

## Still Buffering 428: Girls

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[theme song plays]

**Sydnee:** Hello, and welcome to *Still Buffering*, a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Taylor:** And I'm Teylor Smirl.

**Sydnee:** Tey, it's week number two of the MaxFunDrive!

**Taylor:** Woo-hoo!

**Sydnee:** Woo-hoo!

**Taylor:** We're... funnin', and we're drivin'!

**Sydnee:** Please don't drive while you're podcasting, Teylor.

**Taylor:** I don't have a license.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** I shouldn't drive, anyway.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Okay, yeah, don't— let me rephrase that. Don't drive, period. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** [laughs] But not everybody; just me.

**Sydnee:** No, just you. Unless you learn how to drive again...? Have you ever thought about that? Like, would you go back— like, would you learn?

**Taylor:** That's— I should say— 'cause I didn't do anything to lose my license; I just let it expire. I've been in New York too long, where we don't have— we don't drive cars. Most of us. So it would be very dangerous if I

tried to drive now. And yes, if I wanted my license again, I would have to take the whole test. I would have to parallel park again. I just don't think I could do it again.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] I don't know that I could— well, let me say, I had to retake my driver's test, because I let my license expire so badly, and didn't realize it.

**Taylor:** Well done! I mean, that's what I did, but you retook it. So you did that.

**Sydnee:** I did.

**Taylor:** You went through it.

**Sydnee:** It was hard. I had to do the written test, and the practical test, and I was pregnant at the time - I was very pregnant - it was very intimidating. The whole thing.

**Taylor:** Did they maybe, like, cut you some slack, because you were pregnant? [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I think 'cause I was, like, old and pregnant. And I don't mean "old" like *o*!— but you know, old to take a driver test, I guess. You know?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Because I was old and pregnant, they were pretty easy on me.

**Taylor:** That's good.

**Sydnee:** But I did do better with the parallel parking that time than I did the original time, when I was 16.

**Taylor:** That's the part— I think I could be fine with everything else, but I don't know.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Taylor:** I did it that one time in the test, and never again. Never. And I never would— I wish I could sign an agreement, like, “You won’t test me on parallel parking, and I promise I’ll never try to do it.”

**Sydnee:** [laughs] That c—

**Taylor:** Can I just— [laughs] Can I opt out of it?

**Sydnee:** Well, you know what’s interesting? They don’t make you do that in every state.

**Taylor:** I heard that the other day. I was like, well, I just need to move briefly to a state that doesn’t require that...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** ... get a new license... and— I don’t know. Just not.

**Sydnee:** There you go.

**Taylor:** I’m just not.

**Sydnee:** They’re— just don’t. Just don’t drive.

**Taylor:** I— I walk. I have a bicycle. There are trains. It’s fine.

**Sydnee:** We’re not talking about that kind of driving, anyway.

**Taylor:** No, sorry. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Maximum Fun is a listener-supported network. We are run by our staff, and we are supported by our listeners, and we uh, need you to help us continue to do the things we do, to continue to make the shows we make, to make more of them, to make them better, to improve the audio quality, to improve our research quality, I don’t— all the things we do to make the shows. To give us more time, and better equipment to make things that you enjoy.

And so once a year, we come to you with the Maximum Fun Drive to say, hey, if you can, if you're in a position to become a monthly donating member to the Maximum Fun Network, we would really appreciate it. It really helps us out. [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join) is the website, if you wanna do it right now. I'm watching the ticker right now; I'm watching people join. People either become members or upgrade your membership.

If you're already a monthly donor, and you'd like to bump it up a little bit, you're in a position to do so, and you want to, this is the time to do it, because during the MaxFunDrive, we give you presents! We do special episodes, special content, and we give you presents.

**Taylor:** Love presents.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Like Christmas, but better weather.

**Sydnee:** Exactly, exactly. And there's— even at just \$5 dollars a month, you get all this bonus content every year for the MaxFunDrive. All of our shows make extra episodes that are only accessible to members, and you can unlock all those— I can't even tell you how many hundreds of hours of BoCo. So much BoCo, from every show across the network, from every year we've been doing this, that you get access to for just \$5 dollars a month.

And then, of course, there's more presents as the levels get higher, but again, [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join). We'd really appreciate you if you can join, if you can upgrade your membership, if you can boost your membership by a couple bucks; anything. It helps us so much, and it's a great time to do it, 'cause it's like a party, and you get a present.

Man, imagine going to a party, and then receiving a present. Like, usually you *give* a present when you go to a party.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Let's say— well, if it's your birthday, it's pretty normal. We've all had that experience in that way, but... [laughs]

**Sydnee:** No, this is like you go to— like, you go to somebody else's birthday party, but then you leave with a present.

**Taylor:** I like that. I like that a lot. They should all work that way.

**Sydnee:** That's— actually, now, as I say that, we do that for kids' birthday parties, don't we? That's not that weird.

**Taylor:** Yeah, I wasn't trying to put out your little idea fire there, but it's actually— goodie bags, you know.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** You go to a wedding, you get to leave with stuff. *But*, we have party favors, too.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Taylor:** And they're great.

**Sydnee:** Can I say— they're so much better than in kids' goodie bags. I always feel guilty about... Whenever the girls have a birthday party, we put together some sort of themed goodie bag to go with...

**Taylor:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** ... you know, to give the kids as they leave the party. "Thank you for coming to our party; here's a little plastic bag full of some plastic things, and probably candy."

And as I'm doing it, I feel guilty. Because I know, like, I'm handing this parent— I'm not thinking about the child, I'm thinking about the parent. "Here's a bag full of plastic things... [laughs] ... that you probably don't want, and your kid may or may not want, but your kid *is* gonna wanna keep. Whether or not they want them or wanna play with them, they're gonna wanna keep 'em. And I don't know where you put these in your house, 'cause I don't know where to put 'em in my house. ... Bye!" [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Well, but isn't it sometimes like a blessing? Like, aren't kids kinda like cats, and that sometimes one of those plastic things is just gonna be what that kid is all about for like the next, at least, couple days?

**Sydnee:** Uh, yes.

**Taylor:** They got this kazoo from a goodie bag, and they're just all about this kazoo for the next— we don't have to think about how to entertain the kid, 'cause the kid has the kazoo. That's it.

**Sydnee:** That is true. That is true, like Charlie— this wasn't in a goodie bag, but she recently got— it's a frog made out of soap, sort of.

**Taylor:** Yeah! Sure.

**Sydnee:** Except it's like, it's like slime soap? It's a Lush product.

**Taylor:** Ahh.

**Sydnee:** And it's like a squishy, but it keeps the shape of a frog, but it is soap. But she's obsessed with it.

**Taylor:** I love that for her.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And then its toes came off, and that was a whole thing.

**Taylor:** Aw.

**Sydnee:** Because it is, like, made— it *is* soap.

**Taylor:** Is it meant to, like, slowly disintegrate as you use it?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Okay. That's interesting. [laughs] That frog is an ephemeral joy.

**Sydnee:** I— [laughs]

**Teylor:** All things are, really, if you think about them.

**Sydnee:** Listen, I...

**Teylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I understand the allure of Lush products. I totally do. Like, I've been in the stores, and...

**Teylor:** Oh, they're great.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. They all look— and so many of them look yummy. Like, don't eat 'em. They're not edible.

**Teylor:** No, no.

**Sydnee:** But they look edi— like, they look yummy. But the smell in those store— I am kind of sensitive to scents. And I walk into those stores, and instantly, it's like, nose running, eyes running...

**Teylor:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** ... throat clogged, [laughs] like, can't breathe. And my children are obsessed with everything in the store, and wanna bring home every weirdly-shaped soap and bath bomb and whatnot. And then my house smells— I mean, they smell wonderful. Like, I am not knocking this. It's just as somebody who is sensitive to scents, Lush is this beautiful nightmare for me.

**Teylor:** That's fair. See, Lush is a different kind of nightmare for me, because *I* have social anxiety!

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Teylor:** And those salespeople, they are very forward. They're very good at their jobs, and I get that's part of how they sell things, but I cannot— I wish that there was a little badge they had at the door that you could just pick up and put on - and they're very socially conscious, so I could see them

implementing something like that - just a little badge that says, "Nope, don't talk to me."

And that would... [laughs] I could just put on my little badge, and then do my shopping, and that would be fine. 'Cause as soon as they walk up to me, I'm like, "Oh, no. Oh, no. Oh, no." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Tey, I wish I would've brought home— I don't know if they still do it, but uh, we've been on the JoCo Cruise before.

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And on the JoCo Cruise, they give you a little button when you get on. And again, I don't know if they still do this, but this is when we went on. And there's a button that says, like, "Friend today," and then like "Not friending today," or something to that effect.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And you wear the button like— like, if you're in a mood to make new friends, you wear the green button that says that, and if you're not in a mood to make new friends, you just want some alone time, you don't really wanna... and then you wear the red button that says, like, "Not friending today."

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And then that way, nobody talks to you. [laughs]

**Taylor:** 'Cause I need one forever. I need that just tattooed somewhere, visibly. [laughs] Not friending.

**Sydnee:** Not friending today.

**Taylor:** In general, not friending.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Not interested.



**Taylor:** Sorry!

**Sydnee:** Those are probably useful for life. They should probably just sell those. [laughs]

**Taylor:** I mean, I realize that the way to do that is to just, with your attitude, communicate, "Hey, no thanks. I'm good." But that is hard.

**Sydnee:** It is.

**Taylor:** [wheezing laugh]

**Sydnee:** It *is* hard. It is. 'Cause I was - and probably this is a similar thing for us, Tey - I was socialized to, when I am out in public, I look at people, I make eye contact, I politely nod or smile, or say something pleasant just in passing. Like, this is how I was socialized. And so I do that in stores, I do that— any public place. Like, it can be a stranger. If I pass a stranger on the sidewalk, I'll nod and smile.

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And we're kind of south enough here that sometimes, they'll say, "Beautiful day, isn't it?" And I'll say, "It sure is. Isn't this a relief?" We'll say crap like that to each other.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** 'Cause we live in West Virginia. And if you walk into a store, and you make eye contact with especially a store like Lush, they're gonna come right at you to sell you things. And then I'm gonna feel like, "Oh, now I gotta buy things."

**Taylor:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's tough.

**Taylor:** I can't get it out of— I mean, that's— I work in the service industry. I have a very good presence, and eye contact, and smiles, and it's like I

can't— I'm just gonna interrupt this conversation, and say, this is a survival mechanism. I have developed this; this thing that you're experiencing on the outside of this is pure survival. Not me. [laughs] I am so sorry. I have fooled you.

**Sydnee:** [laughs softly] "Please do not sell me things."

**Taylor:** No.

**Sydnee:** "I will buy them if I want them, but it will have nothing to do with you."

**Taylor:** "I'm so sorry. [laughs] You can give me your name, and I will tell them you sold them to me; I just don't want to talk to you."

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] Now, my impression, though, having visited New York, is that the impulse to, out in public, randomly smile and nod or engage in conversation with people on the sidewalk is not as welcome.

**Taylor:** It's not not-welcome, it's just not as common. But that almost makes— that makes it worse for man, because as the one person who can't seem to turn that off, it's like the amount of people that ask me for directions...

**Sydnee:** Ohh.

**Taylor:** ... or will come up and be like— like, I am always the person that gets stopped, and gets asked, like, "I'm trying to get here," or "I need this," or "Can I use your phone?" I'm like, "What about me communicates... I will be in a crowd of 50 people, and I am the person singled out." Like, I don't look particularly... I don't know. I don't think you look at me, and be like, *that's* somebody that knows general... directions. No. I don't think anything about me [laughing] communicates that.

**Sydnee:** Well, you're walking that line of you're looking friendly enough and approachable enough that they can talk to you, but you also look like somebody who's from here.

See, I'm friendly and approachable when you look at me in New York, but nobody's gonna ask me for directions...

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** ... 'cause I'm clearly not from there. [laughs] There is no doubt. They're looking at my overalls, and going, "Eh, probably not." [laughs]

**Taylor:** Well... [sighs] Maybe that's it, but I don't know.

**Sydnee:** I don't know. But that's— that's— I mean, I think it's a good thing, although I have had that reaction. I feel like I've been to other— not just New York, but I've been to other places where it's not as common just to engage in pleasantries with random strangers. And I'll, like, sort of smile and nod at somebody on the sidewalk, and I get this look, like, fear. Like, "What's wrong with this person?"

**Taylor:** Yeah...

**Sydnee:** Like, "Are you okay?" "What's about to happen?" like, "Why is this person trying to look at me?" And I don't know. Then I realize, "Oh, this is not— this is not welcome." [chuckles]

**Taylor:** I mean, in New York, that is a well-founded fear. You know, when I realize somebody's making eye contact with me, and it's not just like a lost tourist, there's always a moment of "Uh-oh." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** "Uh-oh!" [bubbles into laughter] What could this mean?

**Sydnee:** See, and I'm always like, "Oh, this could be fun."

**Taylor:** [sighs]

**Sydnee:** "Who knows what we're gonna learn next."

**Taylor:** Oh, no. Yeah, no, no, that's uh... that's an okay way to feel in Huntington, West Virginia. That's so in Brooklyn!

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] It is— it's also I have the benefit of, like, I pretty much know everybody downtown. If I make eye contact with somebody downtown, I'm probably like, "What? Oh, I know you." [chuckles]

**Taylor:** No, that's fair. No, I had somebody— I was on the train platform, it was kind of late, and I heard some guy, he was... a little bit farther down. And he said, "Hey, I need to talk to you!" And I didn't even investigate; I said, "Nope!" and I just went and left! [laughs] I left the train station. And I went and walked to the next one. That's fine. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** And then I just went real fast. You do not need to talk to me, sir.

**Sydnee:** Well, but that guy— that guy needed to talk to you, Tey.

**Taylor:** No, he did not.

**Sydnee:** Now you'll never know what it was about!

**Taylor:** Yup, exactly. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Do you think it was Jesus? I bet it was Jesus.

**Taylor:** No, I— maybe. I don't know. He should know better if it's Jesus.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Well, that's why he needed to talk to you.

**Taylor:** I mean, eh, [stammering], he gets... Is he just as clueless, as far as New York City works? Maybe. I don't know. You gotta learn the hard way, Jesus, just like the rest of us did.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] Uh, speaking of New York City.

**Taylor:** There you go.

**Sydnee:** There we go.

**Taylor:** We're gonna talk about the Jesus of New York City, [laughing] Lena Dunham.

**Sydnee:** Oh, man.

**Taylor:** [laughter rises]

**Sydnee:** You're gonna get emails about that.

**Taylor:** Whoops!

**Sydnee:** On all sides, I think.

**Taylor:** I don't even know. I didn't know what to say.

**Sydnee:** I don't know. Somebody's mad. Um...

Last week, we gave a hearty defense of what Millennials have contributed to our... to our world, our society, our culture, and this week, we're gonna acknowledge that there was a downside to the Millennials. [laughs]

**Taylor:** [laughs] Self-aware is a trait we possess, so we're gonna use it.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. And sometimes, we *were* awful - are awful, could/can be. Are capable of awfulness.

**Taylor:** Well, all of that individualism, and sort of thinking outside of the road that we thought we were supposed to walk. It's good, but it also can maybe go too far, or at least be a little self-indulgent.

**Sydnee:** I think that, you know, yes. That is the point— we're not— by the way, by saying "terrible," we are not saying the show *Girls* is terrible. I think that the show *Girls* was fun to watch, and I didn't enjoy all of it, but yeah, I think it was funny, and clever, and I know there's a lot of stuff about Lena Dunham. I'm not getting into all that.

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** I am saying that I think very intentionally, it demonstrated some of the worst qualities of Millennials. And...

**Taylor:** And that would—

**Sydnee:** And yes, that sort of self-involvement is, I think, the hallmark.

**Taylor:** Well, and I think, on a rewatch, like, maybe it was on purpose? I think a lot of it was purposefully...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm!

**Taylor:** ... skewering us? But...

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** That's— you know, it's not acci— it's not, like, you know, an accidental... [breaks into laughter]

**Sydnee:** No, I think it's very intentional. I think that, um... I mean, it's assuming, since it is Lena Dunham's creation, and about her generation, and you know...

**Taylor:** She's the voice of our generation! [laughter]

**Sydnee:** A voice of...

**Taylor:** [erupting into laughter]

**Sydnee:** ... a generation. [laughs] I think— I think she's very intentionally calling attention— like, calling attention to the fact that the millennial generation was very... um— I mean, we are sort of like the... the beginning of the therapy generation, right?

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Like, nobody before us ever went to therapy. And then we discovered it, which is great, and a good thing, but I think what they're talking about is like, if you start down this path of "It's important to take care of yourself, and to think about yourself, and to invest time and effort into yourself. The— what— the extreme extension of that is, "And all I think and talk about is myself."

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** And it is the most important thing not just to me, but to everyone around me, all the time. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm. I see.

**Sydnee:** And that— that is what I think they're demonstrating on girls, often.

**Taylor:** The mai— well, it's like the main character syndrome, where your entire cast, the main cast, has it.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** They are all starring in their own show. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Which is a fair criticism of not— I mean, and again, not all of Millennials, of course. Just like the same— you know, not all Boomers are terrible. I mean, they're not.

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** But they're hallmarks of the generation that we point to that have directed culture, and I think one of the hallmarks of Millennials is that... we can be navel-gazey.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

[extended pause]

**Sydnee:** ... Yeah.

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm. [erupts into laughter]

**Sydnee:** And so— [laughs]

**Taylor:** S— yeah! Period. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I... Owning it. Um, and it i— well, it is important to focus on yourself, and to think about yourself. If you try to... If you— Man, main character syndrome really, like... it's meta, because Lena Dunham made herself the main character of her show.

Uh, but like, it's also very honest that I think— I think there was this tendency to make a story out of our lives. We were taught to, like, tell a story with our life. And the problem with that, the problem with approaching your existence from a narrative point of view, is that your life doesn't— like, nobody's life has that kind of arc, really, right?

Like, your life doesn't do that. It doesn't begin, middle, end. It just sort of meanders.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It starts, and then it— then it meanders, and you've got ups and downs. There is no, like, culmination. There's no climax of the plot. There's no... big action that dictates everything else. There's just stuff that happens, and then stuff that doesn't happen. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah. Well, and not— most of it doesn't have any grand meaning. You can apply meaning to it...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** ... but it's not— yeah. It's funny; this makes me think of when I was... in the age range of the— the women presented in the show - I think this was like 2008, 2009 - I was traveling abroad for the first time, and uh, I



was in... uh, I was in Marce. Staying at, like, a hostel, but it was just somebody's house that he just let people stay in. I don't know. Anyway, the guy - he was French - told— like, I was writing a journal. And he said, "Why is it Americans always have to tell stories about themselves? Every time an American comes through here, they're always writing something. They're always writing the next... great novel, or something. What— Why don't you ever just experience something?"

[bursts into laughter] That stuck with me all these years. I was like, "That is true." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Well, I mean, I think you're right. I think that we do feel like we're supposed to— I don't know... is that capitalism, that makes us feel like everything has to exist in a context?

**Taylor:** ... Yeah...

**Sydnee:** Everything has to have a goal? It has to be moving us towards... something?

**Taylor:** Well, exactly. Like, you can't just do something for the sake of doing it. It needs to be part of a hustle, or an achievement, or a great work of art. Because ultimately, you can sell all those things.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. No, so I mean, I think like... I mean, your main character in the show, Hannah, that— that *is* her goal.

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** To write everything, and then... [chuckles] be the voice of her generation. To sell something. She wants to sell something. For stories.

**Taylor:** If nobody's seen *Girls*, um, the plot is... For *Girls'* main cast, along with some extra characters, and they're young in New York City, pursuing their careers. That's kind of it, right?

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Love and careers, and life experiences.

**Sydnee:** It was kinda— I mean, I think in some way, it's in conversation with *Sex and the City*.

**Taylor:** Oh, direct conversation, absolutely.

**Sydnee:** Because— but it's like, I mean— and again, as I say it, I'm cringing at our generation.

It was supposed to be saying they're, like... We don't live in your fancy apartments, and by your fancy... purses, and wear your fancy shoes, and whatever. Like... we're in the *real* New York. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Which is interesting, because as somebody that was living in New York in these exact same years that the show was being filmed and set, uh, you have to remember that Lena Dunham, her character is, what, from the midwest. Like, a...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** ... you know, middle-class girl from the midwest. Lena Dunham herself grew up very well-off in New York City, with very rich artist parents. And I think that shows through in how they set up the *Girls* there. 'Cause it starts in what, like 2008, I think, is the first year?

**Sydnee:** I think that's right, yeah.

**Taylor:** Um, they quote the rent at some point that one of them paid. And like, they were living still in Manhattan. Like, you know, Greenpoint. They were living in parts of the city that were already... young— like, you know, artists were priced out of.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Like, I could not afford those areas when I was in my early 20s in, you know, early 2000s.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Um, and I mean, even like the kind of jobs that they just sort of waltz into... Like, those jobs were really hard to get. Like, that's not— that was not something available to us.

So it still is kind of a little bit, like, removed from what the reality was. I always enjoyed the fact that they show Bushwick in, like— like, I don't know, one of the early episodes. Like, the second or third episode, they go to Bushwick, and it's literally my— my first subway stop in the neighborhood, before I got priced out of that one. And they kind of treat it like this scary wasteland.

It's like, that was just like where people were living at that time. Like...

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Taylor:** Most of us, we'd all been priced out of the East Village. We'd all been priced out of Williamsburg. A lot of us had moved out to Bushwick or, you know, up to Harlem. So it was like, "Well, no, no, no." Like... [laughs] This is— you know, this is where those people would've actually lived, probably.

**Sydnee:** Well, and I think that, like, they could've— you know, she could've acknowledged, like... she could've set up something. Like, even the *Friends* conceit, you know, Monica...

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** ... had that great apartment, because it was her grandmother's, and it was rent-controlled.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like, they always relied on that. Like, "This is how we justify this." [laughs] Like, "How are the two people who have this apartment currently jobless, and they're still living in this apart—" Well, it's rent controlled.

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** And she could've set up, I don't know, more of a "trust fund" vibe for all of these characters, but they don't all have that. I mean, like, you don't get the sense that Hannah has parents who were rolling in money. Like, they help support her, but they don't have a *ton* of money.

**Taylor:** Well, that's— I mean, it kicks off with them cutting her off. Like, they've been paying rent for her...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** ... up to a certain point post-college, and now they're, you know, letting her go. And to see her— 'cause she keeps getting really good jobs, right?

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** Like, she keeps landing these kind of insane jobs for someone that's just like, "I went to college for writing, and now I'm, you know, working at a nice, professional publication." And then she quits the job because, I don't know, she wants to go be a real artist? [chuckles]

Which also just seems kind of funny to me, 'cause it's like... I don't— I feel like all of my artist friends would've died for those jobs, where oh yeah, you go and get a cushy desk job for a few hours a day, and then you come home and write? Like, again, it just feels a little bit like... "Ooh, no, you gotta pursue the 'real' artist life, which is never working a desk job, or a real job." It's like, [through the corner of their mouth] that's what real artists do. You have to. You have to support yourself.

**Sydnee:** Well... But I think you're getting into, too, though, what— it's like the double-edged sword of— the conversation that *Girls* was trying to have, which was the conversation that I think our generation was trying to have. But does it— but *should* it be that way, and does it have to be that way?

And I'm not saying— but bef— so think on that. And before we talk about it more, though... [laughing]

**Taylor:** Yes. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** We have to go to the Group Message. [chuckles] And the Group Message, again, is about our MaxFunDrive. As we've mentioned before, it is the time of year where we come to you, our listeners, and we say, hey, you know, we make our shows, and you can listen to them for free. But we do ask that if you're in a position where you could donate to our network, a monthly donation, we would really appreciate it.

Because we count on our listeners to help support the content that we create. As a result of your donations, we are able to make more of our shows, make our shows better, devote more of our career time to making our shows, as opposed to doing other things to pay bills. And we really appreciate you. We love...

It's also a nice way to support something that you enjoy. I think it's really important to say, like, "Hey, I love this art, and I don't *have* to give them money for them to make it, but I do like it, and so I would like to throw them some money to help them keep making it."

And during the MaxFunDrive, we, uh, give you a present. So as I mentioned before, there are a bunch of different levels.

You can donate to Maximum Fun at \$5 dollars a month. Uh, you will get all of our bonus content. It's immediate access to— I mean, again, just hours, and hours, and hours of BoCo from every show on the network from every year we've been doing this. Um, all kinds of fun, special, quirky little episodes.

Uh, this one— for us this year, it will feature... uh, one of my children.

**Taylor:** [chuckling]

**Sydnee:** So that's a special— To give us some insight on what the *real* youth have to say about today.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Um, at \$10 dollars a month, you get all that bonus content, plus you get one of our 42 enamel pins, one for every show on the Network. You can pick which one you like. They are so cool. Check out the one for *Still Buffering*; it's a Discman. It's so cute. But there's tons of pins. We love ours, but you can pick any of 'em! Whatever you prefer. And again, of course you get all that bonus content.

At \$20 dollars a month, you get the BoCo. You get the pin of your choice. *Plus*, you either get our "Beach for the Stars" towel— you gotta check out these designs this year; it's beautifully '90s. It's— there are unicorns, and rainbows. It's so pretty.

Or, if you don't need a beach towel, you can get a bucket hat with our Max Fun logo right there on it. Um, so '90s. Bucket hats, unicorns, rainbows. Very 90s, all these things.

And then there are higher levels. If you're in a position to donate more, there's a \$35 dollars a month where you can get an amazing cooler bag, and there's— It goes higher from there.

So anyway, check out the website. [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join). And Teylor, would you like to tell our listeners what their donations mean to you?

**Teylor:** Yes. I would love to. Um... [chuckles] you know, we're having this discussion about balancing art versus, you know, the job you have to do. And the podcast has allowed me to make art like I never really thought, or had the time to do, in my pre-podcast days.

You know, I work in the food service industry; I've always been a bartender, waiter, barista, what-have-you. That's always paid the bills. Um, but that work is sometimes, you know, not the most consistent and reliable. And I'm just— I've always been grateful for this, because it has kept me afloat when I've needed it. It's allowed me that little bit of breathing room to get back to making art, to have some time and space to do that.

And it's also put me in contact with lots of other people that enjoy my work, and share their work. And it's just really introduced me to a community of other creators that I'm deeply appreciative for.

**Sydnee:** So thank you so much for all you've done for both of us. For all of the shows of the Network, I can say we've benefited immensely from your membership, and your donations, and your support. And if you're in a position, please join, please upgrade.

Or, if you're not in a position, just share our show. That always helps, too; just tell a friend about our show. If you like what we do, say, "Hey, I listen to this podcast I think you'd like to." That helps us out.

[Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join).

Okay. So, Teylor. I introduced this idea... [chuckles] about— I do think Millennials were asking a question that is worth asking: Should you have to get that desk job?

**Teylor:** Well...

**Sydnee:** This is tough for us, 'cause we're old Millennials. This is tough...

**Teylor:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** ... because we have— we have enough— I've always been close enough to Gen X that there is a voice in my head that says, "Of course you do! I did." [laughs]

**Teylor:** Right. No, I don't think you should have to; I'm gonna start with that. I mean, I don't— I think... The desk job, I don't know. No. Uh, I've never gotten a desk job. Again, like I just said, I work in food service. And I specifically got— went into food service one, because that was— [laughs] that was the only work I could get, let's be real. I had an art degree.

But also, it allowed me freedom. You know, it was a job that you could just sort of check-in, check-out, you know... You could wear whatever you want. You could work different hours; you kind of keep a different schedule. It had certain freedoms for it.

So I don't know. And I've— I never— even though I've felt the sort of cultural pressure of, like, from the generation before me, like, "That's not a

real job.” Like, it *is* a real job, because it pays my rent. That’s— that’s a real job.

Um, but I think that there is— and this reminds me of something that I’ve heard, hearing in a critique not directed at me, but in art school, towards another student who had made a really beautiful comic, but it was all about the act of making comics.

And my teacher said - my professor, rather - he was like, “The thing is, you have to live a life to have anything interesting to say, and if all of your art is ever talking about is the act of making art, I’m sorry, but it’s just... what is there to it? Like, you’ve got to figure out how to live a life that’s interesting enough to write about.”

And that is the balance. Like, great art comes from... life.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And a lot of times, the things we do... to pay the bills, are experiences with life. They’re things you can draw from, that you could interpret. So I don’t know.

It’s not— I don’t know if the perfect way for an artist to exist is to be entirely funded alone in their studio, with absolutely no demands on them. I don’t know if that produces anything interesting. And I’d even go out on a limb and say it doesn’t, because we see the kind of art that the trust fund babies make. They can buy their way into the galleries, but it’s never particularly interesting.

**Sydnee:** Well, I think, too, it’s interesting, because what you’re kind of talking about is what art is. I think that, probably, artists who have patrons like that and just sit in the studio, and make whatever they want, could probably produce something beautiful.

**Taylor:** Yeah!

**Sydnee:** You know, something technical and beautiful. But I think that’s different than— and I’m not saying something technical and beautiful can’t



also do this. But there is a difference in— in art that changes the conversation, or advances things, or asks new questions, or... or pokes at you in a new wa— You know what I mean? Art that... Art that moves socie—

Art moves society forward. Not all art. But art that does, I don't— I think you're right. I don't think it's the kind of art that you can hole up in a studio, and never have any contact with the outside world, and necessarily create. And obviously, I don't know. That's probably— there's probably somebody who did. But generally speaking, I think that engaging with the world makes art that makes society move.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** That makes humanity better.

**Taylor:** You need some sort of friction against reality to have something to say about it.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** And that's not to say, like, I'm not— this is not a reflection on the show. I mean, I think this show has a very clear interaction with the reality of... Like, everything we're talking about is discussed with a lot of nuance and intelligence in the show *Girls*.

**Sydnee:** It is— I think the prob— I think, like... they are very self-aware. I remember in the episode where Marnie makes the comment, like, "Of course we moved to New York because of *Rent*. [ironically] Isn't that what everybody did? Move to New York, because of the show *Rent*?"

**Taylor:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Well, and I mean, I think there was that— there is that kind of aspect to it. Like, "Oh, you just thought this was gonna be like *Rent*, and it was gonna be fun, and you'd sing songs and eat French fries with your cool boho friends?" You know, whatever. And obviously, it's not that.

And so I mean, I think it is self-aware. But I think the criticism that gets leveled at our generation, and sometimes there is a truth to it, is that we acknowledge that things— we are self-aware. We acknowledge that the system that we were trying to fit into didn't work for us, that it maybe isn't the best system.

And that, you know what, we could probably do better. And that maybe there's a better way. Maybe there's more of a balance. Maybe— maybe I'm not gonna stick with this same company forever, because the company— it doesn't value *me*. You know, the idea of like "The company takes care of its workers, and I work hard for my company."

That idea disappeared when unions disappeared. Well, they didn't disappear, but you know what I mean; they were weakened.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And so, like, all of that got called into question. And those are important things to call into question. Those are important things, like criticisms to level at society. But I don't know how much we did besides say it. [laughs] I feel like we said it, and then we went, "[exhales] That was exhausting. I need a nap." [laughs]

**Taylor:** Well, to be fair, also we might've said it, but you know... again, 2008, that's when the crash happened. Like, you took the job, or you— you didn't have a choice, you know.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Like, it only got worse financially for a lot of us. Like, yeah, we all agree the system sucks, but there's only the system. How else do we survive without it, if we're not one of the lucky few that was born into money?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** You know. And I think there's— this is— there's a very rough crash with reality that elder Millennials have gone through now, where we know

it's... we know this doesn't produce happiness, but it's the only thing that produces any amount of safety.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And I think that kind of— there's a lot of disillusion in *Girls*. As you see them sort of... the way the characters start, and everything they go through, and how much they change, and the— none of them really— outside of Shoshanna... [laughs] come out, like, better? You know?

They live lives that are interesting, but they're definitely not in line with what you said they were trying to do with themselves.

**Sydnee:** Well, it is. I mean— like, Shoshanna's, like... the bathroom speech she gives kind of calls that into...

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** ... I mean, like, that she has made new friends who have— who are, like, nice, and have purses, and opinions, or whatever she says.  
[laughs]

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And she wants to go be with them, now. And what she's talking about is growing up in the way that we - like, our generations before us - expect us to grow up, right?

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** Which is why Millennials get labeled as eternal children. Because they didn't— their growing up didn't look like the Boomers growing up. Didn't look like Gen Xes growing up. Shoshanna kinda says, like, "Yeah, I'll just grow up like they did." Like, "It's time to grow up." [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Yeah. Well, but I think, like, a lot of the— the other three main girls have very cyclical narratives, where they seem to have the same problems, and make the same mistakes, over and over again.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Shoshanna's an outlier from that in that her narrative is consistently forward.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** She starts out very naive, very unaware of the world. And it's— she progresses rapidly. I mean, she ends up in Japan. She's living in another part of the world for a while. Like, she grows and matures throughout the show, whereas Hannah keeps having this cycle of, like, "I'm a writer. Oh, I need work. Oh, no, no, I'm a writer! I'm gonna be free! No, no, no, I need work." You know, constantly sort of self-sabotaging yourself.

Marnie, you know, sort of this... falls in love, thinks that's the one, and then as soon as she gets it, she sabotages it.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Like, over and over again. I mean, Jessa like, you know, kind of going back and forth with the addiction cycle. They're in these cycles that they never really escape.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. No, it's true. And I mean, I think it's interesting because I do think that Millennials, another criticism that got leverage— I mean, still to this day, I hear from people, older people, that they have so many jobs.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** That, like, you know, Millennials will quit a job, and then get a new job, and then quit that job, and get a new job. And I think it's the same kind of thing. Like, it's because everything has been falling apart, steadily... [laughs] Like, all these systems that were working for people before them weren't working anymore, and so you do find yourself sort of repeating cycles over and over again, but is it really your fault? Is it that you screwed up consistently, or is it that things just don't work the way we were told they were gonna work?

**Taylor:** Well...

**Sydney:** We were taught, "This is how you grow up and live a life," and then none of that worked for us.

**Taylor:** I mean, that kind of goes back to what I was saying about, you know... Like, the idea that Americans need to have a story to their life. Like, life doesn't really have a story. It is just kind of an [audio slightly stutters] experience, and you know, you... you get enough money to keep yourself on your feet, and... I mean, that sucks. Sort of the one punchback we can have, like, our jobs don't care about us; we don't have to care about our jobs.

I love that attitude, that when I— I think it's great. I support it. When it's like, "Yeah, this job... kind of treats me like crap, overworks me, so when I get a better offer, I'm gone. If I wanna— I put enough money together to take a trip somewhere, I'm gonna quit! Whatever. Two weeks' notice? Don't have to do that. [laughs] It wasn't in my contract."

Like, I feel like that's— from the outside, it looks like we're not getting anywhere, but we're just living life in a more natural way, which is... I'm seeking out what makes me happy, and you know, what I wanna do right now, and I'll figure out how to move on from here, "cross that bridge when I come to it" kind of... kind of deal. [laughs]

**Sydney:** There's de— and I do think there's an allure to that, and there's an honesty in it because of the way things are right now. I think what's sad is that it's moved us so far away. Like, if you get... [sighs] Like, if you get real granular with it, right down to the base pieces, like, a really great society would be one in which you engage in whatever your— whatever your thing your do is.

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydney:** And you enjoy it, and you're treated well while you do it, and you're cared for by— if it's not— if you don't own it. Although, in a perfect world, everybody who works in it would own it.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydney:** And so you buy into it, and they buy into you. And so then you—the thing that you do, you approach with great care and consideration, because you chose to do it. And whatever that looks like, whatever that profession is, you care about it. And you do it with the same sort of passion and commitment to humanity that everyone else is doing theirs with.

And it's— and the reason you feel that way is because you feel like you're part of your job. You feel like— that I am part of this society that has all these different pieces that keep it going, and make it fun and enjoyable for all of us. And I do my bit, and then you do your bit, and we're all communally coming together to make this great world, with all these fun, cool things that we can experience, and do, and be.

But that is not— I mean, that is not the system we have.

**Taylor:** Well...

**Sydney:** Nothing is that, right now.

**Taylor:** And it's hard because, I think, with that - I agree with what you're saying, but - there's always gonna be the follow-up question of, like, "Okay, but who works the drive-thru window? Who pumps gas?" Like, "Who's going to find some..." I mean, as somebody that's been a dishwasher, like, I don't know if I could ever have been a dishwasher in a way that fulfilled me on a spiritual level.

The balance comes from when that job pays you well enough, and you don't have to work so much of it that you have your passions, and your life outside of it, then it's fine. Then yeah, you play your role in society, you do your job. It doesn't dominate your life. And then, you can kind of have your own personal life, and your own passions, and your own pursuits outside of that.

And whether or not, you know, your side— your side— your hobby doesn't have to be a hustle. You can just enjoy...

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** ... making things, crafts, whatever it is. It's just that the way things work right now, any job you have in that level of, you know, employment is gonna take over your life, because you have to work it so hard and so long...

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Taylor:** ... that you can't do anything else.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. No, I mean, I think you're exactly right. And I think what you end up with is the stuff that gets complained about constantly. Like, "Why are so many experiences that used to be better, like going out to eat or staying in a hotel, or riding on an airplane, or whatever you're doing in life, why does it not feel— like, why does everything feel worse than it used to be?"

**Taylor:** [laughs softly]

**Sydnee:** And it's because, why would anybody ever care about these jobs, with the way they're treated by the companies they work for?

And of course, you're gonna have constant turnover, and of course everybody's gonna be looking for a better deal, because we do not treat workers with care anymore.

**Taylor:** Right. Well...

**Sydnee:** Which, again, gets right back to *Girls*.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** No longer they were trying to opt out. I mean, no wonder you have people who were saying, like, "I don't wanna— I don't want that system."

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** “I don’t wanna be part of it.” But we didn’t— but I don’t think— especially when you’re young, as these characters are, what sort of agency do you have to change the system?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I mean, you don’t feel like you do.

**Taylor:** Well, I mean, functionally, any of the characters— well, the characters here are not in any position to do so.

**Sydnee:** No.

**Taylor:** And I mean, that’s a thing. Like, when you can’t change the system, all you can do is pursue— if you can’t save the world, save yourself. And what does that look like? You know... I think that there’s— like, I don’t know, I love Ray’s narrative. And he’s the one that work at the coffee shop. And then he ends up owning the coffee shop.

And then, you know, he’s kind of got— like, he’s got his business settled, but that’s not— he runs for, like, public representation to be part of the city council or whatever, the community board. And then he ends— like, the end of his story is he’s continuing the stories that his former boss was recording of, like, his neighbors. Like...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** ... preserving the past of the neighborhood.

And I think that’s really beautiful, because you see somebody kind of check all those boxes that is so hard for the rest of us to check. Like, he runs a business. He, you know, gets a fancy position in the community. He’s not satisfied. It’s when he starts doing something meaningful to him, preserving something in a small, but important way, that he kind of finds his ending— the end to his story is that.



And I think that's really beautiful, and it's— it feels small, but if we all were allowed to go through those steps, I think we'd have a better society. To find that...

**Sydnee:** Well—

**Taylor:** ... balance of "I have stability, and I have meaning."

**Sydnee:** You're talking about self-actualization.

**Taylor:** Oh! [laughs heartily]

**Sydnee:** I mean, yeah. No, I mean, you're exactly right. You're talking about getting to the top of the pyramid, right?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** So, I don't know. Maybe, someday all the girls did.

**Taylor:** Well, I mean, I think they all end up...

**Sydnee:** We could imagine.

**Taylor:** ... much— well, I don't know. Maybe that's kind of one of the charming parts of the show, is that there's not a cute bow on the end of it.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Like, I like them all at the end of the show, more so than at the beginning. I think they've all grown in really beautiful ways.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** But everybody is still kind of at a question-mark place in their life, like... [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Marnie is *maybe* gonna help Hannah raise a baby, maybe not. Who knows? Hannah has a *baby*. [laughs] Is out of the city, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. Hannah has a baby.

**Taylor:** Jessa's with Adam, which is absolutely gonna implode, but who knows? Like...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Shoshanna's good. That's all that matters, right? [laughs]

**Sydnee:** There you go. We're just rooting for Shoshanna.

**Taylor:** Always— Shoshanna and Ray were the only two I was really invested in.

**Sydnee:** Well, it was— it was a— I thought the show, overall, I enjoyed it. It was fun. And if you find yourself watching it, and thinking like, "Oh, but I don't like some of these characters," like, well, I mean, I think at times you're not supposed to like the characters. It's kind of like *Succession*.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You don't watch *Succession* and think, "I love these people." [laughs] Or if you do, don't tell me. I don't— maybe we shouldn't have lunch. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Well, I mean, especially with *Girls*, they're very— they're realistic. It's the parts of ourselves that we maybe don't like to pay attention to. The self-important, the self-indulgent, the obsessive...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And I think it's nice to see those reflected honestly. I still think one of the most endearing moments ever committed to television, when they're dancing to "Dancing On My Own," Marnie and Hannah.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Taylor:** That will always be maybe one of my top 10 scenes in television. It's just so that moment, that generation. There's so much said with just that song and those two girls in that apartment.

**Sydnee:** And again, if you wanna remember all the good things that our generation gave you, just listen to last week's episode...

**Taylor:** Yeah, also that. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** We'll remind you.

Well, thank you, Tey. And if you all have never watched *Girls*... I mean, you don't— check it out. It was a lot of fun.

Um, last thing: I want to remind you one more time. Last— this is the last time that we'll do this, because by the time that you listen to this episode, the Drive will almost be over. Not quite. It'll almost be over.

It is the MaximumFunDrive 2025. Ooh, that rhymes! And it is the time of year where we ask you, please, if you can, support the shows that you love. [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join).

If you're not a member, you can become a member for as little as \$5 dollars a month, and get all that BoCo. If you're already a member, and you wanna upgrade, go up to \$10 dollars a month, you get one of our beautiful enamel pins. Um, and as I mentioned before, there are higher levels.

But again, [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join). We so appreciate all of you who listen to our show, all of you who are members of our network. Again, if you're not in a position to donate right now: tell a friend, share a show. Every little bit helps.

There's boosting this year, so you can become a member, you can upgrade your membership, or if you're not, if you're kind of in the middle, and you're like, "Well, I can't really jump up to that next level, but I do have a couple

extra dollars I'd love to throw towards you, you can boost your membership by a little bit, too."

So— and again, every dollar helps. Every member helps. It means so much to us. We love making these shows, and we love that you listen to them. So [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join).

And please join us next week, when we're gonna talk about: boy bands. You know, back in the 90s was like the height of the boy band wars. And so we'll get into our boy band legacy, and where we are today.

[theme song starts playing, gradually increasing in volume]

**Sydnee:** Uh, but until then, thank you to Maximum Fun. Thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind."

**Taylor:** This has been *Still Buffering*, a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us.

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Taylor:** And I'm Taylor Smirl.

**Sydnee:** I am still buffering...

**Taylor:** ... and I am too.

**Sydnee:** I lost my whole rhythm there, and I lost my— [unclear over music] going on, sorry.

**Taylor:** I don't [unclear over music]. [laughs] Like, what comes next?

[song ends]

**Sydnee:** I don't know. I know, it was like a remix. Sorry.

**Taylor:** It's alright.

[acoustic guitar sting]

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