

## Ep #42: Celebrating You



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Hart**

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #42: Celebrating You

You are listening to the *Take a Break* podcast with Rachel Hart, episode 41.

Whether you want to drink less or stop drinking, this podcast will help you change the habit from the inside out. We're challenging conventional wisdom about why people drink and why it can be hard to resist temptation. No labels, no judgment, just practical tools to take control of your desire and stop worrying about your drinking. Now, here's your host Rachel Hart.

Hey everybody. Guess what... It is my birthday this week. And in honor of my birthday, we are going to do an entire episode all about learning how to celebrate you. Not how to be celebrated, but how to celebrate yourself. And listen, I promise this can happen without a glass of champagne; it really can.

Now, learning how to celebrate yourself is a skill that most people do not have, because no one teaches us how to do this. We never learn how to celebrate ourselves, and it is a shame because it's such an important skill to have. What we learn instead is something very different. What we learn is how to let others celebrate us.

Now here's the thing – both are great. It is great to have other people celebrate you and it is great to be able to celebrate yourself, but there is a problem – if you never learn how to celebrate yourself, you are always going to be dependent on others to do it for you. And that does not put you in a very empowered position.

Now, one thing for you to consider, because you know now about the think-feel-act cycle, you know that other people, the people in your life, the people who you love, your friends, your family, your partner, they are not in charge of your feelings, you are.

And the fact of the matter is that you are the only person who can be in charge of how you feel. Your friends, family and loved ones, they can try all they want, but having a happy birthday depends not on what they are doing to mark the occasion but on what you are thinking about your birthday.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #42: Celebrating You

So how do we know this is true? How many of you listening have ever had a terrible birthday despite people in your life wanting to celebrate you, despite their desire that you have a good time? I can think of an example in my own life when I was living in New York in my early 20s and I had a couple of friends come into town to surprise me on my birthday.

But I had recently gotten out of a relationship with my boyfriend and I couldn't enjoy the fact that they had come all this way. I just remember spending the night sulking in the corner, and they were trying so hard to cheer me up and so hard to help me have a good time, but of course they couldn't change my thoughts. And my thoughts were what made me feel the way I was feeling.

And so that is a really important piece for you to remember – that other people are not responsible for how you're feeling about yourself on any day, much less your birthday.

Now, think about the average birthday celebration, what happens? So maybe you throw a party; it might be a surprise party. You might get presents, you might get cards that have meaningful inscriptions, someone might give a toast about what a great person you are. Think about all these things; they're all externally focused. Most of these things are all about others doing something for you.

But what, if anything, are you doing to mark this day? What are you doing to celebrate you? That is such a crucial shift from thinking about how your birthday is this externally focused thing, about how others are celebrating you, into shifting to seeing it as an internally focused thing, to think about how you are celebrating you.

Now, I know that some of you listening right now are thinking, "You know what, birthdays aren't my thing. I don't like being the center of attention, I don't like getting a year older, I actually think that after a certain age you really shouldn't celebrate your birthday anymore." And you know, some of you might be thinking, "I just hate birthdays. I hate my birthday."

## Ep #42: Celebrating You

Now, I want to challenge you on this. Now remember, birthdays are neutral; birthdays are not good or bad, it's what you think about your birthday. And I just want to offer you the idea that this is the anniversary of the day you were born. At one point in time, you did not exist. I know that this is a little bit mind bending to consider this, but at one point in time, you did not exist.

You were born into this world and your birthday marks another year of being alive. Now, a lot of people that I talk to, a lot of my clients will talk to me about how they don't want to die; they're afraid of dying. They don't want to be dead. But yet, when it comes to celebrating life, when it comes to celebrating their birthday, they don't want to do that either, right. They're in this weird no-man's-land where, "I don't want to die, I don't want to be dead, I'm kind of afraid of the idea of not existing anymore, but I don't want to celebrate myself either. I don't want to celebrate another year, I don't want to celebrate my life."

And they end up in this no-man's-land – and I will tell you that for me this is where I was as well for a very long time. I had a love-hate relationship with my birthday. I always felt like my birthdays were so important, right. It was really important to see how people were going to celebrate me and what was going to happen and what I was going to get and what were we going to do – I mean it felt very important.

And then it also kind of felt like a letdown afterwards, I never seemed to be quite happy with how my birthday turned out. And there's a very good reason why I was in this love-hate relationship with my birthday. And that was because I looked at my birthday for a very long time as a way to collect love and approval from others.

Now, I did this because personally I was at such a deficit, right. I had such a deficit of love and approval for myself that all I could think of was, "Well I have to get it from other people in my life." Because I had all these thoughts about how I wasn't measuring up, I wasn't good enough; I wasn't well liked enough, right. I had all these negative thoughts that were not creating love and approval for myself, and so my birthday became this important moment in time when I could kind of collect as much love and

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #42: Celebrating You

approval as possible, hoping that that would sustain me. But of course, it never did.

And so, it always really bothered me if a close friend forgot my birthday or if I felt like my boyfriend hadn't paid enough attention or put enough time and energy into planning something. Right, I really got very fixated if the celebration didn't live up to what I thought it should be. And I'll tell you, it seems kind of silly talking about it now, but I really do think that my love-hate relationship with my birthday was such an example and such a reflection of how lacking I was in approval for myself and love for myself.

I really needed others to do it for me. I needed others to approve of me and love me. And so, my birthday ended up being this kind of milestone day to sit back and be like, "Okay world, I don't think that I matter, I don't think that I'm good enough, I don't really like myself, so show me the opposite is true. Show me that I matter; show me that others like me, show me that other people think that I'm good enough because I don't know how to do this for myself."

Now the other piece of this was that birthdays, at some point on my life, became very tied up in drinking. This is not surprising; this is common for a lot of people. I've talked about this before on the podcast, but I arrived at college when I was 17, I started drinking right away, and from that point forward, my birthday, even though I was underage, was always about getting drunk.

Birthdays and drinking just went hand in hand; and I had 14 years of celebrating my birthday with a drink. And so, I couldn't even conceive of anything other than, "Well let's go out and have drinks. Let's celebrate with a buzz. Let's celebrate with getting drunk." And in doing so, trying to celebrate without doing these things just felt strange.

So when I decided that I was going to take a break from drinking, when I was 31, my birthday actually came around a couple of months later, and I had no idea what to do. I really didn't, because for me birthdays were so wrapped up in drinking, and they were so wrapped up also in getting

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #42: Celebrating You

approval from others that I just kind of ran away; I didn't know what else to do.

And I remember that I decided that that year I was going to fly to Vermont and I was going to spend my birthday in the country with two of my closest friends, two people that I knew wouldn't make this a birthday about drinking. They knew that I was trying to take a break and I was trying to do something different, but I really did that because I had no idea how to celebrate my birthday without having a drink in my hand.

But here's the thing I want to point out and I want you to consider this as well – I actually had a lot of experience celebrating my birthday without a drink in my hand. Now, that is not what I was telling myself at the time. What I was telling myself was, "Well it's impossible; how would you possibly celebrate without a drink?"

But the fact was that I had 17 years of experience before I went to college, all those birthdays and none of them involved alcohol. But my brain could not see that, it was like I had blinders on. And I just kept thinking, over and over, "You can't celebrate a birthday without a drink." And because of that, I couldn't even see that I had all this evidence that actually it was possible.

So in the years that followed, I knew that hiding was not a sustainable solution, and I also knew that I had to devise something different. You know, I'll tell you that there's nothing like taking a break to really give you some great clarity about what is and is not working in your life. And one of the things that I realized was how much I needed approval from other people to feel good about myself, and was constantly seeking it out and how my birthday had become kind of a milestone. It was like the day of the year where I was supposed to get as much approval and as much love as possible.

And I knew I had to figure out a different way to celebrate. I had to figure out a way to celebrate myself and not be so dependent on other people. So I spent a couple of yours trying out different things, and I'll tell you that the very last birthday that I spent in New York City, I had nothing planned.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #42: Celebrating You

The only thing that I knew for sure is that I had decided that I would take the day off from work. That was it, and I told myself, “You know what, Rachel? You’re just going to follow your whims today; you’re just going to see where the day takes you.”

And back then I was reading this book, it’s a fabulous book actually, called *New York Diaries*. And it’s a book made up of individual diary entries from people living in New York City from 1609 to 2009. It’s an incredible book. So it had daily diary entries from George Washington and Walt Whitman and Mark Twain and Elizabeth Katie Stanton and Andy Warhol. And the book is actually made up of 365 separate entries, so that there’s an entry for every day of the year from a different person.

And that year, I had decided that one of the things I wanted to do was wake up every day and have this book be part of my morning routine. So I would wake up and I would make myself a cup of tea and I would read one diary entry a day from this book. And I’ve talked about my love of history before, but this is like the perfect thing for me to do in the morning; I really love doing it.

So I woke up the day of my birthday, just as I had the 313 days of that year, and I picked up my *New York Diaries* book, and I read the entry for November 10<sup>th</sup>. Now, the entry for that day was written by a man named Jonas Mekas; he’s an avant-garde filmmaker from Lithuania, and he’s actually still alive. And he wrote the entry on November 10<sup>th</sup> in 1949, two weeks before he had arrived in the US. This was a couple of years after he had to leave Lithuania. He left his home country during World War Two.

He ended up spending part of the war imprisoned in a labor camp in Germany. Then after the war he ends up in a displaced persons camp, and he finally, in 1949, emigrates to the US and he settled in Brooklyn. And on November 10<sup>th</sup> this is what he wrote and this is what I read.

“In the employment agencies there are hundreds of little desks and hundreds of people looking for work, with their eyes on the bulletin boards, reading the tiny labels with job descriptions. For two weeks we sat on those

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #42: Celebrating You

sad benches and moved from table to table, from one board to another and kept hearing 'nothing, come tomorrow'. The eyes get blank, the face becomes long, apathy sinks in. Work, work, work. Sometimes you come very close; you almost have it, and then it crumbles again.

Now I have a job. I am an assembly worker at G-M Co. manufacturing, 1308, 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Long Island City. My check number is 431. For two days I have been assembling miniature toys. I am going out of my mind from monotony. My fingers have holes from screwing tiny screws. Today by evening I could barely grasp them. I have blisters on all my fingers. Saw the Van Gough show at the museum of modern art – I revived.”

I can't even tell you how much I love that entry. I can't tell you how much it spoke to me that day. I mean, here is this man; he had to flee his homeland when he was 22. He was imprisoned in a labor camp. Once the war is over he can't even go home. He can't go back to Lithuania because his country was invaded and currently occupied by the Soviet Union, so he ends up living in a displaced person camp until he's finally 27, and then he sets sail for the US.

And he leaves everything he knows behind, his family, his language, his culture, so that he can make a new life in the US. And here he is, working in this toy factory after having searched and searched for work, and he's got blisters on every finger and he's barely able to grasp the screws. But that day, at the end of the day, he goes to the museum of modern art to see the Van Gough exhibit and, as he writes, "I revived.”

And I just knew in that moment, "Oh, of course, I'll go to the MoMA and I'll see Starry Night. I'll celebrate my love of art." I've talked about this before, but art and painting has always been a big part of my life. You know, when all the other kids were going to little league practice and they were playing soccer after school, I was with my art teacher. That is what I always wanted to do. I would paint anything, and I loved, especially when I was a little kid, I loved Van Gough. And I remember I just wanted to do reproductions. And my art teacher was always trying to convince me to paint something else,



## Ep #42: Celebrating You

but I was like, “No, no I just want to reproduce this painting.” I was like a miniature counterfeiter.

So that’s what I did that day. I went by myself to the MoMA and I saw the Van Goughs and the Matisse’s and the Monnets and the Jasper Johns and On Kawara, and I just wandered through the galleries looking at this incredible, beautiful art, art that I have loved for so long and have felt connected to for so long.

And when I was done doing that, I wandered outside – so for those of you who don’t know, the MOMA’s in Midtown in Manhattan, and it’s in a pretty busy area. And I wandered outside and I wandered to the church of St Thomas, which is right on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Now, I’m not particularly a religious person, but I will tell you that there is something, I think, that is truly amazing about being in a city like New York with eight million people and there’s just so much activity and hustle and bustle, and so much is moving and happening and there’s so much noise. And to be able to be on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and then walk into a church like St Thomas and just sit down in a pew and all of a sudden you’re in this sanctuary.

All of a sudden, everything is quiet. All of a sudden you just have this sense of peace. And so, I did that, I spent a little time in there just to sit and reflect with myself, and then I headed to my favorite restaurant in the West Village all the way across town. It’s called Café Clooney. I still miss it. And I had my absolute favorite meal to eat.

And then afterwards I wandered some more, and I ended up by Union Square, and I was outside a movie theatre and I thought, “Oh, I’ll just go see a movie. I’ll watch a film.” And it was perfect. My day was perfect and none of it was planned.

The only thing I knew was that I was going to take the day off from work; and then everything else was just me being led on a whim and a desire and figuring out, “How can I celebrate me? What can I do to celebrate my own birthday?” That’s what I was doing; I was celebrating my desires and my

## Ep #42: Celebrating You

wishes and what moved me and inspired me and how I wanted to spend my time.

And I remember thinking, “Oh this is what a birthday can be. This is what a celebration can look like. It doesn’t have to be externally focused; you don’t even need other people.” It was all about me. It was all about me looking inward and figuring out how to celebrate myself.

And I will tell you, that birthday transformed my idea of what birthdays could be and should be, because all of a sudden it moved into getting my own approval; doing things for me instead of focusing on everybody else’s approval of me. Rather than getting approval from others, I was giving it to myself. And this is a skill that I think too many people have no idea how to do. When we think about celebrations, when we think about our birthdays, it’s so externally focused. It’s so much about how other people will celebrate us.

And especially if you are like me and you struggle with your own self approval, if you struggle with your own love for yourself, right, that was something that was a big struggle for me, then you will find that birthdays might, like they did for me, become this kind of milestone of sitting back and being like, “Okay world, prove it, prove that I’m okay, prove that I’m enough, prove that I am loved.”

I think that that is such a thing to realize, if that sounds familiar to you. And the question is – and you know what, it doesn’t just have to be on your birthday. You don’t have to wait for your birthday to do this – but what do you do in your life to celebrate you listen to your own whims and your own desires? You don’t need to take the entire day off, right, but how are you doing it in small ways?

When do you listen to that voice? When do you listen to that inkling of what you want to do? How do you focus on yourself? What do you do to make yourself happy? Everyone, I believe, has an inner compass that points us in the direction that we want to go, that points us in the direction of our desires and our wants and how we want to spend our time.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #42: Celebrating You

But when you are caught up in either getting approval from other or focusing all your energy in making other people in your life happy – which, by the way, we do to get approval for ourselves – you lose sight of your own compass. And you may have a hard time tapping into it; you may have a hard time answering these questions for yourself. That’s okay. I didn’t learn how to do this skill overnight; it took practice.

But you can start to ask yourself, “Okay what would I do to celebrate someone in my life that I love? Would I plan a special meal? Would I plan a special outing? Would I buy them a thoughtful gift? Would I try to create a special experience for them? Would I write them a letter? Would I send them a card? If so, what would I say, what would I do?”

And you can take some of that information, you can take some of that knowledge and think, “Okay so how could I redirect that to myself?” Now, this may feel uncomfortable. If it does, that’s normal. The reason it will feel uncomfortable is because you have some thoughts, like, “Is this weird? Should I be doing this? It seems selfish. Isn’t this about other people doing this for me?”

It’s okay if it feels that way, but the question is, “Do you want to learn this skill of celebrating yourself, or do you always want to be dependent on other people doing the celebrating of you for you?” Think of the ways in which you can start to give these things to yourself. Think of the ways that you can start to give yourself your desires, your wishes, what moves you, what inspires you, how you want to spend your time.

And think about it big and small because learning how to celebrate yourself is such an amazing skill. That birthday totally transformed me because it was the first time that I realized I didn’t need other people, and I certainly didn’t need a drink. At that point, you can see that that wasn’t even crossing my mind. I just needed to tune into myself, and that was something that I had lost sight of for so many years when all my birthday was about was other people and how they were celebrating me, and making sure that I had a drink in my hand.

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #42: Celebrating You

So this is what I want you to do – see how much you celebrate yourself versus how much you rely on other people to celebrate you. And if you find the balance is skewed, that's okay. That's just a good piece of information, a good piece of awareness so that you can start to change it, but you can't do it without tuning in.

Celebrating yourself is about tuning in, and I'll tell you this, so often drinking is about tuning out. So think about this skill. It is such an important one to develop. I will tell you that it really transformed things for me, and I hope that just hearing how I spent that day gives you a bit of inspiration about what is possible for you; especially if you are at the early stages of trying to change your drinking and it feels like, "How could you possibly have a birthday and not have a drink in your hand?"

I will tell you this – remember that you have done it before. You have had a lot of happy birthdays, a lot of fun birthdays before you ever started drinking.

That's it, I'll see you guys next week, and I hope that you spend a little bit of time just thinking about one thing that you can do to start to celebrate yourself. Alright, thanks everybody.

Hey guys, if you want to go over to iTunes and leave a review about the podcast if you're enjoying it, I would love it. But not only that; I am giving everyone who does a free urge meditation. I will tell you, this meditation, it is super simple. All it takes is five minutes and a pair of headphones. If you are having an urge and you want a different way to handle it, just pop those headphones in, find a place where you can sit down undisturbed and teach your brain, retrain your brain a very simple method to make urges more tolerable. All you need to do is head on over to [rachelhart.com/urge](http://rachelhart.com/urge) and input your information there.

Okay, listen up, changing your drinking is so much easier than you think. Whether you want to drink less or not at all, you don't need more rules or willpower. You need a logical framework that helps you understand and, more importantly, change the habit from the inside out. It starts with my 30-

[Take a Break from Drinking](#) with Rachel Hart

## Ep #42: Celebrating You

day challenge. Besides the obvious health benefits, taking a break from drinking is the fastest way to figure out what's really behind your desire. This radically different approach helps you succeed by dropping the perfectionism and judgment that blocks change. Decide what works best for you when it comes to drinking. Discover how to trust yourself and feel truly powered to take it or leave it. Head on over to [RachelHart.com/join](https://RachelHart.com/join) and start your transformation today.