**40. Celebrate Your Milestones — And WOW, I Just Turned 40!**

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:00:00] It was a simple, perfect birthday, with a bit of magic. **Intro** [00:00:05]

Hello and welcome to ALSO in PINK. The podcast all about lifestyle design. How we live, the clothes we choose and how we organise our space. I'm your host, Alexandria Lawrence, a certified KonMari consultant and personal stylist. I'm here to guide you on your journey to live a happy, fulfilled life.

Every Tuesday you'll get new insight on what it means to live well. Plus actionable tips.

Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life.

This episode is all about celebration. Celebrating your achievements big and small. It could be a birthday. It could be creating a new habit or reaching a goal. And let's not, of course, forget those mini milestones along the way. And surprises! Those strange and wonderful things that make for good stories. Life is all about storytelling. And I'll tell you about some unusual things I've experienced lately. From running adventures to birthday miracles Hello, lovely listeners. How's this for a coincidence. This is episode 40 and I just turned 40 a couple of days ago. A bit of synchronicity, I can't ignore.

So, what's your first thought when a milestone birthday comes around? We're talking one of those significant birthdays: 18, 21, 30, 40, 50... You get the idea. All the way up to a hundred and beyond.

Do you think. Oh, dear. Am I really that old? Or yay. Now I can really celebrate. Or meh. It's just another birthday. Well, I hope this episode encourages you to embrace door number two and really celebrate.

 I didn't know many people with May birthdays when I was growing up. So, I guess I kind of felt special having a birthday in may. The month when the jacarandas were in bloom in LA. What I remember most vividly about my childhood birthdays was a tradition that carried on from year to year. The birthday baseball game. There were prizes, handmade badges, that we'd give out after the game. Ones you'd expect like MVP, most valuable player. But then it got a bit more interesting. Awards like Most Creative Throw, Most Enthusiastic, Most Likely to Derail the Game, or some such thing.

It was usually girls against boys or with the average participant being over the age of 40, perhaps I should say women against men.

 And it got pretty competitive, at least for a few participants. But it was a lot of fun. And as a result of these birthday baseball games, I became known as the home run hitter at school. My one athletic achievement. I was usually that kid who got picked last for every team. So it was kind of nice for a change to be undeniably good at baseball.

 Uh, that was me. Birthday's in LA. Happy days. Fast forward to when I met my in-laws in the UK and seriously? Everyone has a birthday in May? It's like Christmas. But in May. And this year, in particular, is a year of milestones. Ben sister just turned 50. Our nieces just turned 18 and 21. And I just turned 40. How crazy is That's not all the may birthdays. They're more. But four proper milestone birthdays within two weeks in May this year? However you look at it. That's pretty impressive.

I like the idea of a birthday week as a general rule. But especially for a milestone birthday. And shout out to Gisele in Atlanta, Georgia. She recently told me she listens to this podcast every week. We were just chatting by email about big birthdays deserving, a good week of celebration. Gisele turned 50 the day I was born, so if you've been doing your math, yes. She just turned 90 on our shared birthday, the 20th of May. Gisele, wishing you a very happy birthday week. And I look forward to celebrating many more birthdays and milestones with you.

Cheers So do you have a bucket list? Or one of those lists a mile long of things you want to do before your next big birthday. Like 40 things to do before turning 40. 50 things before turning 50. Things like housesit for someone on the other side of the world. Learn Danish to more fully enjoy your favorite Scandi crime dramas. Become an expert at making matcha lattes. Dye your hair pink. Well, here's one thing I said I do before turning 40. It's not super imaginative, but that's all right.

At the beginning of the year, I set myself a goal to get through the couch to 5k before turning 40.

Now this program is only nine weeks long. So if you start it in January, that doesn't sound too hard, right? You just need to do three runs a week. A total of 27 runs and they gradually build up in length and intensity. And I started the couch to 5k with Ben, my hubby, which was lovely. We get on our grubby exercise clothes and spur one another on. When I didn't feel motivated to run, he'd be all eager and raring to go. And when he didn't really fancy a run, I'd say, come on, we can do this. Let's go. We kept one another going, which is exactly the kind of motivation you need when you're trying to form a new habit. Sure, Ben is a faster runner than I am, but we found rather a nice running dance to do together. He'll run a bit ahead and swing back around and retrace his steps. So he doesn't leave me too far behind. Or he'll take a slightly more elaborate zigzag where I'd run more in a straight line. So we each ended up running at a pace that feels right for us, but we keep in touch, which is rather nice. So it feels like we're running together.

 By April, Ben and I had reached week nine, the final week of the Couch to 5k. And it was on that final run of week eight that Ben said, oh, you know, I'm not feeling quite right. I need to cut this one short. And sure enough, within a couple hours, his left knee had swollen right up. Something called Prepatellar Bursitis, also known as Housemaids Knee.

 So poor lad. He's had to take some time off to recover and regain strength. I've heard sports people say that if you take time off or sustain an injury, it then takes twice as long to regain your previous level of fitness. So this was April. A month to go before my 40th birthday. And only three more runs to complete to reach my goal. I had plenty of time. But also not a lot of time to complete my Couch to 5k. But I now found it much harder to motivate myself to run without my trusty running buddy. So the days drifted by. A couple of weeks passed and then I thought. Okay. Right. I need to find a way to motivate myself to do this. And I think I need to do a few of those shorter runs before I feel ready to jump back into week nine. Those somewhat intimidating three 30 minute runs.

Ever heard of Parkinson's Law? The concept that a task or activity expands to fill all the available time. So, however long you give yourself to do something, that's how long it takes. I call it the Law of the Handbag. If you're someone who carries a handbag, I'm sure you're familiar with this one. It doesn't seem to matter what size that handbag is, but somehow you fill it So I knew I had a deadline. Finished that final run before the 20th of May. That's all that mattered. And I eased my way back into it. Repeated some runs from previous weeks, gearing myself up to week nine and those three 30 minute runs. Michael Johnson, Olympic athlete and sprinter is my personal coach, for the Couch to 5k.

Sure, his voice is prerecorded, but it feels like he's speaking directly to me. He's retired from competitive sports now, but I'm familiar with him mainly through watching the Olympics in recent years. He's my favorite Olympics commentator. He has a delightful voice, so deep and calm and reassuring. Perfect to guide me or anyone else through the Couch to 5k.

 And his voice sounds resonant, even through those tinny speakers on my iPhone. Michael says, I know this feels like quite a jump doesn't it, but have faith in the plan. You've done all the hard work to prepare yourself for this and as always. The key will be in pacing yourself and trying not to go too fast. You can do it.

Yes, Michael. Yes, I can.

 And I'm very happy to stay in my lane when it comes to running. I could be the slowest runner in the world. And I'd be okay with that. At least that's what I happily tell myself. And that's because my only goal during each run is to get to the end of it without stopping. And if I need to be the slowest runner in the world in order to do that, that's fine by me. On my morning runs, I'm used to being passed by all sorts of people. Runners young and old, men, women, essentially, everyone. Even dogs of all shapes and sizes and occasionally a child running with their parents. I always marvel at that one. But then think, wow, that's a great way to get your kids into exercise and also maybe tire them out early in the day. Win-win, I imagine.

Sure, I can overtake walkers. I'm not that slow. But never have I overtaken a runner. So you can imagine my excitement on one particular run a couple of weeks ago.

There's a long path on my running route that leads down to the River Thames.

So here it is. A beautiful spring morning. The birds are twittering away. The leaves all fresh and green. And as round the corner there's this lovely stretch of clear path ahead of me. Just one other person, a woman, running in front of me. If you can call it running. A sudden thrill passed through me. I thought, wow, this is it. Finally, I'm going to overtake another runner. Wait for it. Wait for it, just a few feet away. And now.

Ah, that was almost too easy.

I glanced at her as I passed, partly out of curiosity. After all, how could anyone run that slowly? I mean, I'm slow, but seriously. I instantly felt guilty when I caught a glimpse of the woman's face. She clearly had Down's syndrome. Now, this is something I don't know a lot about, but I imagine having any kind of learning disability makes something like running extra challenging.

She looked at me and cheerily said, I hate running! So do I, was my gut response. And yes, pretty accurate, if I'm being honest. The young woman removed her earbuds so she could hear me better. I gave her a big smile and thumbs up and said, well done. Thank you, she said. And so we continue down the path.

I leaped ahead, gazelle-like for one final moment before settling into my usual steady plod plod, plod along the river path.

I'm happy to be a slow runner. After all, we're all on our personal journeys. It's unproductive and not much fun to compare yourself to others. And when is it ever a fair comparison anyway? We all have wildly different journeys, experiences, and opportunities that have led us to where we are now.

 Only compare yourself to who you were yesterday. That's the only comparison that matters.

So, yes, it's possible to struggle with running for one minute, like I did in January, and then gradually build up to being able to run for three minutes. Five minutes, 10 minutes, 15, 20. Even the elusive 30 minutes. And it doesn't really take that long. A few months and your progress is undeniable.

Yes, it's all about breaking down that goal, which the Couch to 5k app does beautifully for you. And recognizing what you achieve along the way. And keep on going. Steadily plod, if that's your pace, to the finish line. So yes, I completed the couch to 5k the day before my 40th birthday. I left it until the very last minute, but still managed to get it done. The law of the handbag.

And of course it doesn't end there. Completing the couch to 5k is a wonderful achievement, but it's only the beginning. I'd like to keep going and see what this running thing is like. So my plan is to run three days a week and either walk on the other days or do my favorite online workouts with Rebecca Louise. She's a very inspiring British woman who lives in California. And she's my favorite, when it comes to online workouts, you can follow along to. I'd say that my fitness journey is only just beginning. But when you do achieve a big goal, it's important to celebrate. I celebrated my 40th birthday the day after completing the Couch to 5k. So that's a nice way to start. Milestone birthday celebration. Tick.

It was a simple, perfect birthday. With a bit of magic. Just me and Ben. We went to Kew Gardens in the morning. I was suspicious it might rain. After a long dry spell, it's been surprisingly rainy in London these past few weeks. It's all the low pressure we've had lately. Ben said, knowingly, how does that work? Then I asked. Well, we have high pressure spells and low pressure spells. Or something.

But the weather held, at least for the morning. And we stayed dry as we wandered about the gardens, no particular destination in mind. And we ended up at the Japanese gardens at Kew.

Amongst the bursts of red flowers. and perfectly raked Zen gravel, there was right before us a brilliantly colored glorious peacock. I'm not sure how many peacocks there are Kew gardens, but I've never seen one up close. He even fanned out his brilliant feathers in a magnificent display. Oh, come on Howard. That's what I called him. Come on Howard. Just turn a bit more this way.

After all, there's nothing more frustrating than a peacock on full display, but facing the wrong direction. And by wrong direction, of course, I mean the opposite direction to where I'm currently standing.

Still I managed to take a little video of Howard's walking gracefully across the screen, like a film star. Yes, he knows he's gorgeous. And you can see him too. There's a video in the extended show notes for this episode, so if you fancy having a look.

It wasn't long though, before other people appeared. Two older women wandered into the Japanese gardens, happily chatting away. They had apparently seen the splendid peacock in the same spots about a week ago, lucky ladies. And there was a Kew worker tending the garden at the time. He told them that male peacocks were unlikely to display their feathers in full, unless a female peacock was present. Oh, but he displayed his feathers just a few minutes ago, I said. I guess it was an honor of my 40th birthday, is what I didn't say. Come on. Come on, show us your feathers. Then one of the women said.

In my head, I said, it's Howard, my fricking 40th birthday, miracle peacock, stand back. I'm not done taking photos. But I just smiled and Ben and I wandered off to another part of the gardens.

Speaking of miraculous things, or happy coincidences, my mom calls each year on my birthday at the time I was born, which UK time is nearly 5:00 PM. And I think that's lovely. Certainly makes me feel rather special. So she called right on cue and we were busy chatting away when Ben said, wow, look at that.

And I'm not exaggerating when I say that the most magnificent rainbow I've ever seen appeared in our kitchen window. It's one of those must've been photo-shopped type of rainbows. You can practically see a pot of gold at either end so intense is that rainbow color near the horizon?

My miraculous 40th birthday rainbow.

Age is such a funny thing. I feel my inner age has always been 35. Even when I was 20. An old soul, you could say. So actually it was much stranger to turn 36 than it is to now turn 40. I'm excited to be in my forties. Here's why. I now have a sense of who I am and I'm not embarrassed by it or feel I should be someone I'm not.

For years, I felt pressured to do things other people do. Things like have kids. I've always kind of known that's not the right choice for me. But it took me far too long to admit it to myself and say it out loud.

When Ben and I got married 15 years ago, I think we just sort of assumed we'd have kids. That's what people do, right? I was 25 at the time. And Ben was 40. And it's the question, you get asked again and again, especially if you're a woman, especially when you turn 30. Especially if you're married and in a solid relationship. Everyone wants to know when you're having kids. I never really had a decisive answer.

 My advice. If you do want to have kids, great. If you don't want to have kids, great. Just be secure enough in yourself that you're making the best decision for you. And not the decision you feel other people want you to make. So all this goes to say, I am entering a new decade with a strong sense of who I am, who I want to be and how I want to live.

And that's huge. That's a massive thing. I'd even go so far as to say that feels like the secret to living well. And I wish the same for you. I hope I can inspire you through this podcast and through ALSO in PINK to know who you are, who you want to be and how you want to live.

And I'm incredibly grateful to you for listening and joining me on this journey of self discovery and living a life full of

 **Key Takeaways** [00:22:39]

Well, hope you enjoyed this 40th birthday celebration. So here's some key takeaways from the show today. In a word, celebrate. Celebrate your next big birthday or your next birthday, full stop. And let's not, of course, forget those mini milestones along the way. Break down your goals and celebrate the progress you make. The journey is everything.

And keep on the lookout for any strange and wonderful things that happen in your life. You might surprise yourself and even start journaling, like I've recently begun to do. It's simple. All you need to do is take notes. And notice when a story plops in your lap. So get out there and have an adventure.

In your own home. In your neighborhood. Anywhere and everywhere.

**Outro** [00:23:45] That's our show then. Thank you so much for listening. I'm Alexandria, and this is ALSO in PINK. The podcast, all about lifestyle design. If you enjoyed the show, please subscribe to ALSO in PINK, wherever you get your podcasts. And the absolute best way to show your support is to write a review on Apple Podcasts or iTunes. This really helps more than anything to promote the show. And, of course, tell all your friends. Thank you so much for your support. Until next time, have a wonderful week. Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life.