



***Women and the need to drink***

The other day my friend complained that her mom drinks too much. “She is not allowed in this house unless she stops. My kids cannot see this!” she shouted. I felt for her. After all, having grown up myself with a mother who started her day with a shot of grappa in her espresso and ended it with Jack Daniels as a digestive drink, I knew all too well the meaning of it; slurred words, vacuous stare, horrid breath and the demoralizing feeling that “us” around her couldn’t help her.

“Sorry,” I said to my friend. “I understand. But please be careful when you speak to her. She is

drinking because she is in pain. If you are too harsh she will drink even more.” I replied.

More and more women—friends, neighbors, people I know—I realized, especially in the “older” age bracket, begin drinking when the clock says it’s ok to do so, i.e. 5:00 PM. Why is that? I think it’s because the older we get the more useless and invisible we feel. The kids are gone, we have had one or multiple careers (depending on how many jobs we have had to begin and then interrupt to take care of the babes and the husbands), our partners are gone all day on their never-fragmented-never-in-question jobs (I am NOT dismissing the hard work of our mates and this is a generalization, of course), thus we find ourselves wondering WHO we have become and HOW we are going to spend the next thirty years in a meaningful (to us and others) way. It is at this juncture that the drink comes in. The pull to drink (and I mean, drinking every day and more than just one drink each time) comes from the feeling that, unless we are paid and validated in the way our culture does, i.e. to produce something valuable and to earn tangible rewards, then we don’t count. The alcohol numbs the pain of this realization and the fear of moving ahead in uncharted and unknown territory. Which way do we go? Do we believe what we are being told or do we revisit who we have become during the last thirty years and use it to recreate a new-found persona that will keep us fulfilled thereafter? You know the answer. But this proposition is very hard and requires a lot of courage because no one has yet created a historically sound, paved path of how a woman over fifty can regain grounds in a fast-paced, heavily industrialized and Patriarchal society. Will we have to sell out our dreams, once again, to keep up with the rest, or can we find a way to emerge while keeping our integrity and our vision alive?

My mother could not do either. As a heavy drinker she was touted as an unfit mother; as a worker, she was unfit because she left me in the care of others. She had no open doors and no one to help her, thus she drank from 8:00 in the morning until 9:00 at night, when she collapsed in bed in the hope of never waking up. Eventually, the drink killed her and she got her wish.

PS In my next BI-WEEKLY articles I will be exploring what it implies to go deeper within and find new means (and meanings) of moving forward, the significance of living in a Patriarchal society (down to the daily, nitty-gritty examples), the roots of the problem and suggestions for solutions that we can adopt starting immediately. If you are interested in these topics, PLEASE BOOKMARK my site, [www.paintedred.info](http://www.paintedred.info), and come back in two weeks. Thank you for your patronage.