

(introductory music)

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MARYN: Hi, everyone. Welcome to the latest podcast of Indie Birth's *Taking Birth Back*, a series where we've been focusing on, so far, self care in the prenatal period and talking here and there about doing our own birth as well. Known as unassisted birth to some, or family birth to others, or freebirth is another term. So way back when I started the podcast, we began with prenatal care because it's my belief that if we start at the very beginning when we're first pregnant and we start to take responsibility for ourselves then it just becomes something we want to do during our labor and birth. It's that much easier and makes that much more sense because we've been doing it all along.

So today I have a guest, which should make it really fun. We're going to have a little chat here on this podcast for your listening pleasure. And this is an amazing woman, a very good friend, an amazing person, who is a great example for all women of someone who has been transformed through her births and has had quite a few different experiences. So I'm going to introduce Jennifer in a minute. And she's going to share her birth journey with us today in the form of her stories and her thoughts as well as some questions for me. And I think you'll agree that this is an amazing example of what we are all capable of as women. And I hope you're as inspired as I am by her. So let's start. Jennifer, why don't you—

JENNIFER: Hi.

MARYN: - introduce yourself and just tell us a little bit about you so we can—people can get the—get what you're about.

JENNIFER: Okay. My name's Jennifer. I live in Florida currently. I have three children. Two of them are a little bit older than the baby that I just had unassisted. First one was a hospital birth. Second birth was a home birth with a midwife. And then unassisted. I think that kind of sums it up.

MARYN: Yeah. That kind of gets to it. Okay. So I want to hear from you because I know other people are interested—feel free to tell us as much of the birth stories as you'd like starting with the first one. And just focusing in on—not only maybe the details of the story but tell us what you were thinking at the time. What did you believe at birth at that particular moment? Because I think that's where the transformation happens.

JENNIFER: Yeah. So you want me to kind of give my birth stories a little bit?

MARYN: Yeah. Or even before you tell the story of the first, just give us a little background of what you were thinking, kind of life you were living, the kind of care you sought out.

JENNIFER: Okay. With my first, I was very conventional. I had never had any exposure really to anything alternative. Just went to the doctor when I was sick, which, thankfully, wasn't very often. But that's what I turned to. I knew nothing about natural anything. So when we got pregnant, I, of course, went to the OB because that's just what you do. And did everything the OB requested without questioning anything because why would I because that's just what you do. They're the experts. That's why they're there. At the end of that pregnancy, my blood pressure was a little high because it slowly climbed towards the end of my pregnancies I've learned which, of course, called for an induction which, at the time I was there, seemed like it was an urgent thing. But then when the hospital was busy, they were able to postpone it a few days, so that kind of confused me because if it was urgent, why do they postpone it? But we did.

So eventually, I got in when the hospital had room. I was induced, had the baby vaginally, which was, looking back, is kind of surprising. I had an epidural and Pitocin and even Cytotec to start. He was born vaginally. I tore. Stitches. We spent a couple days in the hospital, came home, and that was it. At the time, it was like exactly what I hoped for because I had read some books, had a birth plan in mind of how things were going to go. At the time, I was really happy with it. It was a good experience. And everything was fine as far as I was concerned. Shortly after that, I got into the natural health world. I won't get into that story, but that's been a long, complicated. So at the time I got pregnant like three years later, I really wanted a home birth. But—

MARYN: So what had changed in your thinking? I mean what did you think your responsibilities were the first time and how did you feel differently about that going into the second time? Because something must have changed.

JENNIFER: Yeah. The first time I really didn't feel like I had any responsibility. That was a foreign concept to me. That's what I went to the doctor for. And I think getting into the natural health, I started to realize that there were things in conventional medicine I didn't agree with anymore. My whole perspective changed by the time I got pregnant with the second baby. So my beliefs were starting to shift to some extent.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. So would you say that—sorry to cut you off.

JENNIFER: No. That's fine.

MARYN: We're recording. So would you say the first time then that you thought that birth was medical? Or did you not really even think about it? You just kind of did—

JENNIFER: Oh, absolutely. Well, yeah. I probably didn't really think about it. But had someone asked me that question then, I would have said it was medical. Yeah. Definitely.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. I would have to the first time. I mean my experience was similar to yours too. And yeah. I kind of gave the responsibility away for sure. Yeah. Yeah. So what besides natural health—or was there something in particular that made you investigate home birth? Because that alone, you know, is a pretty radical idea nowadays. So what hit you? Or how did you find out about home birth? Or how did you consider that going from an induction to a home birth?

JENNIFER: I think it was more of not trusting conventional medicine entirely. But on some level, I wasn't—I don't know. Here's the situation. I wanted a home birth. But when it came right down to it, it wasn't covered by my insurance in my area. So I started off with an OB. Convincing myself that saving the money would—it'd be okay. I like the doctor okay. Things went okay the last time. I would stand up for myself. We wouldn't do an induction this time around. I wouldn't have a C-section. All that. But I started out conventional. Did all the testing and everything. I got to about 25 weeks, had my ultrasounds and stuff, and went in—my husband and I went in to see the OB. So that 25-week visit. And the conversation just didn't go the way I wanted it to. I didn't feel like she was taking my concerns seriously. I told her I really wanted to have a home birth in the future. Therefore avoiding a C-section was really important to me because in that state a C-section meant no home birth in the future. And she didn't really take that seriously.

She had nothing good to say about home birth. And I felt really—I don't know. I felt like my opinion really didn't matter. Like she didn't really care what I wanted. So we left that appointment, and I told my husband. I'm like, "I can't go through with this. We're going to have this baby at home." And he—thankfully, he was 100% behind me, and we never went back.

MARYN: Wow. Wow. That's amazing. So what would you say to women that—I think one of the most common excuses I hear when women aren't ready yet—I know they're not ready is to say it's because my insurance covers it. Or they make excuses in their head kind of like you did in the beginning saying, "Oh, it wasn't that bad."

JENNIFER: Yes.

MARYN: Yeah. What's up with that?

JENNIFER: I think, for me, it really was important to me, and I really knew it wasn't okay. So when I was confronted with this, "She really doesn't care what I want," I—the

money didn't matter. The money was not important to me. I knew we could figure it out. And we did. It happened.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. So you really had to get the message loud and clear that she just didn't care.

JENNIFER: Yeah. I couldn't get the natural birth experience in the hospital. And once I was really confronted with that, I knew it's not what I wanted. It's not what I wanted for myself or for the baby.

MARYN: Right. Right. And I know, for me, I don't—I'm assuming it was this way for you too. That with the hospital birth, there was so much to be desired with how the baby was treated too. I know, for me, that was—

JENNIFER: Oh yeah.

MARYN: Yeah. That was one of the main—right. That was just horrifying. I mean I felt like I could handle anything. But the way my baby was treated—yeah.

JENNIFER: Yeah. And I didn't want to be fighting with nurses or doctors even after the baby was born over (inaudible). So it just kind of came down to, "You know what? Why even go there? We don't want to be dealing with this during the first precious hours and days. Then why would we go there?"

MARYN: Yeah. Yes. So did you have any friends that had had a home birth, or did you have any firsthand experience? Or did you guys just jump?

JENNIFER: We just jumped. I mean I knew of two moms back when I was around 10 that had had babies at home. But that was my only experience. I knew nobody else who had done it. So yeah. It was a real kind of jump for us.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's kind of how we did it too. I think some people are lucky enough to have a community around them or a group of women or family that are good examples. But I think most women really don't. We don't have that sort of example anymore.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

MARYN: Yeah. So you went looking for a midwife now at 25 weeks. And what were you thinking as far as—like what were you looking for in a midwife? What were you looking for someone's responsibility to be and how were you feeling about what your responsibility was going to be now being at home?

JENNIFER: I still really didn't feel like I had a whole of responsibility. I guess contrasted with my unassisted birth. I was eating better because I'd gotten into natural health. But

yeah. I was still—when I went looking for a midwife, I was looking for someone with experience, who was able to handle any things that came up in the birth or whatever. So that was kind of really what we were looking for. So when we met with somebody and they seemed to know what they were talking and were respectful of our desires for how I was treated and how the baby was treated, we were thrilled and jumped all over it.

MARYN: Right. Right. And at that time, would you say you knew much about sort of types of midwives? Or were you looking for any kind of credential or qualification? What were you guys thinking when you started the search?

JENNIFER: Yeah. We really didn't know anything. I read in books the difference between CPMs and licensed midwives. But I didn't understand everything I know now. So pretty much it was still a licensed midwife. That's really all we need.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. And so how many were you able to find in your area? How many did you get to meet with before you could choose somebody?

JENNIFER: I only knew of two. And we had appointments with both of them. And we met with the first one and really liked her, so we cancelled the second one.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. That's quite a switch especially to have some home visits. I know. I remember thinking that was just one of the greatest things ever.

JENNIFER: Yeah. Right? Someone coming to your house. That was really cool at the time.

MARYN: Yeah. So I mean I know your story. So I'm kind of—I don't know. Helping shape it here. But it seems like the midwife assisted birth was kind of your middle ground. Kind of like your stepping stone from the hospital birth and in between the unassisted birth. So I don't know. Just tell us about your experience and what your mindset was. Because a hospital birth, obviously, is really common. We kind of probably aren't even getting those listeners, to be honest. But we probably have the most amount of women in the midwife attended birth arena. And it's not that there's anything wrong with that, but I think it's really cool to hear from women what their experience was and what the pluses and minuses were and how it differs.

JENNIFER: Yeah. So what do you want me to start with?

MARYN: Hmm. Well, what was just so obviously different for you having a midwife?

JENNIFER: The home visits. The home visits were amazing. She came in to our home, and I never had to leave. She came every single time. She interacted with my then almost three year old. Made him feel really involved, really comfortable with her.

Just got to know us and what we liked, what we didn't like. And made us feel at ease, and she felt like a friend. She didn't force me to do any testing. So that just felt completely different from the doctor, of course. Yeah. So that was probably the main differences. I felt listened to. I felt like my concerns were valid. And yeah. I felt like an important part of the process.

MARYN: Yeah. And where the family can be involved. I think that's just—well, it's an amazing plus, obviously, when you already have a kid or kids. Yeah. To have somebody come to your house and get to know you. I mean that's just priceless. So how about going into the birth, what were you desiring? What were you picturing or wanting to be different or the same?

JENNIFER: I wanted a water birth. I wanted to labor on my own because I had never done that. I was induced before I was ready. So just kind of that whole experience. I had absolutely no idea what to expect because I—the only thing I knew was what I'd read online and videos I'd watched. I didn't have anybody to talk to about it. So I just kind of wanted to experience it, and I knew I could do it. I just had no idea what it was going to look like. And yeah.

MARYN: Yeah. Those are pretty good things to want out of a home birth, I think. And so how did it turn out? Did you feel like those things were accomplished?

JENNIFER: Yeah. Absolutely. I labored on my own for quite a while before she came. She came in. She was pretty mellow. I mean there were a few exams and stuff I didn't know any—I just—that's just what you did. She wasn't really pushy about them. And I labored in the water pretty much the whole time. When it was time for the baby to be born, it was—it got a little weird. I was having strong contractions, and I felt like—I felt the baby moving through the birth canal. And I leaned back to push her out waiting for contractions to help me. And all of a sudden the midwife couldn't find heart tones. She was listening through the water from what I can remember. And she kind of freaked out and told me I had to get the baby out in the next push. And I wasn't having a contraction. And I was waiting for the next one because I'd done that before. Even with the epidural, I could feel when I was having a contraction, so I knew when to push.

MARYN: Right.

JENNIFER: So I knew how that part of it worked. So I did. I waited for the next contraction and pushed her out really fast. And she was fine, of course. And the interesting thing is when this is all happening in my mind and in my heart, I knew the baby was fine. I kind of had this inner argument with myself as well. Just the midwife is concerned. There's a reason she's here. There's a reason we hired her. She's the experienced one. If she's concerned, then I really should just listen to her even though I did know that she was fine. So I went ahead and pushed her out really fast. I tore

probably because she came out so fast. But she was fine. I caught her. I held her. And then everything I wanted, and it wasn't until later that I realized kind of what had happened at the end. And I think that probably played a lot into my unassisted choice in the future.

MARYN: Yeah. I think that is such a crucial point. I mean not to highlight not getting what you want at a birth. But let's talk about interference in birth. I think that is a subject we could talk all day about. I think it's amazing that you had the knowing in that situation because it's hard. I mean I've been in similar situations. And it's hard. And sometimes you're not quite sure. Was there something wrong? And then you start to second guess yourself. So I think it's great that you knew deep down. It was just a matter of reconciling with the fact that someone was telling you different. But that kind of interference at birth is just—it's just all over the place. And yeah. I mean what do you think about that? I mean do you think it had anything to do with your expectations or her role? I mean what caused that? Because you knew everything was fine.

JENNIFER: I think—yeah. She probably had issues of her own that led her to react that way in that situation. I mean because ultimately what did it matter to her if I pushed the baby out really fast. It didn't. So she was probably covering her own butt. She probably did have really legitimate concerns. But yeah. My intuition didn't play any part in that because I had asked her for outside help.

MARYN: Right. Yeah. It's kind of a catch-22. I agree. It's like if you birth in a hospital you get what you get there. And if you invite somebody into your birth, especially as a professional—a paid professional, then you are likely to take their suggestion or their order.

JENNIFER: Yeah. And you don't know what their issue or issues are until you're in that situation, and they start to come out. Their past experiences and how that colors how they practice, I guess.

MARYN: Yeah. Well, that alone, I think, is a great takeaway lesson for other women to hear. If they have questions about their birth, they can ask the care provider for sure. But also to have in the back of their minds that exact thing, which is that we are all people. And sometimes there are just issues that we bring into other people's births. And that's just something to consider when you invite people whether it's a midwife or a friend or a grandma. That people bring stuff in. And it can matter. Yeah.

JENNIFER: Yeah. Definitely.

MARYN: So did you ever talk to the midwife about it? I mean that specific thing. Just kind of what she was thinking or not.

JENNIFER: No. No. I mean it was a reason. Why didn't really matter. I mean, to me, the main lesson was I can trust my intuition. I did know that my baby was okay. But I chose not to follow it. And in the end, it wasn't like a big deal. But I did care. And I did have stitches, and I was uncomfortable for a few days because of that. And that was really, really something that I wanted to avoid with that baby. That was disappointing.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I agree. It's hard, again, when you invite people in and then you kind of have to deal with that. And you make the best of it that you can. And you learn from it.

JENNIFER: And it wasn't—it was years later before I really put two and two together in that situation.

MARYN: Yeah. Definitely. Hmm. So you had that birth, which was a nice homebirth really. And then a couple years later, what were you thinking?

JENNIFER: A couple years later I really started thinking a lot about unassisted birth. And I—it just was something that always in the back of my mind. I'm not exactly sure how it got there. But it did. And it just kind of grew and, I think, probably a year or two before we decided to have another baby that we were both pretty—we were both leaning towards if we did ever have another baby that we would do it unassisted. And I think that just kind of grew out of our—what we learned about natural health and taking care of ourselves and our family and all these different things that always come together to lead you on your next journey in life. And by the time we did get pregnant, we were absolutely certain that we were going to have an unassisted birth.

MARYN: Yeah. So were there specific resources or people you talked to or stories you read? Or was it just an understanding of birth that evolved that made that choice easy for you?

JENNIFER: I think it was just—yeah. Really realizing that I did trust my body and I did trust birth. I mean I'm sure I read a story here or there. But it was just kind of a gradual—almost awakening, I guess. On some level, I know I felt called to it. But yeah. It wasn't anything specific. Just kind of evolved.

MARYN: Yeah. I think that's so inspiring because—I mean so many of us have had births that were pretty near perfect, I'd say. Or maybe not perfect at all and there would be stuff we'd change. But I think it's definitely a societal thing that we want to blame people for stuff, especially in birth. So I don't know. To come out of prior experiences without that and to just want to take full responsibility for it, I think, is just really inspiring. You weren't looking for anyone else to make the perfect situation for you. Yeah. So did you even both looking for a midwife the third time around? Or did you just, from the beginning, just go out on your own?

JENNIFER: You know what? Before I got pregnant, I was kind of interested in midwifery a little bit. I've always been fascinated by birth. So I had looked into the laws in my state. And I looked up a few midwives. I was not impressed with the laws. And I was not impressed with the websites I visited. By the time I actually got pregnant, I was like, "There is no way." No way would I ask any of those women to be in my space ever.

MARYN: And what's the biggest reason for that? I mean you didn't know. You hadn't met any of these midwives. So what was just your—the biggest reason for not wanting any of that?

JENNIFER: I think because that experience that I had at the end of that last birth of having someone in my space and not really knowing what their issues were until it was too late. And I mean you—I could tell from some of these websites that these women didn't entirely trust birth, and they were interventive. And I did not want that at my birth.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. I agree. I think it sounds to me like your home birth experience was definitely pivotal in just changing your mind about what it mean to have somebody there.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

MARYN: Yeah. I think so many of us were in a place initially where having somebody there can feel safer or somehow that they can protect you or save you. But I know I don't feel that way anymore. I know that I'm the most safe really just listening to myself.

JENNIFER: Yeah. Absolutely.

MARYN: Yeah. So was your husband on board with this from the beginning? How did he feel?

JENNIFER: Yep. He was on board the entire time. By the time we got pregnant, we were both like, "Well, of course, it's going to be unassisted." So that was really helpful.

MARYN: Yeah. There's nothing like having support for choices. Yeah. So right away in early pregnancy, I mean how did you guys feel about not getting the traditional prenatal care? Or did you seek that at some point?

JENNIFER: No. I mean from the very beginning I did not feel led at all to do anything—any type of prenatal care. I was really in tune with my body. Had been for a few years. And so I really felt like I could trust myself to know if anything wasn't right. And at that point, then I would seek outside help, if I needed it.

MARYN: Yeah. So any specific things you can share with people as far as—it sounds silly almost. I mean how did you take care of yourself? What kind of things did you find

you needed to do to just be in tune with the pregnancy and know that everything was moving along just fine?

JENNIFER: I really—I just tried to stay relaxed. I tried to stay out of stressful situations. Before I got pregnant, I had gotten really in tune with the kinds of food my body likes to eat. So I paid attention to that, and I ended up eating a lot of protein in that pregnancy and a lot of greens. And it just always felt really good, so I just kind of did what felt good. I had a naturopath I had been working with for a few years. So when I kind of seemed a little emotionally out of balance or something seemed a little off, I could call and talk to him, and he was really good about helping me rebalance. It wasn't anything like major. Just minor irritability stuff. So it really was my easiest pregnancy in that sense. I felt like a more normal person and not so much like a crazy pregnant woman.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. No. I remember how sort of grounded you were for sure.

JENNIFER: It was really nice. A nice change.

MARYN: Yeah. Well, I think it's, again, a great reminder. I mean to you and me these aren't necessarily new concepts. But to some women, they are. And to think that you don't have to go see a doctor. You don't have to go see a midwife. That you really can tune in and then look to the outside. Have a naturopath. Have somebody you can call with the questions because you're taking care of your whole self. It's not just the pregnancy.

JENNIFER: Right.

MARYN: So I think that's a great—yeah. That's a great inspiration that that's how it can be done. For sure. So did you do anything sort of clinical on yourself? I'm always curious about that. Did you take your own blood pressure? Did you listen to the baby? What did you do or not?

JENNIFER: I did keep track of my weight. I checked it every month or so. A little more often at the end. Once the baby was big enough, I did listen to the heart beat.

MARYN: And when you did that—oh, sorry to interrupt you.

JENNIFER: Oh no. Go ahead.

MARYN: Yeah. That's what I was going to say. I'm always curious when women listen to their own babies—I'm just always curious about it because I had more of a clinical brain at this point. So I always wonder do people listen just to hear it, which is a perfectly legit reason. Or do they listen to count it and figure something out? I'm always just curious when people listen what their motivation is.

JENNIFER: Yeah. I was just listening to listen. It's fun for me. It kind of helped me figure out what position the baby was in while it was (inaudible). Yeah. Just more for fun. I did count the heart beat just because I like to try to figure out from that aspect was it a boy or a girl. And of course, it was all over the place. So that was just for something fun to do and to connect with the baby, hear it. Yeah.

MARYN: Yeah. That's another great reason, I think. Not everybody listens though which, like I said, is, I think, perfectly legitimate too. Did you listen to the baby's heartbeat at all in labor?

JENNIFER: No. I didn't feel led to. And because I had always done it just for fun. And I didn't want to not find it and to be concerned. I wanted to tune into myself and not be paying attention to something that may or may not mean anything because you can't always find the heart beat easily. And I didn't want that to concern me when it really might not mean anything. Yeah. I just wanted to focus inward at that point.

MARYN: Yeah. I think that's great advice for people planning unassisted births. I think to not be your own midwife is a good thing. And that's hard for me. But for people who have a normal interest birth, I think, to not get involved on that level probably in prenatal period and then in labor and birth is a good thing because it's too much. It's too much interpretation, and you really can lose touch with your internal voice that way, I think.

JENNIFER: Yeah. I think so.

MARYN: Yeah. Plus it always reminds me that if we do that—and that's not a bad or a wrong choice. But for some people, it's just because that's all they know. It's like they're going to have a home birth, but the standard is still sort of the same that you get from a midwife or even a doctor. And I feel like with unassisted birth it's more about, for many of us, just tuning in on a different level.

JENNIFER: Yeah. I know it was for me. And it was really—a really life changing thing for me in that regard.

MARYN: Yeah. I bet it was. So what did you do to prepare for the labor and birth? Anything?

JENNIFER: I watched a lot of videos. Just for fun. And more for my kids, so they'd have an idea of what was going to happen. Because the one was pretty young when I had the last baby. I tried only to show them the videos that weren't interventive which was kind of hard to find. And I read a lot of birth stories because I found them really inspiring. Especially unassisted birth. It was really inspiring. I read a lot about complications just so that—I don't know. Because I'm kind of a planner. I guess I'm really a planner. So for me—

MARYN: You're really a planner.

JENNIFER: For me to have some information of this is what you do in this situation and just—I don't know. I like to learn that kind of stuff. So I think that's why I did it. I didn't expect anything to go wrong. I really didn't expect that I might remember this stuff if it happened anyways. But I don't know. It just appealed to me on some level, so I read a lot about that kind of stuff. And I didn't go really deep because it is—the information is so varied out there. But I just kind of wanted to get a general sense, if that makes sense.

MARYN: Well, I think that brings up a really interesting point that—well, just home birth in general, isn't that everybody's first question? How would you deal with if something went wrong? And I think with unassisted birth that's even more the question if you entertain it which, of course (cross talk)

JENNIFER: Oh yeah. I mean that's the only question I ever got. What are you going to do?

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. So how would you answer that? I mean what do you say to people that say that?

JENNIFER: You know what? A lot of the stuff that I read about the most common complication there really wasn't anything you could do. Really. Either it wasn't a big deal, and it was just made to sound like a big deal. Those I didn't have to worry about. And the ones that really were a big deal, there was nothing I could do. I would need to call the paramedics or go to the hospital. So just kind of knowing this really isn't a big deal and this is was kind of all I could do. And I would tell people, "Well, like what? What are you concerned about?" "But what about this, this, and this?" I'm like, "That's really not a big deal." And they'd be like, "What about this?" I'm like, "I'll call 9-1-1." I mean that's really my only option.

MARYN: Right.

JENNIFER: It doesn't happen really frequently. And because I am in good health, I'm not really concerned about it. But I do have (inaudible), so it's not a big deal.

MARYN: Right. Yeah. Yeah. I always—well, I always tried to say to people, but they don't usually get it. That more problems are caused by intervention and attendants than they are by being alone. Truly.

JENNIFER: Yeah. I had a lot of those conversations too.

MARYN: I mean—yeah. Yeah. It's a totally crazy thing to slip it on people like that. And most of them don't understand. But I guess the disclaimer is that feeling confident

and trusting your body is key. And that doesn't mean that every unassisted birth is going to go off without a hitch. But I think that's the key is feeling that way and not doing it because you're scared or whatever.

JENNIFER: Yeah. And we both went into it knowing that. That it wasn't a guarantee. I mean even getting pregnant. There's no guarantee that you're going to have a baby in 9 months.

MARYN: Exactly.

JENNIFER: So we knew. We knew there was no guarantee either way. And we knew that our odds were a million times better being at home without intervention. So that was a big factor for us.

MARYN: Yeah. That's huge. I feel like that's huge because in those moments it's about so much more than birth, I think. It's about just accepting the unknown. It's about an acceptance of death. It's about a lot of stuff people don't want to talk about.

JENNIFER: Mm-hmm. And there's a peace that comes with it when you make peace with it. For me anyway.

MARYN: Yeah. That's amazing, isn't it? I think in the few years that it's come from the hospital induction to get to that point where you were able to surrender to birth, I think, is very inspiring. So did you go into the unassisted birth with a really set vision of how it would look or be? Or were you flexible? What were you feeling?

JENNIFER: I was, I guess, flexible. I always feel called to the water. So I was planning on a water birth, and I did have a water birth. I just really like the water, in general, in my life. And then in labor, it's even more amazing. So that was really my only plan, I guess, was to have a birth tub.

MARYN: Yeah.

JENNIFER: And then aside from that, whether or not the kids were around, that—I was leaving that up to them. We had neighbors they were really comfortable with, so they could come or go as they pleased without my husband having to leave. So yes. I really didn't have any.

MARYN: Yeah. Well, I want to tell our listeners that for sure Jennifer has approved—well, her birth story and her slideshow, which are up already Internet wise. But we're going to link to this podcast, so that you can read her story and watch a really beautiful slideshow. So I won't ask you to tell the whole birth story because it'll be there. But yeah. Just kind of give us the summary or just how it left you, how it changed you because that's what we really want to hear.

JENNIFER: Yeah. Oh gosh. It was just amazing overall. I went into it trusting. My husband went into it trusting. We had absolutely no fear and had no fear the entire pregnancy. So it was just really exciting. And when I finally went into labor the day after my due date, which I was more than ready for, of course, was just exciting. And it was joyful. And yeah. It was uncomfortable because that's how it is a lot of the time. But in between the contractions, I just felt really excited. And really joyful. I don't even know how to explain it. It was just amazing. And it's so exciting. And I kept telling myself, "Well, I just have to go through this. And when it's over, I'm going to be holding this baby." And just that idea was so exciting. So I labored in the tub. We borrowed from a friend. I went in on it with a friend. She had used it before me, and it had a hole, which we didn't know of. So we were constantly adding water and constantly adding air. But it wasn't all that distracting to me like it would have been the last time around. And labored in the water. And when it was time for the baby to be born, I knew. I had this sudden urge to change positions, and I did. I was just listening to my body at that point. And my body really just kind of took over. And then when I felt that it was time for her to come, the contractions changed in intensity. And I knew that that's what was happening. And I wasn't really pushing anymore. I was just letting the contractions kind of propel the baby out slowly because I really didn't want to tear again. I was still in search of that birth without a tear. And she did. She came out nice and slow and gentle. And she was my biggest baby ever. And I didn't tear at all. And it was just—I held her. And it was the most—it felt like the most natural thing because it was just my family and I and then a close friend taking pictures. And it was just amazing and completely empowering. And at that time, I didn't realize how much it was going to change my life. But I just knew it was a totally different experience. And it was the absolute best moment of my life.

MARYN: Wow.

JENNIFER: And to hold this baby and this baby that I had bonded with over the entire pregnancy because I had focused so much on that—to finally look into her eyes and see her hair—just—was just the most amazing thing. And to not have anybody interrupting it or touching us or doing any of that was just priceless. And absolutely how it should be (inaudible). Yeah. Totally (inaudible).

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. I mean there's a whole different sense of peace even with you telling the story. I mean because I wasn't there obviously. But a whole different sense of peace of just not feeling rushed or not feeling told to do anything that seemed wrong. I mean just really listening to yourself and allowing birth to work because birth really does work. It really does. Most of the time it works just like that. And if I'm not stating incorrectly with your birth story, I thought she even came out with a hand next to her face, didn't she?

JENNIFER: She did. Yeah. It was a cord around her neck. Yeah. And cord going down her body. So she was extra wide.

MARYN: Right. So take that everybody that thinks that cord is a disaster or is afraid of having a cord around a baby's neck for an unassisted birth. And truth be told, if certain types of midwives had been present for that birth, especially with a hand next to the face, that could have been another get the baby out or some kind of situation where you tore just because somebody else's fear got in the way whereas you didn't even mention. You didn't even mention that the hand came out next to her face.

JENNIFER: I have the pictures to prove it. But yeah. It wasn't a factor. I think I felt the cord around her neck. Her head was out for some time before her body came out. Of course, I lost track of time, so I don't know how long. But I knew it was there. But I knew it wasn't a big deal. And when she came out, she just looked out. And yeah. I unwrapped her. It wasn't a big deal.

MARYN: Yeah.

JENNIFER: It just became totally normal and natural. And yeah.

MARYN: And it was. I mean babies—again, most of the time, come out. And all of the fear and hemming and hawing as far as how long it takes them to come out or which way they come out or—that's something that we've just sort of invented in a lot of ways in our culture. Because moms know. And they know what positions to get into when no one is telling them. And really most (inaudible) take care of itself. So I think that's (cross talk).

JENNIFER: Yeah. Your body just kind of takes over if you're tuned in. You just know what to do. It's just a knowing. It just happens.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah.

JENNIFER: For me, anyway.

MARYN: That's a great message there. So tons of great messages. But let's end. Let's tie it up. And I just want to hear from you. Just give your best advice. First, just for any pregnant woman that you would see walking down the road. What would your best advice be for her?

JENNIFER: Trust yourself. Trust your intuition. And challenge your fears. I mean anything that—any decision you're tempted to make based on fear really examine it. And examine where the fear comes from. My motto is never to make a decision based on fear. And so I just look it squarely in the face and try to find the truth of it. And a lot

of times when we do that, the fear kind of just goes away. And you can really find your way in that situation that you're looking at.

MARYN: Yeah. That's wonderful advice. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. So thanks to Jennifer for our very first Indie Birth podcast interview. I think this is a great resource and an amazing inspiration to hear somebody tell their story. And like I said, you'll be able to watch Jennifer's slideshow and read her birth story. So please do that and be even further inspired. And thanks for joining us today. Have a great day.

JENNIFER: Sure. It was fun.

MARYN: Thank you. It was wonderful.

(closing music)