashville to be with my second son's father, who's now my husband. We were together, not married but engaged. It was Cinco de Mayo, and it was a Taco Tuesday. And, I was with my girlfriend, my neighbor, we were up at noon because why not?

It was a reason to drink. It was Cinco de Mayo, and I don't know what it was-- Well, I do know what it was. It had to be a power higher than me, I say. And, out of nowhere, I just had this instant feeling. I remember where I was sitting and what I was doing, I was drinking in my margarita' and I had this instant power said, "Your partner's not being faithful to you."

And, I was like, huh, that's interesting. But it was a voice that I couldn't quiet down, and it had come out of nowhere. I'd never suspected him of being unfaithful to me. And so, through a series of events, I came home and you know, started investigating because that's what I'm good at, honey. I really need to be in the FBI.

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: I started a full-fledged investigation out nowhere. I don't know, again, what inspired this, and found out that it was true that he hadn't been faithful to me. It wasn't like some girl he was seeing-- Well, actually it was, but it wasn't like it was-- It was just sex, according to him, which I don't know why that maybe felt better or worse, I don't know. I'm still processing that part of it too.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. Yeah.

Lauren Makk: However, what I do know in that moment was that same voice that told me to trust my instinct was also telling me that if I picked up a cocktail that I was going to end up in jail before the end of the day, because my personal self was saying, 'oh my God, something's wrong. I'm having a bad. I need to have a drink.'

And, something bigger than me said, "You put that drink in your mouth and everything is going to shit," because I was going to kill that woman and I was probably going to kill him too. And, I mean that with sincerity, I don't mean I'm saying it as a cute little quip. I was going to kill her.

I have watched enough *Dateline* [laughs] and enough, *20/20* to know how everybody else does it wrong, and I was going to do it right. And, the rage and that intensity was so unfamiliar and scary to me that I knew that putting any amount of alcohol on top of that, was going to add something way worse.

Jackie MacDougall: Wow!

Lauren Makk: And, I thought, I'm not going to let somebody take me away from my kids. So, I left Nashville, to be honest with you, I was a little bit out of control at that point so I don't recall exactly how long but long enough to get my head together before I had to come back home.

I was so intensely angry at him because we had gone through all of this therapy together to change our relationship and to rewrite the narrative and to be this family for our children, and here he was being duplicitous, right? He wasn't doing what he said. He needed this comfort. And, of course, and I want to give some grace to him, let me be really clear. My partner had an addiction as well.

He was a sex and love addiction, which he is now experiencing his own sobriety on and recovery. Yes, exactly. I was so angry with him for doing that to me and knowing damn well that we were doing all of these things to get better and to be more conscious because our actual therapy is called Conscious Relationship Therapy.

And then, in that same moment, as I'm so mad at him, I think to myself, 'Well, are you conscious? You're not.' I have my own addiction. I'm completely drunk from probably three o'clock until I pass out at the end of the day, you know? I had to stop and sit with myself about that because I'm so mad at him for having this thing, this secret, this addiction, this thing that he wasn't clearing up.

But I know good and well that I have now started to sneak a beverage or checkout. I'll just say check out. I was checking out too, you know? And, I recognized that if I don't start checking back in, if I hadn't, if this was out of control for me and I wasn't checked in with this, then there's probably other places in my life that I'm checked out of that I'm not aware is happening.

If that could not see that happening in my own space, then where other places is that happening? And so, I did get really still. I was meditating one morning, and I was so agitated. I didn't know like how to be in my home, around him, with my children. I was just so like out of control in my own body. I recall I was sitting right next to my home bar, wanting another drink, but I didn't even-- At that point, I didn't even want another drink. I almost needed it. Like even there were days when I didn't want to drink, but I still felt like I had to.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah.

Lauren Makk: I remember even like, about to pour the drink and I was like, 'I don't want this,' but I felt like, Ugh, I was still doing it anyway.

Jackie MacDougall: Your subconscious is like, 'but this is what we do, Lauren.'

Lauren Makk: Yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: Pour it. Pour it.

Lauren Makk: You'll feel good.

Jackie MacDougall: It'll make everything better.

Lauren Makk: Exactly. 'You don't feel good, you should have a drink.' And I'm like, 'no, but this drink is not going to make me feel better.' And then, I was like, 'It is. I'm going to do great.'

Jackie MacDougall: Right. Right. It's like the devil and the angel, right?

Lauren Makk: Yeah. I sat there and I was like, I just gave it to God. And I said, "Okay, please, help me. Just help me, help me." I remember saying, "Please, just help me." And, I remember this voice. It was clearer than anything I've ever heard in my life. And, it said, "How do you expect me to help you when you can't help yourself? Like, how do you expect me to use the gifts I'm giving you if you're too numbed out, too checked out to even use them?"

And, I was like, 'oh, right, right, right, right, right.' So, that day I was like, fuck. [laughs It was like so loud and clear. I couldn't even not say that I had heard it because it was so clear. It was so evident. Like you have really found yourself in this position where you are like planning a double homicide on one side of your brain, but in the other brain, like

you can't even get control. And, it was just like, I was so out of control. I was literally out of control

Jackie MacDougall: At this point, Lauren knew she needed help, but she could not do it alone.

Lauren Makk: I knew I wanted to go to AA, and I had looked it up before. I kind of had an idea of where they might hold a meeting or when it could be. But I made all these excuses about why I couldn't be there at that time. I got two kids. I can't be up at 7:30. Oh, during the day, oh no, I've got these things and I'm too important, because I can't take care of myself.

I've got more important things to do than take care of me. And then, I was like, 'well, who do I call? Do I have any friends that are sober?' And, the answer was typically no, because why would I hang out with sober people? I like to have fun. You're a loser.

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: Totally get that. Totally get that.

Lauren Makk: No, I don't have sober friends. Well, they wouldn't be friends, you know?

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. I remember thinking that like, if someone was sober because they have a problem, I could be friends with them because they get the appeal or if someone's a drinker, but someone who just chooses not to drink, like, what's wrong with you?

Lauren Makk: Why would I be your friend?

Jackie MacDougall: That was what my brain also, you know?

Lauren Makk: Yes. That's how hard it was when I was trying to come out of that. I was like, 'I have nobody to call.'

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: Because that ain't my community, that was not my bird that I can be a flock with, you know?

Jackie MacDougall: And, by the way, drinkers don't necessarily want you to get sober, because they'll lose their partner.

Lauren Makk: Exactly. But then, are they really your friends? Are they really your friends? And, that's what I'm also learning. Like so much of the people that I thought were my friends, weren't; and they were my drinking buddies, and I get that you have somebody for everything. So, I did what I-- I went back to the archives. We had this old friend from FABLife, Antonio Martinez. He was--

Jackie MacDougall: I love Antonio.

Lauren Makk: He's really wonderful, and he was the only person I remember being backstage with him, me and another FABLifer, who shall not be named. But I actually think she's on her sober journey. So, I'll just say it, I guess, Chrissy Teigen. We used to go backstage and we'd have a couple cocktails together.

She was my drinking buddy. Okay? And, I remember she and I were like having the little, like giggle-fest. We had just like, I don't know, probably both did the wine together. And, we offered him some and he was like, 'no, I'm sober.' And, I was like, 'gross, okay, loser.'

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. Yeah.

Lauren Makk: Judge. All right, judge. You know, and I remember thinking, 'he's sober, huh? That's weird.' But he and I had always kept up through the years, whether it be social media or just touching base. And so, I thought, 'oh, I do know one loser.'

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: 'Let me call him.' You know? So, I pick up the phone, was the hardest phone, the heaviest phone to pick up that day. And I said, "Hey man, I want to think about sobriety, can you give me some direction? What are your thoughts on the first thing?"

Jackie MacDougall: Wow.

Lauren Makk: He really did help. He gave me a direction and he told me some really important things to like remember just for that day, just for that moment. So, that day I didn't drink. And, the next day I went to AA, and I walked in. And, now, we're in Nashville. Okay? And, I'm in the suburb. So, let's just say I got to the door and I walked in and I was like, 'oh, am I in the right place? I thought I was there for a Trump rally.'

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: I beat my head. I was like, 'well, this can't be it. I must introducing myself to the wrong crowd.' I said--

Jackie MacDougall: Well, frankly, if I were at a Trump rally, I'd be drinking too. But that's a totally different time.

Lauren Makk: Yes, yes. I peeped in, and I'm like, 'this ain't my crowd.' I said, "Am I in the right place?" And she said, "If you are a drunk, you are." I thought, 'okay. Okay. I'm in the right place.' So, I sat down and I just sat there and just sat there and cried the whole time. And, it was my first meeting. So, of course, they do a whole first meeting for first timers.

And, I just cried. I don't know what they said, but I know for sure there was a few little things that I could take from that meeting. It was like, you know, just I got to do is just thrive right now in this moment, right now, you don't have to worry about when you're never going to drink again. You just worry about right now.

And so, that was what I took. I would go back, and I would cry and cry and cry, and just go back and cry. And then, I stopped crying, maybe two weeks in, then I could finally muster who I was and where I was from. And then, I just kept going back.

Jackie MacDougall: Why do you think it was so emotional for you in the beginning?

Lauren Makk: Oh man, Jackie.

Jackie MacDougall: Was it a loss?

Lauren Makk: Yeah. It's just a change, you know? It's just like, it was everything. It was so unfamiliar to be there. So hard to admit that I had a problem that I didn't know where to start with. You know, I consider myself so able to do anything in this world. Like, I can work my way all the way up to television, national television, if I wanted to, I can do anything.

This one thing seems so impossible, and I really didn't want to stop drinking. I didn't really want to stop. I knew I had to. But I was so scared to let go of what that looked like for me, whether it was the lifestyle or the friendships or the experiences, like everything I've ever done from 23 years old until now had been with alcohol; vacations, holidays, afternoons, dinners, out to eat; God, even at church, they give you wine.

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: Totally. And then, even with small kids, it's like, you invite people to the first birthday, and there's alcohol at this first birthday party.

Lauren Makk: I was fucked up on my kids' first birthday. I thank God I have a camera to show me the pictures, but yes, you know?

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. I mean, it's not, and I don't want to-- Listen, I think it's important to take personal responsibility. I think it's accountability. It's 100% so important. Right? I'm guessing AA helps you do that. But also, the messaging out there, the societal like drinking, drinking, drinking, like that's what makes you fun?

It's wine o'clock, you know? It's mommy juice. It's all of these things that are out there that if you are someone who wants to be sober or who struggles with alcohol, I don't want to say it's not 100% your fault, but they don't make it easy.

Lauren Makk: No, they don't. It's so true, because I was even at Ross the other day, and I was like walking through the aisles and there was like all these like aprons and like towels for your kitchen, and every one of them had like a glass of wine on it. Like it's wine o'clock, it's five o'clock somewhere.

Jackie MacDougall: Exactly.

Lauren Makk: I have subscribed to that girl, you know, I remember my son asking if he could play soccer. And, the first thing I thought was I don't want to drink outside in the heat. [laughs] I don't want to drink on a soccer field with all them bugs in the heat. Like, 'no, you cannot play soccer,' because I don't want to be-- I'm uncomfortable drinking there. Like that's not what my first thought, you know?

Jackie MacDougall: Right. Right.

Lauren Makk: And, it's like, even just when I've had a long day, like I remember just like Pavlov's dogs being like, 'oh my God, I need a drink. Like I need it. Not I want it, not it would be nice, I need it.' Like that was my messaging to myself. I still find myself sometimes like joking about a cocktail, like, 'oh see, I have a cocktail,' like as a joke. But that's not even like how I think anymore. It was just so ingrained in my head.

Jackie MacDougall: It's programming.

Lauren Makk: Yes.

Jackie MacDougall: It's programming. You get programmed at a young age that it's like, 'oh, the drinkers are the fun ones. The drinkers are the ones you want to be around.'

Lauren Makk: Yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: And also, as a host, like I love to host things and it certainly makes it easier when you've got to drink in your hand, right?

Lauren Makk: It does.

Jackie MacDougall: When you're trying to connect people to each other--

Lauren Makk: Oh yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: -and host it all. Otherwise, it's just the work without the pleasure.
[laughs]

Lauren Makk: Hello, and you don't clean up. When you're fucked up and drunk on the floor, someone else does it for you. [laughs]

Jackie MacDougall: Right. You're like, 'why do I host? It's so awful.' But when you've got a drink in hand, like, so there's a lot and you're right. Like with COVID and quarantines, you'd sit outside, at least we would in California. And, it was the only way to be social, and then be on these Zoom calls or whatever.

So, a lot of people don't have that, I'm about to kill two people moment. But they have some version of that, some version of like, 'shit, this needs to change.' So, from that moment, when you got sober and you went to AA, was that it? Was your sober journey on or did you hit some bumps along the way before you got sober, finally?

Lauren Makk: No. Oh, well, first of all, let me just say clearly, it's not that cute and packaged. Of course, that was the first day of my sobriety, yes. But keep in mind, mentally, there had been many, 'I'm going to stop on Mondays,' for at least a decade, you know?

Jackie MacDougall: Okay.

Lauren Makk: Certainly, I can surely clearly tell you when I had that meeting with Jill, back in my ABC FABLife days, there were definitely days like, 'oh, you know, I'm going to go to this event, and I'm just going to have one cocktail.' And then, I don't, you know? That was, that day at AA was the first day I stopped lying to myself, but I had lied to myself and been attempting sobriety forever, I would say.

Every time that I would embarrass myself or hurt myself or overcommit or do something inappropriate or wake up and forget or lose something, all of those things, all of those whispers up and until that moment, I had always said, "I'm going to stop drinking. "On Monday, I'm going to quit. I'm going to take it easy. I'll just drink on the weekends." All these little mini negotiations that I had had with myself that I was never living up to. So, my sobriety journey could probably go back until the very first time I lied to myself.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. Yeah. I mean, I'll tell you right now. I am not a one-drink girl.

Lauren Makk: Hell, no.

Jackie MacDougall: I feel like one drink is for quitters.

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: Exactly. I brush my teeth with a cocktail.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. And so, for me, I don't go to AA, and I am from a family of alcoholics. I have siblings who are sober and who have-- And, for me, I was like, 'I didn't get busted. I didn't do this. I didn't do that.' My husband and I would share a bottle of wine. And, I knew in my head, I had already pre-negotiated that we only have one bottle of wine because if I open the second bottle of wine, nothing good is happening.

So, I'm drinking half a bottle of wine, but here's the thing, my husband's not that much of a drinker. And so, we would share this bottle and then he'd go up to do to, you know, whatever, get ready for bed or something. And, he'd have a glass with like half-full, which I did not understand.

Lauren Makk: How?

Jackie MacDougall: And so, to me, even if I was just about to go to bed, I would shoot down his wine, because you don't waste wine, like have respect.

Lauren Makk: No, don't you dare pour it out.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. And, I'm the same way with food.

Lauren Makk: Exactly.

Jackie MacDougall: Like to leave that bite of food.

Lauren Makk: Don't you regret it too, when you leave that last bite and then you're hungry later and you're like, I had left cheesecake on that plate. Why would I do that?

Jackie MacDougall: To me, I have a disordered relationship with alcohol. And again, I don't want to be lying to myself, and like, what's the difference between that and alcoholism? I have no idea. And, they say, are you an alcoholic? Well, do you think you're an alcoholic? I mean, it's really a self-diagnosis, right, alcoholism?

Lauren Makk: Right.

Jackie MacDougall: And so, I just know that I had a really, really unhealthy relationship with it. Like if you were to invite me to dinner, I'd go, 'Ooh, where does she live? She lives on the other side of town. How many glasses of wine can I have and still blow less than 0.08?' Like all of these things are happening--

Lauren Makk: Hell, yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: -and I'm like two days before we even have dinner.

Lauren Makk: Exactly. And/or then you negotiate like, 'okay, an Uber's 20 bucks. I could spend \$40 and not get a DUI. That sounds like a good plan. Oh good. Then I should bring two bottles of wine because now I'm taking an Uber.'

Jackie MacDougall: Right.

Lauren Makk: You know what I mean? I could have two bottles and maybe even some *Jack Daniel's* and wash that down with them when I get home, if I'm making them safe, we'll have a party cocktail because I'm home now. I made it safely. The kids are asleep. I can't tell-- That's the alcoholism though, because it's cunning and it's sophisticated. And, I wouldn't even say that's the alcohol, that's the disease of alcoholism, because that's what it turns into. I think if you think of it as, you fighting a drink, then that really dumbs it down.

Alcoholism is by definition, a disability with alcohol, it's an inability to have control, but it tells you that you do. So, it has altered my brain in such a way that I think, 'oh, girl, I got this. I can just have one glass,' but really my mind is going, 'huh, girl, you're so cute. Have three, just take an Uber, duh, duh. You can get it. You're fine. Oh, you didn't, you drove home last time after our two bottles of wine and you're fine. You know the back roads. You know the way to go. You can drive slow.' That's the disease.

Jackie MacDougall: And, by the way, so-and-so had two bottles of wine at that dinner, so you're not like her, right?

Lauren Makk: Right, that comparison part.

Jackie MacDougall: It's always comparison. Yeah.

Lauren Makk: Yeah. I think those parts of the negotiation is the -ism of it, you know?

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah.

Lauren Makk: We do this all the time. It doesn't even matter. It's like the same thing if you had a bad relationship and you're like, 'well, I'm just going to call him and tell him about the dog that we share. Maybe he'll then take me to dinner.'

You know, all these little mini negotiations you have with stuff, like whenever you're in any addiction, it's the same thing for me with like, I still love food, right? And, I still have to be around that too. And, it's like me going, 'all right, I can have donut at breakfast if I have a salad at lunch.' [laughs] I feel like it cancels it out, you know?

Jackie MacDougall: Right.

Lauren Makk: Like, all of those things. But alcohol, particularly with that disease is so cunning because it tells you that you're okay, that you can do this. And, the first step in AA is admitting you have a problem that you're powerless over it. I mean, that-- I still find it weird. I haven't done any step work with AA. I just go in the meetings, and sometimes I just sit there and cry. And, sometimes I gain experience, strength, and hope from other people.

And, I just learn, I desire to go through the steps. It seems to me another part of the process that I am maybe more resistant to because I'm like, I still have that thing where I'm like, 'well, I'm not like you, you went to jail, and have been in rehab three times.' Like, I just need to get my shit together, you know?

Like, I need to stop drinking. So, those steps, and that's where I hear all the sauces. For me, I'm also, I'm not very religious; and it has a lot of religious components to it that sometimes I'm like, ah, okay.

But I will say this, whether or not I'm religious or not, something higher than me has pulled me out of this because it's that thing that told me, 'You are better and you're meant for more, and I can't help you if you can't get your own shit together. I can't help you if you don't clean your instrument up so that I can use you the way you need to be used.' And so--

Jackie MacDougall: Maybe it's the voice of Jill.

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: Yes. Yes. It was Jill.

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: I still love you.

Jackie MacDougall: No, but I hear you because I'm not a religious person either. And, I grew up very Catholic, but I believe in energy, I believe in the universe, I believe in our existence is connected to something greater.

Lauren Makk: Yeah. Yes.

Jackie MacDougall: And, there's something greater that wants you, Lauren, to be greater.

Lauren Makk: Yes, exactly. That's a great way of putting it. Jackie though, let me ask you. What instigated you to becoming sober?

Jackie MacDougall: A few things. Number one, I'm kind of a dick when even just a buzz. Like, so if I went to that dinner and I had three glasses of wine, like I didn't have alcohol before, I didn't come home and have more alcohol after. So, like that wasn't necessarily part of what I was doing. But if I went to your house and you were just pouring, I've had half of glass of wine and then you poured more into it, and I wasn't actually counting my glasses of wine, there's just no discipline whatsoever.

Lauren Makk: Right.

Jackie MacDougall: But if I had this bottle, that's why I had to have these pre-negotiations like, you know, Lauren and I are going to share a bottle of wine, then I know that I get two and a half glasses.

Lauren Makk: Yeah. Oh right. Yes.

Jackie MacDougall: And so, it was the constant, and it was also like we were home and it was quarantine and I wasn't drinking necessarily more often. I would have some weeks that I was and some that I wasn't, but I wasn't being the person I wanted to be. But I also went to a friend's engagement party, the surprise engagement, and I just-- First of all, I talked about how the future groom, who he dated in the past, like at their engagement party?

Lauren Makk: No.

Jackie MacDougall: Like just like, it's just Jackie, she's just being funny, you know?

Lauren Makk: Uh-huh.

Jackie MacDougall: And, I didn't like who I was. I didn't like, like who does that? And, I didn't mean any ill-will by it, and even that was like three months before I ended up really stopping, but I just saw over and over again that I wasn't a fan of who I was when I was drinking and the thoughts, the constant thoughts of negotiation. And, I just thought, you know what, I'm going to stop for a little while. Like you, maybe, I could not say, "I'm done drinking," because that would send me into a tailspin and I would just drink.

Lauren Makk: Yeah. Right.

Jackie MacDougall: Like don't tell me what I'm not going to ever do again.

Lauren Makk: Ever do again. My favorite person, my favorite thing, my one activity I can rely on and can get anywhere. Yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: And so, I just thought, you know what, I'm going to take a break. And also, I have a kid with chronic kidney disease, and I told myself and anybody who had listened that I was going to stop drinking just in case he needed my kidney. Now he's in like stage two of five, he's managing like there's, knock on wood, right?

Lauren Makk: He's all like, no thanks, to that kidney.

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: Well, thankfully it's the liver that--

Lauren Makk: Oh right, right, right. You're right. Yeah.

Jackie MacDougall: But at the same time, I was like, 'well, if I have to have surgery and I have to blah, blah, blah.' You know? And, he's not even close to that, but that was what I needed, because we, as women, won't necessarily do for ourselves, but we'll do for our children.

Lauren Makk: Right.

Jackie MacDougall: So, I told anyone who would listen, 'oh, well, he could use my kidney one day. And so, I better at least stop drinking.' Right?

Lauren Makk: Right, right.

Jackie MacDougall: It was kind of bullshit. I'm calling myself out right now, but that's what I needed to tell myself, that I was being a good mom, because if you're being a good mom, at least for me, I'm much more motivated than to say, I should do this for myself. You know?

Lauren Makk: Yeah. Ugh. Are you still motivated by your children or are you motivated by you now that you're a little bit deeper into it?

Jackie MacDougall: You know, having teenagers, it really helps that I don't want alcohol to be front-and-center in their lives, because I would like them to have a positive relationship if they want to drink as, you know, as adults at 21 or whatever, go for it.

But I also want to teach them that it's not the end-all be-all, that you can live a life, you can have friendships, you can do all these things, and not think that, like we were programmed, that alcohol needs to be front-and-center. And so, they don't really think much about it. And honestly, like even the days that they were younger, and oh my God, I threw up one time in a public fountain in front of a restaurant, in the suburbs of Los Angeles. Not even that long ago, like 2008.

Lauren Makk: Sounds about right, my kind of girl.

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: Right? And, my son had just been in the hospital with asthma. He has that too. And you know, I came home and I went to this charity event, and I was like, 'well, I just spent three days in the hospital. Like, I need to let loose,' you know? And, I let loose, I let loose into the fountain. The fact that nobody ever like saw me or whatever. I mean, it was so embarrassing, by the way, the fountain's gone. I don't know if it has anything to do with me.

[laughter]

Lauren Makk: They're like, this has got to go.

Jackie MacDougall: Or the fact that the restaurant, the Mojito restaurant right in front of it, probably wasn't a good mix. But I just, I just wasn't really enjoying who, especially not having, like you were saying, the social activity. It's different when you're out and you're social, and this and that, but like, it just wasn't working for me anymore. You know?

Lauren Makk: Right.

Jackie MacDougall: And yet, to this day, I'm nine months in, you cannot tell me I will never drink again or else I will feel compelled to drink again. So, that whole, 'one day at a time', thing works for me. You don't have to be in AA for that to work.

Lauren Makk: That's totally true. Because, you know, AA is for me, something I use as just to kind of keep checking in. it's someone I feel accountable to somehow now at this stage in the game. I just feel like, well, they give you a chip. So, like, okay, got my 30 days chip, and I want the rainbow. So, I like got to keep going, you know? And again, their whole thing is like experience, strength, and hope.

So, it's like, you go there and listen to other people and you're like, oh, okay. I can do it another day. Or you just learn a little bit something. And, the thing with AA is they just say, take what you want and leave the rest, you know? So, I take whatever I need that day or whenever I go and use that. But I don't, like I said, it's hard for me to say that I'm in AA because I'm not working the steps the way that most other traditional members are. I need to look into that for myself, because--

Jackie MacDougall: And, maybe one day you will.

Lauren Makk: One day, I will. I hope to, I'm always on a quest to learn more about myself, but it just seems like another commitment that, right now, I'm like, 'okay, take your time, take my time.'

Jackie MacDougall: What would you tell Lauren, 10 years ago about sobriety, about what life can be?

Lauren Makk: You know, there was a time that I thought I would never be able to live without alcohol. Like, 'why would I do that? That seems completely weird.' And now, I look back on my life and I can't imagine my life with it, at least the relationship I had with it before. I can't imagine ever having that same relationship with it again. I have lived a life, a really incredible life and doing some of the most amazing things.

And, I don't remember a lot of it because I was drunk and telling myself I was having fun; and I probably had a great fucking time, I just don't remember any of it. [laughs] And the people who do, said I had a great time. I just don't remember it, and that for me is so sad. And, I want to remember the rest of my life, the future that I have.

And so, I would tell Lauren that really, she is really, really great just the way she is, that alcohol doesn't add to that. When I posted something about my one-year sobriety, one of my producers from another show I did, she said, wow, Lauren, because I said, I thought alcohol made me more fun and beautiful and entertaining and all of the things, but I didn't drink at work.

So, she said, "You were my favorite person on set, and you were never drunk." And I was like, 'oh wow. That was actually-- I'm good when I'm not drunk, you know? Like, why do I need to be drinking?' That doesn't add to it. And maybe it does, but it doesn't add to it in any measurable way that people could recognize half the time.

One of the things I used to pride myself on was that people didn't know that I was drunk. They would say, 'oh, you're drunk. I didn't know you were drunk when you were there.' And I'm like, great.

Jackie MacDougall: I was skillful at hiding it, especially with my kids. I don't know if I just act drunk when I'm sober, but they didn't notice. So, at least for me, I was like proud of my skills, right? Like I could hide it. So, do it that way.

Lauren Makk: Girl, yes, to hiding. That's another thing I just wanted, going back to this, I would hide it. I would not let anybody know. I would brush my teeth really quickly. Or it was like a big, old thing of mouthwash, I might even take a sip of that. Sometimes it was in my throat, so you couldn't smell the *Jack Daniel's*.

Like I would hide it from people on an airplane when you're not supposed to be drinking, but I would hide my little bottles and I'd pour them out and you know, all these little

sneaky tricks, I'd throw the trash away down the street before I threw it in my own trash can, like all these little things that I know like--

Jackie MacDougall: Wow.

Lauren Makk: If you had to do it in secret, it's probably not a good thing.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. How has your family changed since you became sober?

Lauren Makk: There are a lot of champions about my sobriety. There are a lot of people who are so happy and proud for me. You know, it's been easier than I thought it was. I'll just put it that way. Everything's been easier than I thought it was to stop drinking. Like all of the people that I used to drink with that I don't drink with anymore are still my friends.

If they were really my friends before, but there are certain family members that I have that have really taken advantage of my inability to be present or clear. And, some of my family members now that I'm clear-headed and more level-headed and aware, I'm recognizing some toxic relationships that I had with certain family members.

And so, in doing what I need to do for myself, which is my own work and taking care of myself, I've had to eliminate a lot of toxicity in my life, whether it be friendships or relationships, whether it'd be the kind of television or news that I ingest, whether it'd be the food or whatever that I eat, like I've had to like really clear out some things that I are not good for me. And, sometimes that can be people in your life. And I'm okay with that, if I'm putting myself first.

Jackie MacDougall: Since getting sober, you've also gotten married. So clearly, you were able to work out some of the things that, I mean, without murdering anyone, you were able to work that out?

Lauren Makk: I have not murdered. Yes, we have. And you know, we're on the other side of it. And, when I was entering into our marriage, I was sober and that was a big thing to put together sober. I was about eight months sober at the time, and we have

done some intensive work, but our relationship is better than I think it could have ever been. That experience broke me open.

I had an opportunity to either choose the best of me or not. And I did, and we both grabbed onto the best parts of our relationship and have utilized that experience to really get a little bit more familiar with who we are and who we want to be and who we want to show up as in this world. And so, I am doing my work for myself, and he does his work for himself.

And, I recognized in that, you know, we say the serenity prayer in AA, and it's the first thing that you say. And, I'm sure you see that on every teacup too, right? But it's like, and the first line of it is, *God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.* And, what I'm learning every day is the wisdom in what I can change and what I can't change.

And, I will never be able to control my husband, or my kids, or anybody else for that matter. What I do know that I can control is me and how I respond and react in this world; how I show up, how I do my own work to do my best. That's my commitment. And, that was my commitment entering into this marriage and same for him. And, that's why I accepted that responsibility as being a wife.

Jackie MacDougall: So powerful. One of the things I've always respected about you is your ability to just be yourself. You're so gifted and talented and brilliant, and also being vulnerable and authentic.

Lauren Makk: Thank you.

Jackie MacDougall: I think that's why you get these Instagram messages and these people, because the more we can talk about our struggles, the better we'll be and the more connected we'll be.

If you're curious about beginning your own sober journey and you need support, I will link to some resources in the show notes. And, while Lauren herself has found value in AA, she also credits some other places for finding connection, including following different hashtags on social media, as well as sober associations, some specifically for women of color. Visit grownasswoman.guide/episode168 for more information. The key is finding community. something Lauren credits even today.

Lauren Makk: I think that's really one of the reasons why I wanted to speak out with you, Jackie, is because I feel like there, as I told you, before I learned in FABLife, there are people, I'm not alone. And, there's so many of us that want to clean up our act. It doesn't even mean that you have to be completely sober, just clean the act up. There's a calling to bring us forward and to do better. And so, that's one of the reasons why I wanted to share my story with somebody so that maybe they found some strength in that too.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. That's beautiful.

Lauren Makk: And, I really want to make sure it's clear that there's so much grace that I have for people who are in the struggle themselves. I think there's so much of that judgment and shame and guilt that's wrapped up into the disease as well that makes people feel like they're inadequate or can't get out of it. And so, I have so much grace for that and for people in that situation, because, I mean--

Listen, I'm only one decision away from going right back to where I started from, I really am. But that also, in that same heaviness of that, there's also just one-- You're only one decision away from changing it too. Anything you do is a series of a lot of decisions added up to create change, right? And so, for me, it's like, I don't look at it like I'm quitting drinking, I just look at it like, 'just for today, I'm not going to have a drink. And if that seems too heavy, then it's just for this hour, I won't have a drink.'

And, a series of hours turns into a series of days. And then, a series of days turns into weeks and months and years and all that other stuff. I was in a group with this-- I go to-- I volunteer now. That's another way I spend my time because for me, I like being social. I realize that, right? I can't be at a bar for me because if I go to a restaurant, I'm sitting at the bar, honey, sitting at a seat by myself.

So, I volunteered this woman's shelter and they're women of color, they're all in treatment or in therapy and are getting help for their addictions. And, it doesn't matter if it's drugs or alcohol or prostitution, whatever, you can just get caught up. And I'm witnessing these other women who have had it so much harder than me, just collect their little series of good decisions,

Jackie MacDougall: Collect their series of good decisions.

Lauren Makk: Yeah. And then, all of a sudden, you look--

Jackie MacDougall: I love that.

Lauren Makk: Right. And then, all of a sudden, you look back and you've got a year of them. And that's anything like, it's like anything you want to do to change your life is just about like little decisions. One decision at a time, you can change it. And so, I don't want anyone to like be like, 'oh, she went to AA, and shouldn't do all these things.' Nope. I just made one decision at a time that just changed it, just like I was doing when I was staying in my addiction.

Jackie MacDougall: Amazing. One decision at a time, there are no truer words, but Lauren suggests having a plan and "playing the tape forward", thinking about the outcome of your actions in advance.

Lauren Makk: I already know what drinking and get up looks like for me. Right? Let me play the tape forward of like what it doesn't look like for me. If I know if I drink, I'm going to be too loud, be too much, act a fool, pass out, throw up, somebody's going to drag me out of the bar, I'm going to be wobbly, I'm going to pay an expensive Uber, if that I could get a DUI, I could kill somebody's kid or somebody or myself or my kids.

Or I could not drink, and I could have a couple of spritzers and I could enjoy myself and I could dance. And I could remember, and I could have engaging conversations with real people about real experiences. And, I can get home and I can go to sleep, and I can wake up, and I can do something with my kids early. Like when you play those two tapes together, you're like, 'oh right, okay.'

Jackie MacDougall: Here's the thing. Getting sober comes with some uncomfortable moments and some different decisions. And according to Lauren, it's a daily practice of putting yourself first.

Lauren Makk: I cannot drink, but that comes with a little bit of practice, right?

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. Yeah.

Lauren Makk: You can also stay the hell home. You don't got to go to every party you're invited to. [laughs]

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. And, I think that's a really important point is that if you need to, in the beginning, not go to social events, it's okay to be first on your list. It's okay to say, "Hey, this is what I'm doing. And, it's really too hard for me, and if someone isn't understanding of that, I'm sorry."

Lauren Makk: Yeah. Then they're not your friends.

Jackie MacDougall: If you are listening and feel moved to begin your own sober journey, please check out the show notes for resources. I also link to a few non-alcoholic beverages that you can bring to parties and social events and feel like you're having the experience without the alcohol. Thank you so much, Lauren, for sharing your story.

Lauren Makk: I love you so much, Jackie.