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HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND DRINK ALONE

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I've always been a careful, even cautious, drinker. In high school, I would make myself scarce whenever friends made booze magically appear (you know you had those Houdini-level friends, too!). As a budding college student, I was the two-drink-max girl who kept a mama bear eye on all my friends – 'cause if we all came together, we all leave together. And as an upperclassman, I became a [Champagne](#) drinker at parties – yup, I was that girl – and would only let loose at house parties that we threw in our dorm room. I knew if things ever got out of hand, I could kick troublemakers out.

But this cautious approach was not just something I did because it suited me. It had a very specific source: growing up watching family members fight the demons of substance abuse. And that's why I was pushing 30 before I even had my first drink alone. Even though I love a good cocktail, I was terrified that drinking by myself would lead me to become an alcoholic. It's crazy how other people's struggles can color the choices we make in our lives.

I remember the first time I finally decided to enjoy an adult beverage solo. It was my 29th birthday and I decided to pop a bottle of Champagne to celebrate (totally still that girl). Alone at home, I decided that I wanted to not only toast getting a year older, but all that I had accomplished along the way. I had survived living part of my childhood in foster care, earned a scholarship to a prestigious boarding school, attended that school, paid my own way through college, traveled abroad, excelled in my career, hustled enough money to buy a condo, turned said condo into a home, and happily cheered family members as they overcame their addictions over the years. I realized I was a responsible, grown woman, and I deserved a drink.

I won't lie; it was pretty sweet. After a second glass, I headed out to birthday festivities with my friends and had an epic, fun night. But having a pre-soirée solo Champagne toast is now one of my favorite birthday traditions, and I've even become comfortable enjoying a drink alone from time to time.

My family's history of substance abuse still plays a role in my drinking choices; to some degree it always will. I've learned to accept it as part of what makes me who I am and what

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motivated me to be the person I've grown to love so much. As I continue to mature, I'll constantly be refining and changing my drinking habits to fit in my lifestyle, while also remaining hyper-aware of and compassionate toward those who struggle with substance abuse. And that's not a bad thing.

Exploring speakeasies, wine tastings, and brandy flights with my friends is my normal, but, from time to time, so is having a glass of alone Chardonnay while watching "Game of Thrones." It doesn't worry me like it used to. And that's not a bad thing, either.

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Alcoholism, Birthday, Champagne

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