486: How to Celebrate Your Birthday

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With Your Host

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486: How to Celebrate Your Birthday

Guess what day it is? It's my birthday. I'm recording this episode on my actual 50th birthday. And I have some thoughts about how to celebrate your birthday and why birthdays are so complicated for some of us, especially as we get older, so emotional, try to play it cool, it brings up a lot of stuff. So today I want to talk to you about how to celebrate your birthday. This is episode 486, *Better Than Happy*. Let's do it.

Welcome to *Better Than Happy*, the podcast where we transform our lives by transforming ourselves. My name is Jody Moore. In the decade-plus I've been working with clients as a Master Certified Coach, I've helped tens of thousands of people to become empowered. And from empowered, the things that seemed hard become trivial, and the things that seemed impossible become available, and suddenly, a whole new world of desire and possibility open up to you. And what do you do with that?

Well, that's the question… what will you do? Let's find out.

Sometimes, listening to a podcast is enough. But sometimes, you'll feel inspired to go deeper. If you hear things that speak to you in today's episode, consider it your invitation to a complimentary coaching workshop.

On this live, interactive Zoom call with me, you'll get a taste of the power of this work when applied in real life. You can participate, or be a silent observer. But you have to take a step if you want to truly see change in your life… two steps, actually. Head to jodymoore.com/freecoaching and register. Then you just have to show up. Your best life is waiting for you. Will you show up for it? Jodymoore.com/freecoaching. I'll see you there.

What's happening, everybody? So I am recording this episode on my birthday, which is Halloween. I'm a Halloween baby. So you're going to be getting it next week. It will be after my birthday, but I wanted to record it today when it's my actual birthday and just give you some ideas about how to consider thinking about your birthday and how to make decisions about how to celebrate your birthday.

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I know there's some people who are of the opinion that birthdays are just another day on the calendar. It's just a date. Why do we make a big deal out of it? And I would say, on the one hand, that's true. If you don't want to make a big deal of it, you absolutely don't have to. If you do want to, great, I'm in for that too.

I think where we complicate things, especially as adults and as women and as mothers, is we let all the noise of should and what we think other people want and trying to manage other people's opinions and feelings interfere with figuring out what we even want. And at the same time, I don't think that what our loved ones want or need or expect is irrelevant information. I think there's a reason why we want to consider that. So we're going to sift through some of that today. I hope this will be helpful. This is how I think about birthdays.

First, quick story. I share my birthday with Halloween and with many of you. I love hearing from other Halloween babies. So that's been to me kind of fun because there's always something going on. It kind of feels like a special day. There's always some kind of a party. It's not a present holiday, so it doesn't create weirdness when you're a kid. And I've loved having my birthday for the most part on Halloween.

As a mom, of course, Halloween is a kid holiday for the most part, right? Like my kids like dressing up and even as they get older, Halloween is less fun, I guess you might say. And I love that about it. I love having just fun things to do with the kids. And also, if I want to have a day or a time when it feels like we're celebrating me, I make sure I make that happen somewhere around my birthday, not necessarily on Halloween, maybe on a different day or a different night.

So I'm going to talk to you a little bit about that. But this morning, I just, this is what I was going to share with you. My daughter, who is almost nine, because I'm turning 50 today, she said, "Mom, you have another decade. You made it another decade." I thought that was so cute. I'm like, "You're

right, I did. I made it to my fifth decade. Look at me doing it. I'm still alive. Good job, me."

Okay, so I have five things I want to talk to you about today when it comes to considering how you want to celebrate your birthday and what to do on your birthday. And the first thing is that you have to figure out what you want. What do you want to do? Or what do you not want to do? What are your preferences or opinions?

Now, I say that you have to figure this out because it's actually not easy. Have you noticed? Do you know what you want to do? I know so many people, and this is myself included at times, who when you ask, "What do you want to do?" The answer is, "I just don't want to make a decision. Like, I don't want to have to figure out what I want to do." It's so challenging for most of us to figure out what we want.

Now, my belief is that this comes from a disconnection with ourselves. If we've been ignoring what we want for a long time in the name of what everybody else wants, then we start to lose touch with our own desire, our own wants, or who we even are.

If we have guilt or shame or overwhelm or self-judgment that comes up in our lives at different times, which we all do to a certain extent, but if we have a lot of it, it blocks us from knowing ourselves because we don't want to look at something that we find to be wrong or bad or disgusting or just less than in some way. And so we look away, right? We turn away as much as possible because it doesn't feel good to judge ourselves. And eventually we stop knowing ourselves. We stop knowing what we want.

If we've done a lot of comparing of ourselves, when I say ourselves, I'm talking about the way your house looks, the way you do things, your processes, your routines, your money, your body and your health, your parenting, your marriage, your relationships, like all the things about you are up for grabs when it comes to comparing ourselves to others, right? Anything that we compare ourselves to others and then judge ourselves on,

we're going to lose touch with who we really are, what is our preference, what we like best, where we operate best, because we will try to hide it from ourselves because of how mean we are to ourselves.

Okay, so a birthday is just a tiny little example of this, and I don't want you to feel bad if you notice it, that's only gonna add to the problem. I just want you to notice if you don't know what you like, what you prefer, what you desire, it may be that you've been pushing away your own desires, wants, needs for a long time. And it just might be an invitation. That's all I'm saying. It might be an invitation to reconnect with who you are, what you like, okay?

So here's the thing, whatever, and your birthday can be like a great first step, by the way. You can ask yourself basic things like, do I want to have a celebration of some sort? Do I want a "party"? Do I want to get together with family or friends, et cetera? And the answer might be, yes, that sounds fun. And then your brain might go, but that will be so much work. Who's going to plan it? I don't know if people will want to come. I don't want to put people out. Like all of the nonsense that comes after that, don't worry about that.

Just set it aside. We're not making decisions yet. We're not saying we are going to have a party. We're just figuring out what we even want. Did you know that you can want things and not go pursue them? It's okay to want things and choose not to go make them happen for various reasons, which we'll talk about in just a minute. Okay? So yeah, you might, you might decide to make a party happen, but you also might not. Can you just know that you want it and let that be interesting and useful information?

And on the other hand, do you not want that? I know sometimes I have people judging themselves because they really want a big celebration and they think they shouldn't want that, or they judge themselves because they don't want to celebrate and do anything and the people around them are telling them that they should or that they're trying to plan something and they feel bad, why do I not want this? What's the matter with me?

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Guess what? Nothing wrong with you. Nothing wrong with what you want or desire. It's just interesting information and we wanna pay attention to it. We wanna keep a connection with that part of us. Okay?

Do you want a really delicious birthday cake or a delicious meal of some sort? Is there some kind of food that you want or do you not want that? Again, it's totally okay. We have like traditions, right, in different cultures, depending on what culture you were raised in. You probably have traditions around birthdays when it comes to food and social gatherings and things. And my point is, it's great if you want those things, and it's also great if you don't. Okay?

Do you want to go out somewhere? Does that sound fun to you? Do you wanna go out again, out to dinner, out with friends, out dancing, out whatever going out means to you. Do you want to talk to a lot of friends, like get phone calls on your birthday or call friends on your birthday? Do you want to hear from people? Do you want people to text you and wish you a happy birthday?

I got to tell you, I have this friend who I met through my sister and her family. They met this gentleman when they lived out in New York through their church, and he is a 49-year-old man who's autistic.

And he loves his birthday, and he loves to get phone calls on his birthday. And so he happened to be here visiting my sister and her family, so we got to spend some time with him last summer when it was his 49th birthday. And he tells everyone, he first of all tells everyone his birthday when he first meets them and he asks your birthday. And then he, for weeks leading up to his birthday, texts everybody saying, don't forget, my birthday is coming up on this day and you can call me anytime that day to wish me a happy birthday.

It was so awesome. I didn't know him, I kind of had met him, but I didn't know him very well until he came out here to visit. So it was literally like three or four days before his birthday when I first met him. And I still got a

text from him the day before saying, "Don't forget, tomorrow's my birthday and you can call me anytime after 9am to wish me a happy birthday." And I was like, great, I will definitely call you.

And I called him and he just earlier this week texted me saying, I know it's your birthday on Thursday and I'd like to call you. What's the best time to call you on your birthday? And sure enough, it is only 9:23 in the morning. I have gotten lots of nice text messages and one phone call and it's from him, my friend from New York.

Anyway, If you want people to call you on your birthday, tell them to call you. This is what he does. When he was here, he had over 100 phone calls on his birthday because he counted them because that's what he wants for his birthday.

Now, I know that's like kind of a unique example, but my point is it's okay to want whatever you want, and it's even okay to decide that you're going to make it happen in some way. Now notice I didn't say, sit back and expect that everyone else will read your mind and they'll make it happen for you. If they loved me, they would know this is what I want because this is what I want every year. That's some nonsense if you have that thought, okay? They don't know, they don't remember, they don't think like you think, and it doesn't mean they don't love you. All right?

So here's what I want for my birthday that I'm going to make happen, but I'll tell you why in part two, why you may not fully execute what you want, okay? But this is what I decided I wanted. I wanted to go for a hike with my sister, just so happens that also my daughter and her friend who's visiting from out of town are gonna come with us. So that's gonna be super fun. Then we're gonna grab some breakfast or lunch.

And next week, I'm gonna go to lunch with some girlfriends from the area, some women that I kind of am just getting to know. That's it. That's what I want for my birthday. Okay. All right. So consider what you want. It can be

anything really. Put it down on paper. And then we're going to go to step two, which is to consider what your people want as well.

Notice I didn't say consider what everybody wants in terms of your birthday, but your people, you know what I mean when I say your people? Who are the people whose opinions matter to you? I hope not everyone's opinion matters to you. If it does, we've got some work to do. Come and see me. I will help you. That's called people pleasing. It's not going to serve you in the end. You're not going to please all of them.

But your people, who are the people that are important to you? For example, my kids and husband. Their opinions matter to me. I care about what they want. It may be that my kids want to make me a big dinner, and I don't really care about having a big dinner, but I care about letting my kids feel like they're celebrating their mom in some way. And so maybe I would choose to have that big dinner that my kids make me. It's a factor to consider.

Notice I didn't say, do what they all want, right? If they have a desire that really conflicts with my own desire, I have a decision to make about what feels like the way I want to spend my birthday, the most important thing to do right now. Is it to give into what my kids and husband want, or is it to honor my own desires? I don't know the answer to that.

But if you don't even know your own desires to begin with, then most people just go along with what their kids and spouse want, and they haven't even let themselves consciously make the decision. And then we start feeling manipulated and resentful and we become martyrs and that's not healthy.

Okay, so it may be that you forgo what you want in the name of what you think your people want, or it may not. We just need to consider everything and notice we started with considering our own desires. Okay? But we take into account, what do our kids, what do our husbands, what do our friends?

Like for example, my friend from New York, the man I told you about earlier, who wanted to call me and wish me a happy birthday. I don't really actually love talking on the phone. I don't need to have a phone call on my birthday, but I know he does. And he loves to celebrate birthdays. And to him, the appropriate way to celebrate a birthday is with a phone call. And I know that that just, I don't know, it's like, I'm happy to do it, right? Even though it's not exactly what I want and need.

So I'm not saying we only do what we want and need. I'm saying we consider all of it. You with me? Okay. Let's go to number three. The third thing we do once we've considered what we want, we've considered what our people want, then we tell the truth. We tell the truth and this is my favorite part. Okay.

We just go ahead and assume that others are telling the truth as well. I just want to give you permission right now, because this is what I hear a lot of is, okay, I'm going to tell the truth to, let's say my husband about, hey, this is what I really have decided I'd like to do on my birthday, or this is what I don't want to do. I don't want to have a family gathering, or I don't want to go see these people or whatever. Okay. This is what I like. This is what I don't want to do.

And the truth includes the part where I might say something like, I know that may hurt someone's feelings and that's not my intention. This just feels like how I wanna celebrate my birthday. Okay, but I do care about people's feelings.

I hope everyone understands. That's my truth. That's my whole truth. But then I get to just assume that others are telling the truth because people tell me all the time like, "Well, they've said they want to do something to celebrate my birthday, but I'm pretty sure they're just doing it to be nice. I don't want to put anyone out. What if it's actually inconvenient? Or what if when they asked me, 'What would you like for your birthday?' What if I say something that feels overwhelming to them that they don't want to do?"

And I would say, yeah, what if? Like, well, then maybe they'll do it, but they'll be overwhelmed and I would feel bad if that were true. And I'm like, okay, this game where we try to read between the lines and somebody tells us something, but we go ahead and decide that they don't really mean it is exhausting. So I don't personally play that game. I just don't have the energy to anymore.

Maybe it's because I've gotten a little bit older. I'm just like, listen, if they're not gonna tell me the truth, if they're gonna pretend and people please and lie, that's on them. Not that I wouldn't say something if what was true for me was like, "I feel like maybe you're just saying this, but you don't really wanna do it, which is totally fine with me. I don't want to put you out." I can keep telling the truth all day long if I want to, but what I'm not going to do is play a game.

And I don't very often even say that part. Because honestly, like, imagine someone saying that to you. Imagine if, let's say your friend says, "Will you bake me a chocolate cake?" And in your mind, you're like, "Oh, I don't really have time that day to bake a chocolate cake, but I'm going to do it for my friend, but I'm kind of overwhelmed about it." Okay. And your friend said to you, or even if you knew your friend was thinking like, "Gosh, I don't think she really wants to do it. I feel bad that she's doing it." Wouldn't you feel bad that she felt bad? And if she said that to you too? So listen, you don't have to play those games.

I'm just giving you permission right now. If somebody says to me, like, for example, I'm kind of new to this area, right, where I live. We moved here the beginning of the summer. And so all the people that we've met here are so kind, and all these ladies I've met mostly through my church are being like so generous. They're like, "Hey, we want to celebrate your birthday. What are you doing for your birthday?"

Now, again, they don't really know me, right? So they're really just being kind and polite. And I don't mean that they don't mean it. Like they're nice. We've connected a little bit. I'm sure they do want to celebrate for me. But I

don't spend any time thinking about that because it's too exhausting. I don't know what they think. I don't know how they feel. I don't know if they're just doing it to be nice. I'm just gonna accept it if I want it and turn it down if I don't want it.

This one sweet friend of mine who I've gotten kind of close to here, she's like, "We could do this or we could do that." And she had all kinds of ideas and she's like, "I don't really know you that well. I don't know what's fun for you. Would you like to do a dinner on the beach? Would you like to have a bunch of ladies at a house and we, you know, hot tub and have food or we could, you know," and I was like, "You know what? I think it would be really nice just to go to lunch one day. Like, let's just get a smallish group or whoever wants to come is invited, but doesn't need to be big. And we just go to lunch. That sounds really fun to me." She's like, "Great," right?

So I'm telling her the truth. I'm assuming she's telling me the truth, right? When she says, "I wanna do whatever you wanna do," like, great, let's do it. I'm not playing a weird game. And I don't think that she is, but maybe she is. Sometimes I feel like maybe someone is, right, in my life. And I don't have to try to guess or read between the lines. I just want to give you permission.

Tell the truth and assume that others are telling the truth as well. This is what makes for the best relationships. And I'll tell you what, the more you tell the truth to other people, the more they see, oh, it's safe to be honest and real. And that kind of authenticity is where true connection happens.

But it's easier to tell the truth, right, when everything is kind of pleasant and simple, but can you tell the truth when it's, hey, to be honest, I really don't want that, that doesn't sound fun to me, but I so appreciate you offering. Like, can you tell the truth in a way that isn't people-pleasing? That's when people realize, oh, this is the kind of person where it's safe to tell the truth.

There is one, I'm just trying not to give names because I don't want to talk about people on here, but there is another woman I've met through the

Word who's so good at telling the truth. I'm like, she's my kind of people. Because I noticed that she tells the truth even if it kind of goes against from time to time what the group might be saying. And she's still very kind about it, but it's not always just agreeing with everyone and trying to be easygoing. And I'm like, yeah, she's the kind of person I can be real with. It's safe to be real. She can handle me being real. And I can tell because she is able to be real. Okay. Just saying. Tell the truth. Assume others are telling the truth as well.

Number four, don't expect outside things to create your inside feelings. Okay, so here's what I mean. I decided ahead of time, I want to go for a hike today and then go get brunch and next week do a lunch with some friends. I do not tell myself, yeah, that's going to be great. I'm going to feel amazing on my birthday if we just do that. Doing that, yeah, sounds enjoyable to me. I'm sure I will enjoy it. But it doesn't mean I won't have a human brain with a bunch of human thoughts. Doing things, eating certain foods, even seeing certain people, having certain conversations, like you can plan your whole day and it doesn't mean you won't still be a human being with a human brain.

You might have some random thoughts that come up. You might have some self-judgment. You might have some judgment of others. You might have something unexpected happen in your day. Don't make it be this day where you're like, I'm just gonna feel so good that day because we're gonna do A, B, and C, right? Outside things, including actions that we take, don't create our inside feelings. We create our inside feelings with our inside thinking, not external actions or events or people, et cetera.

And so I just bring this up because on your birthday, you can first of all, generate the feelings you want if you want them by paying attention to your thinking, choosing how you're going to think about any situation, intentionally focusing on some kind of thinking or stories or beliefs that serve you. And I'm all for you doing that if you want to, but you also can just notice and allow the feelings that come up. You don't have to feel good to be doing it right. Did you know this? It's not like, what's my birthday? I'm

supposed to feel good today. Maybe, but I kind of like to watch what happens in my brain.

I'm really fascinated with myself lately in terms of my thoughts about aging, getting older, and watching my kids get older, and my kids are starting to leave the house, and just noticing what's coming up for me. Like, I think it's really fascinating and I like to spend some time noticing it before I even go in and self-coach on it at times with a topic like this, because it's not like an emergency. I don't have like major anxiety or stress or something going on about it. I just have some interesting thoughts coming online about, I mean, you might call them like midlife crisis type thoughts a little bit.

And I think it's so fascinating. I think it's really interesting and I don't wanna miss this part of my life. Yeah, I'm not gonna stay in like a negative space. I don't wanna stay in a negative attitude about anything and I would describe like the midlife thoughts as somewhat negative, but I don't wanna also hurry and get rid of them. I want to experience what is it like. And I don't necessarily believe the thoughts. I know they're just thoughts, but I'm fascinated by them.

And I think it's kind of an interesting part of our human journey and human experience. And it's a part that I heard a lot of people talk about before, so it's not surprising, but it feels different than I thought it would feel. And in a way, it feels kind of like what I call clean pain. It feels like kind of just an appropriate way to move into the next phase of my life. And I think that's the other reason I'm not in a hurry to change it.

So again, this can be true on your birthday as well. Like, do you have thoughts and emotions coming up about yourself or the fact that you're another year older, or whatever else is coming up, it's kind of interesting. So you also can just allow it and notice it. But if you want to feel a certain way, know that you're going to most likely need to generate those feelings.

Okay, five, the final thing I wanna talk to you about today is on your birthday, I think it is a really good reminder or excuse or reason to just

spend a moment with you. And that is the final thing I will be doing. I didn't list that before, but that's the final thing I want to do on my birthday is spend a moment connecting with me.

But I will say I do this regularly. This is not an unusual thing. I do this every day to a certain extent, but I'll probably spend a few more minutes just because it's my birthday. Just like when it's my anniversary, I wanna connect with my husband, right? Even though I try to connect with my husband regularly, we are always working on that. We could always be better at it, but it's a practice we try to implement to stay connected with each other. But on our anniversary, it's kind of an excuse to connect a little bit deeper, like really make sure we set aside some time, really appreciate each other, maybe get each other a card or a gift or something, right?

And that's how I think about myself on my birthday. How do you do that? Well, for me, it looks like journaling. I'm going to spend a few minutes talking to my own self in my journal. I like to talk to my past self. I like to thank her for things that she's done. I like to acknowledge her.

I like to offer her lots of compassion and grace for the areas in which she fell short of which there are many and I like to remind her that I'm not mad at her and I don't hold any grudges against her. In fact, I know that she was doing the best she could and that her best was awesome and really hooked me up in so many ways and also was pretty tragic and I hold no grudges against her. I just love her.

And I also like to talk to my future self and ask her for wisdom and advice. And I like to ask her what she needs me to be doing or thinking or focusing on right now that will help her. What is she going to need from me that I may not even be considering? And how does she want me to think about my current challenges and problems? What does she know that I don't know? How do I get through or figure out some of the things I'm trying to figure out right now.? And what's different in the future? What's better and what's harder? And what can I do right now to prepare for all of that?

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So it's connecting, it's reflecting, it's dreaming. And I like to do it in a journal, and that's what I'll be doing on my birthday. So in summary, how are you gonna celebrate your birthday? I recommend that you begin by figuring out what you want. Even if your birthday's a long way away, maybe you need to start figuring out right now what you like, what you prefer, and giving yourself permission to want what you want and don't want anything you don't want even if everybody else would want it or thinks you should want it.

Number two, figure out what your people want. How do you know what they want? Well, you pay attention and maybe even ask them. Then you have to make decisions, right? You have to reconcile what feels like the right thing, the best way to spend your birthday.

Number three, tell the truth. Now you got to tell everybody the truth. By the way, they're not going to read your mind. You got to tell them. You probably have to plan it too. You're probably going to need to make the reservation or confirm with everyone that we're leaving for the hike at 10:30 and we're going to drive and I already have the map so I know how to get there.

Like just make it happen. Tell the truth and assume that others are telling the truth too. Don't play games and try to read between the lines. If they offer to do something and you want to do it, take them up on it and say, thank you so much. That sounds amazing. Let's do it.

Number four, don't expect outside things to create inside feelings. Generate whatever feelings you want to have and/or allow for the feelings that are coming up and use it to just be curious about yourself.

And number five, spend a moment connecting with you. That's how I'm gonna celebrate my birthday. How are you going to celebrate yours?

Thank you, by the way, for all of the sweet birthday messages. I'm getting them. I appreciate all of you and I will see you next week. Bye-bye.

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Oh wow, look at that. You made it to the end. Your time and attention is valuable, and I don't take it lightly that you made it this far. In fact, it tells me you might be like me; insatiably curious about people and life and potential and connection. Maybe you have big dreams but a small budget and no time. You're tired, but bored. You're content, but dissatisfied. Sound familiar? Come to a free coaching call and see for yourself what's possible: jodymoore.com/freecoaching to register. That's jodymoore.com/freecoaching.