

Ep #96: Why Celebrating Matters



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

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How often do you find yourself saying something like, “Well, I mean, not to brag but here’s this amazing thing I did?” How often do you hear someone you love put a disclaimer like that before their own achievement? How often do you pause to recognize and celebrate just how amazing you are, the effort you’re putting forth, and the processes you’re choosing to engage in to make your life the life of your dreams?

If perfectionist, people-pleasing, and codependent thinking are your habitual thought patterns, celebrating yourself and your achievements may be a totally foreign concept, and one you likely apologize for when you do it. I know it sure was for me. Curious? Want to learn how to truly celebrate yourself? Keep listening. It’s going to be a good one.

You’re listening to Feminist Wellness, the only podcast that combines functional medicine, life coaching, and feminism to teach smart women how to reclaim their power and restore their health! Here’s your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine Expert, Herbalist and Life Coach, Victoria Albina.

Hello, hello my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. Today, I’m so excited to talk with you about celebrating. And this topic came to mind for me because it’s the old holiday season and celebrating with the people we love is extra complicated this year. Also, it behooves me to say, please don’t. Please don’t fly anywhere and see anyone. Please stay home with your quarantine pod, whatever that looks like for you.

So beyond it being the holiday season, all of us really questioning what does it look like to celebrate when we’re not seeing the people we love in person, I also wanted to talk about celebrating, in particular celebrating

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ourselves because it's something that pretty much all of my coaching clients struggle with. And it's something I struggled with myself.

And so, it's one of the things that we intentionally do in my six-month program, Overcoming Codependency. And we do it and we do it collectively in a community because celebrating ourselves and being witnessed celebrating ourselves and encouraged to do it more, being celebrated for celebrating, it matters.

And most of us are not doing it enough, if at all. If we do do it, we feel guilty or weird about it. We judge ourselves or others for doing it, or we write it off with phrases like, "I mean, I don't mean to sound conceited but," or, "I mean, it's not a big deal, but whatever, I just hiked Aconcagua, the highest point in South America, but whatever, no big deal."

So for me, it was about a decade ago or maybe longer. What even is time? But my BFF Becca gave me the most magnificent gift. It was this tiny palm sized notebook and it said the word victories on the front. When she gave it to me, she said, and I do paraphrase, "You're so amazing. I want you to know it. And writing down at least one small victory each day will help you to believe it."

And Becca was right. She's always right. And over these years of pausing every day to write down at least one small victory, one celebration, naming it and taking the time to purposefully do it every single day without disclaimers, guilt, or shame, has in fact been life-changing. And I don't say that kind of thing lightly.

And it wasn't that I was opposed to celebrating me. I just honestly never thought to pause to do it, which I now realize makes so much sense to the me I was back then, in that way that things that are maladaptive now or

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don't serve us now were often the most logical thing for our past selves to be doing because our brains link that activity or in this case, lack of activity, not celebrating me, with safety, with emotional safety.

I can see now that my brain thought it was smarter, safer, better to just keep plowing through life, to keep striving and pushing. And yes, to celebrate others, to throw the best surprise parties, to bake everyone else the best cakes, but it felt weird, uncomfortable, just ugh in my body to pause to celebrate me.

And I think that's because there was this thought, subconscious, it wasn't a thought I was consciously thinking, but it sounded something like I can't pause to celebrate me because I need to keep pushing my mind and body to the brink in order to prove my worth.

Well okay, so that thought was in there. I didn't realize it before thought work, I didn't know about it, but when I look back on the pattern of behaviors in my life and the way I felt, it becomes so clear to me that I was constantly striving, constantly doing, moving and rushing and racing to the next thing without pausing because I was attempting to prove my worth to myself and the world around me.

And it's super, super fascinating the internal somersault my brain was doing. For the longest time, I disliked having my birthday celebrated and my brain told me that it was because as an August baby, my birthday parties as a kid weren't well attended because people were at summer camp, or visiting their grandma, or whatever they were doing in August.

And so I decided many, many years ago that I was good on birthday parties. I was all set, thank you. I didn't want them; I didn't need them. And it was this protective stance that I didn't really realize as such, and I've

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come to see that I felt uncomfortable being celebrated because I didn't believe I was worthy of it, and so I didn't like the fanfare and all those eyes on me, paying attention to me, even though I'm a Leo and you'd think I'd be like, yes, my moment in the sun.

But the truth is I was so much more comfortable taking care of others and I seriously have thrown about 473 surprise parties with balloons and fancy cakes and the whole thing for other people. And when the spotlight was on me, it felt weird, strange, yuck. And in talking about this with my clients over these years, I've found that for so many of us, that underlying story is that if people are focused on us, they'll see that we're a fraud.

We're actually not worth celebrating. They'll see that we're lacking and failing and terrible in so many ways, and then they'll abandon us, and we'll die, say it with me now, cold and alone on a mountain side. And I know now after years of getting coached and doing daily self-coaching that none of those self-flagellating thoughts are true.

And I can see how they're part and parcel of habitual thought patterns that may be rolling around in your perfect head too. If your childhood brain associated being seen, being authentic, open, vulnerable, with being negated, unheard, dismissed, criticized, or told you're actually not as amazing or good or successful as you experience yourself to be, then your childhood wonderment, your childhood success of doing a cartwheel or drawing a narwhal or whatever little you is excited about, if your childhood brain associated being seen, being authentic, open, vulnerable, if you associate celebrating yourself, telling another kid or a sibling or a grownup or a caretaker just how proud of you you were and then you were negated, unheard, dismissed, or criticized, or told you actually aren't as amazing or good or successful as you experience yourself to be, then that childhood success story of wow, I did a cartwheel, I drew a narwhal, I did whatever it

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is that makes a kid feel great about themselves, you come to believe those things are actually not that great.

You learned not to pause to celebrate you, or to ask to be celebrated because you're going to be told you're not actually awesome. And that hurts so much more than just not bringing it up in the first place, which to me is just more evidence that our inner children are so brilliant.

And an experience such as this can be one seed, one root cause of perfectionist thought habits. And if these habits are part of your mindset, if you call yourself a perfectionist, then you likely hold yourself to unrealistic standards, expecting yourself to be perfect at everything, to accomplish a bajillion thing in a day, and are mean to yourself if you're not a superhuman.

If you don't write a memo in 15 minutes, or make a spreadsheet in 12, or sign 473 charts in an hour, you beat yourself up for it. You may not even see your success because your brain is so focused on what you're not accomplishing. And so celebrating is just not on the agenda.

A client of mine recently shared that she doesn't want to let people know when she accomplishes something. Doesn't want to celebrate herself because when people perceive her as being good at whatever it may be, she then feels like it's a lot of added additional pressure to maintain that external A+ gold star status. And she's worried that if she celebrates and then has that same expectation of herself, then she will feel even wildly more disappointed in herself if she, mon dieu, doesn't do everything 110% perfectly all the time.

As humans with codependent thought habits, we often have spent a lifetime focused on others and their joy, their achievements, and so it feels

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understandably weird or uncomfortable, awkward to celebrate our own. Or just like it was for me, it isn't even a thing we think to do.

We just keep plugging along in our lives, not even recognizing that we can, let alone would benefit from pausing to really celebrate our achievements and our victories because the fear story inside us goes if we take our attention away from managing other people, their wants, their needs, their emotional state, et cetera, then they won't be pleased with us. They'll think less of us, they'll stop validating our worth as humans and wow, no way, nope, not safe, not going to do it.

So we keep our focus on celebrating and caretaking others and reasonably, understandably, don't pause to celebrate ourselves, which keeps us from recognizing just how amazing we actually are. For humans socialized as women in particular, there's often this story taught to us that it's our job to manage the everything for everyone else.

And my Latinas out there, right? Yeah, I feel most of us, many of us are taught that quite explicitly. So like in codependency, we don't pause to truly celebrate ourselves because we're so busy taking care of everyone and everything else.

Many of us were also taught that it's bad to be self-centered or selfish and that celebrating ourselves is evidence of that, whether we're even doing it in our own minds, hearts, or gasp, out loud, it is evidence of selfishness, which once again is very, very, very bad, says the patriarchy and systems that want to keep us down, keep us quiet, keep us feeling small.

Women are also taught by our patriarchal and capitalist systems that celebrating is something we do by engaging something outside of

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ourselves. Meaning buying something, drinking alcohol, daring to eat something off the diet plan, like something naughty like a cookie.

But it's also quick to remind us we should feel guilty about those choices. Now, I'm not demonizing treats, I'm not demonizing alcohol, I'm not demonizing any of those choices. Baby, if you want to have the wine, drink the wine. But I want to encourage you to pause before you tell that lie to yourself that that is celebrating you.

To say it clearly, drinking wine is not celebrating yourself. Buying stuff is not celebrating yourself. Going on a trip, a spa day, a bath, these things are not evidence that you are celebrating yourself. Celebrating yourself truly, honoring yourself is an inside job, one that happens inside you in your own mind, body, and spirit.

And yes, it's something to share with others so that you can co-create that beautiful experience of celebrating you, celebrating them celebrating you, you can celebrate them, but it's never about buying stuff. It's like way back in episode 34, which is all about self-care, where I shared that to me, the bubble bath and the spa day and the fancy whatever lovely and fine and good and great really, but true real lasting self-care to me means learning to manage my mind, to trust myself, to honor myself, to live from a place of me first, you second, with love.

And I bring that same mental framework to the act and the art of self-celebration. The stuff is lovely. And the work is really showing up to have your own back and to honor and support yourself. And through that process, applying minimum baseline thinking to it, as discussed in episode 78, where we learn to trust ourselves by committing to showing up for us and then actually doing it in a tiny way every day.

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Not for the sake of the thing you'll accomplish, like exercising or drinking water, doing your thought work, but rather for the sake of doing it, for the sake of showing yourself that you can trust you to do it, whatever it is.

Which brings us to why I love celebrating and why it's such a regular daily constant thing in my own life and in my six-month program because it deeply matters, particularly when we are striving and working to overcome our codependency.

Celebrating is how we cultivate a loving relationship with our healthy ego, which is so vital for our wellness in every way. When you pause, you deepen the experience of seeing yourself, of getting present to yourself in this one perfect moment, and through that process of becoming your own ever-present watcher, you can gain so much awareness over what your brain has been conditioned to think so you can decide if you want to keep those thoughts or not.

When you pause to celebrate you, you release some of that beautiful oxytocin, dopamine, these fantastic, motivating, self-loving neurochemicals that make a gal feel amazing in their life.

And when you pause and feel into your body, really connect with the somatic or bodily experience of celebrating you and the effort and the process you decided to engage in towards whatever outcome and really allow yourself to feel what self-celebration feels like in your body, you are connecting in with and strengthening a nervous system resource. A glimmer, which we talked about in episode 62, the nervous system opposite of a trigger.

A way to bring yourself back to being in ventral vagal, that safe, social part of our nervous system where our physiology, our cognition, things are

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running optimally. And you can experience you as being in ventral vagal with you. And when you pause, you can feel what it feels like in and for your body to say I love me enough to take this one little moment, to give myself a high-five, and to honor me.

And that is beautiful. The more we connect in with our own capacity to be in that safe and social part of the nervous system with ourselves, the more our bodies will believe us that that shift is possible when we are feeling anxious, worried, stressed, hypervigilant, in fight or flight, or shut down in dorsal vagal, sad, challenged to focus, or find the pleasure, joy, and motivation in life.

Prioritizing celebrating ourselves also begins to break through habits like codependency by shifting our focus on to ourselves. It begins to shift perfectionism by reminding us that done is better than torturing ourselves to get to some imaginary fantasy perfect, and it begins to shift people pleasing as we prioritize our own pleasure and joy.

Remember, if you have ridiculously high standards for yourself, perfectionist thought fantasies are your norm, this may feel silly, trite, not worth it at first, and that's cool. I'll encourage it anyway because it can be so easy and habitual for us to jump to the next thing on our to-do list and not even pause to recognize our accomplishments, to allow ourselves to acknowledge that we did the thing and that's really great.

To allow ourselves to feel what achievement feels like in our bodies, and to name it so we can stop or at least temporarily pause working ourselves to the bone, limping along on that hamster wheel of productivity, always feeling like we get nothing done.

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And if I had a nickel for every time I myself got to the end of a day before really engaging with this daily victories, daily celebration process and practice, the number of times I got to the end of the day and said, “I feel like I got nothing done.” And then I’d look at my to-do list and I had crossed out a bajillion things.

But because I hadn’t paused to be like, yeah Vic, you sent out the email, way to go, got that Instagram post up, that’s my girl, oh you watered the plants, oh you watered the Vic. Because I wasn’t pausing, it just felt like this endless stream of always being overwhelmed, always being behind the eight ball.

And when I learned to stop to say, yay, I finished a task, it helped me to realize how much I actually do do in an hour, a day, a week, in a year, which my beauty, is such a vital first step. A solution for beating yourself up for being human.

And yes, this practice, beyond feeling silly may also feel terrible and uncomfortable at first and that’s okay. Studies show that not a single person has died from sharing what they’re proud of themselves for, and you are unlikely to be the first to die from self-celebration.

So go forth, my love. Celebrate away, even if it feels uncomfortable, but also exactly because it feels uncomfortable and we can do hard things in this familia. We really can. And by doing them over and over, we create new neural grooves in our mind and over time, these things feel less and less uncomfortable as they become our norm.

So what does this practice look like? Well for me, it’s less about the accomplishment and it’s more about the effort, the internal shift. Those little things I would never have previously celebrated because I expected myself

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to do a superhuman number of things in a day and felt disappointed in myself if I didn't.

So yes, celebrate checking the thing off your list and celebrate the effort you put into it, for the short term and long term, for future you. In my six-month program, we have a channel in our Slack group, which is this private direct messaging program where the folks in the group can gather, connect with one another, and get coaching from me literally every weekday for six months, which is pretty rad, if I do celebrate myself.

And there's a thread there, a channel that's called celebrations and wins, and I'm so delighted to share some of those wins with you now. And yes, these are direct quotes from the group, copy pasted, which is also so rad.

I felt my cheeks - my smile feels so huge as I think about the humans in this program doing this hard work and dedicating themselves to this process of self-discovery together for six months. And the things they celebrate, I read them every week and often cry because they're so beautiful. But I'll do my best to get through this one without crying.

So, "I can now notice when anxiety is rising and have the tools to bring myself back to neutral. The cycles are shorter now. Before our work together, I could be in a depressed funk for days or weeks without knowing how to come out of it. Now I feel my feelings and somewhat enjoy the darkness because I know it's all part of the journey, and that recognition helps the cycles flow better."

The next one, "Celebrating drinking lots of water this week and taking a break from Zoom next week." Next one, "I spent yesterday with just me and my mom. And while it was sad to see her so depressed and struggling, it was the first time I was really able to separate my own worth from her

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experience. Thankful for Victoria and all of you who helped me get to this place. Knowing I can still be sad for her and that I'm allowed to be happy for the things I have in my life is the most wonderful gift."

Next one, "I said no to an opportunity that I don't really want, and I would have said yes to before. My time is sacred, and I am reclaiming it." "I drank eight glasses of water today. That's an increase from zero before V taught us about kitten steps to self-care and focusing on the basics first. I feel so proud of myself."

And finally, "On Sunday, I did the October breathwork session replay, and it was amazing and healing. I had so much awareness, which I immediately wanted to share and every detail on Slack here with you all and Vic. I pause because I checked in with my body and had an intuition that when I jump to share my awareness quickly without really just allowing my brain to feel it and know it, that is part of people pleasing and seeking external validation. It was tremendously healing and grounding and I moved so much stagnant energy and grief. So grateful."

Oh my goodness, these daily and weekly celebrations fill me with such joy. And yes, they're about these monumental shifts because that's what we do in my programs. But they're also about quotidian things like drinking water and peeing when you have to and feeding yourself because that's vital self-care.

And you truly deserve to celebrate the small moments because it adds up to a life of learning to put yourself first. Learning to give yourself a high-five. Celebrating you is you moving out of that deep codependent, people-pleasing, perfectionist desire for external validation, as you experience a life that starts with you giving you validation first.

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And from there you can share it with whomever will listen, which I highly recommend. And to say it plainly, if someone else thinks you're bragging, boasting, being self-centered or thinking highly of yourself when you share a celebration, I'll invite you to go ahead and let them know they're right. You are. And that's so amazing.

Because for those of us who are doing this work of learning to radically accept, love, honor, and trust ourselves, to heal from a lifetime of codependent habits, this work is vital. And the added bonus is that when we decide that it's great to celebrate ourselves and to do it frequently, and that what other people think about us as humans who celebrate ourselves frequently is that we begin to care less and less what others think about us and our celebrations of our own magnificence.

And as you do this work, as you show up in your communities as a person who celebrates themselves, as you share those celebrations with the people you love, you model that self-care for others. And that's a beautiful gift to give the people in your world.

No one needs your permission or mine to feel or do anything, and by showing up and modeling self-celebration, we give the people we love permission. We show them it's okay and it's valuable to do it.

So your homework, my beautiful darling kittens is this. Each day, I'll invite you to find one thing, just one little thing to start to celebrate. If you don't historically floss your teeth every day but you do it today, then yay for you. If you set a healthy boundary then you are amazing. If you publish your book and it hits number one on the New York Times book list then yay, congrats.

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If you remembered to eat three times a day or take your meds or your supplements, or if you make a million dollars today then oh my beauty, yay for you. It's all worth celebrating. The big, the small, all of it. Because you are worth celebrating. No if, ands, buts, writing it off, feeling guilty or ashamed. You are amazing.

Let yourself know and let the people know. Start your next celebratory sentence out with, "To brag, I did x, y, z." And see how amazing it feels. For extra credit, I'll invite you to share your wins on the old Instagram and to tag me @victoriaalbinawellness so I can celebrate you celebrating you. How fun is that?

And if even after listening to this show, the idea of celebrating yourself without a disclaimer, without guilt or yuckiness, without worrying what someone will think of you, if all of that feels beyond your capacity, then you may have some sneaky codependent, perfectionist, or people-pleasing thoughts playing on repeat in your mind.

And I would be delighted to help you learn how to identify, accept, and shift those thoughts and the feelings they create in your body using the science and psychology-based nerdtastic methods I teach in my six-month program, *Overcoming Codependency*.

I could talk on and on about how amazing this high-touch, wraparound, intensely supportive community program is, but I won't talk your ear off. I think I could probably do a many hours show about how in love with this course I am. Instead, I will invite you to head over to victoriaalbina.com/masterclass to learn all about it.

The group that starts on February 1st, how could I not take that date? 2/1/21? So good. That group is a little over half full, so if you're interested in

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joining the program, fill out the short form on the website today and my team will be in touch to get you on a call with me to talk about all the details to see if you're the right fit, if the program's the right fit for you.

Alright my beauty, thank you for listening. Let's do what we do. Put a little gentle hand on your heart if that feels supportive, flutter close your beautiful eyes if that feels safe and you're not driving or walking in a dark alley at night, let's take a nice slow deep breath in and out. Remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my beauty. I'll talk to you soon.

If you've been enjoying the show and learning a ton, it's time to apply it with my expert guidance so you can live life with intention, without the anxiety, overwhelm, and resentment, so you can get unstuck. You're not going to want to miss the opportunity to join my exclusive intimate group coaching program, so head on over to victoriaalbina.com/masterclass to grab your seat now. See you there. It's going to be a good one.