

(introductory music)

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**MARYN:** Welcome to Indie Birth's *Taking Back Birth* series of podcasts. So I have been journeying through this pregnancy with you the last bunch of months. And I can hardly believe that there are ten weeks left. Ish. Tenish weeks, I suppose I should say. I'm amazed. I bet many of you feel the same, if you've been through a pregnancy before, that it's both long and short. It's a funny conundrum. Parts of it seem really long and drawn out. And then other parts go really quickly. And all in all I feel like this has gone really fast to be sitting here 30ish weeks and really not have that long left is sort of mind boggling.

So that's what I'm going to talk about today. Just the journey that I'm at or am on. The place I'm at right now. This journey. This incredible eighth pregnancy. Will be my seventh baby. And just kind of going to talk about what I'm experiencing and what I'm discovering each and every day even though I've had pregnancies. And I've certainly accompanied many women on their pregnancies. It doesn't matter. I discover new things, and I'm learning all the time, every day, about myself, about this baby, about pregnancy. My brain is just open in a different way to learning about birth. In a way, I feel like it hasn't been yet which is really exciting.

So if anybody thinks that being pregnant numerous times especially n a row is boring in any way, shape, or form, I can tell you from my perspective that it most definitely is not. That I am enjoying it and relishing this time actually. This could be the last. In fact, there is a really good chance that it is. So I found myself the other morning waking up and feeling the baby move as she or he does pretty much every morning at the same time. And having that sense of sadness, in a way, almost, about it being such a short period of time left. And I'm super excited to meet this baby, obviously, but there is something about the pregnancy time that has always intrigued me. And I guess that's why I've been pregnant so many times. That it is such a sacred, blessed time. And often there aren't words to convey just how other worldly it can be.

And that's not to say it's not stressful at times or scary or very real. And sometimes, that's hard. But I suppose with the amount of time I have left, I'm not feeling the negative as much. I'm feeling really positive, and I'm feeling really good. Physically, I'm feeling great myself. I think most women do at this point. It's not close enough to be enormously huge and pregnant and heavy yet. And, obviously, it's not the early period where you're kind of just growing this person and feeling tired and yucky. So it's a pretty awesome time in pregnancy, I think, to have the last two months or so left. I get

an occasional practice contraction, which is kind of fun. Maybe not as many as I'd think for having had as many babies as I have.

But yet, I think a lot of them pass unnoticed just because my day is pretty busy, and it's a pretty relaxed, gentle sensation anyway. So I bet I'm missing a bunch. And perhaps at night I'm having more. Getting up to pee a lot and then not really having to pee so thinking that I'm having practice contractions at night too. But, of course, no big deal. All normal. All good. All a well welcomed feeling.

And no real changes yet physically in my body. But that's typical and normal at least for me. It would be way too early to really be noticing anything different. And so, overall, just feeling great. The baby is growing well in my opinion. Seems to be a smallerish type baby than I had last time. For whatever that's worth, and I could be wrong about that as the baby definitely has lots of growing to do in the next couple months. But an interesting person as I get clues about that. Sort of predictable in the way he or she likes to lay. She likes my left side a lot and is pretty predictable with movement as far as times of day. Definitely getting stronger.

So all of the things you'd expect to hear from somebody that is about two months away. And, again, it's a funny time because you're brain—I think my brain with the calendar says, "Oh, wow. That's not that far away." And in some ways, that's very true. But I think physically for the baby especially there is still much work to be done. There's still so much weight to gain. Obviously, a baby is not ready to come out at this point. Or it would, right? So there's plenty of time left for getting ready and getting the lungs ready and the brain ready and all the stuff that will allow this baby to be on the outside successfully.

But, again, not a huge amount of time. Happens pretty quickly. So that's the physical part of being about 30 weeks. Not too much more to say there. I think today I'm going to focus more on where I personally feel like I'm at just with preparing for another labor and birth. I think most women are in a similar place at this point in pregnancy whether they realize it or not. Perhaps if it's the first pregnancy then things may be a little bit different just because you're not as aware. You haven't been through it before. But if you have, I feel like about 10 weeks before is when your brain and your spirit start to get serious about the idea that this labor will happen. And two months is not that far away. And this baby will come out.

So simple but certainly wasn't that way a month ago. At least for me, that's not where I was at. So it's not close enough for me, at least, to be feeling down to the wire. I'm certainly not—so I'm not focusing on specifics. I don't have birth supplies. I don't have any baby clothes ready, believe it or not. I'm not there yet. And I don't know that I will get there. I'm sure I will, at the very end, with the details. But right now, I'm just in that

space where, again, labor is close enough to be coming real, and I'm focused on that. And I don't know if that's just me. I mean the intensity in which I am able to focus on such a thing. Or just being in the birth world and talking about labor and birth literally every minute of every day to somebody, it's very much a part of my life. So that could be why.

But I'm focused on it personally. I feel like that's what I want to sort out right now. Or what I want to be thinking about, and that's a positive thing. I don't feel like I'm dealing with too many fears at this particular moment. And that could change by tomorrow. And that, of course, is super individual. So everybody is different. And I'm going to talk a little bit more about fears in a bit. But right now my place is what is my intention for this birth experience. Now mind you, to me, an intention is not a plan, per se. So I don't mean I'm thinking about where this birth in my home will take place or how it'll go or how long or this or that.

I'm simply focused on what part of the experience do I want to focus on. And my intention with this upcoming labor is to feel everything. That's as focused as I've gotten. I want to feel everything. I want to fight nothing. With my mind, with my body. I don't want a plan really. I want it to flow. I want to be a witness to the flow of this labor whatever it is. Whatever it needs. I don't want to over assist my body. So that can probably mean a lot of things to a lot of people. But last time pregnancy and birth, I was a lot more controlling for various reasons in the type of experience I wanted to have. And I did a lot of hypnosis. It wasn't one of the courses that everybody knows. It was a less well known birth hypnosis course, and it was quite good actually. I enjoyed doing it.

But this time I feel like I need to be present in my body. I need to not focus on the way out which for me that's what the hypnosis was. And that's not necessarily everybody's experience with hypnosis. For some, it's a really amazing tool. And I've seen that. But for me, it did not work that way. And it was about finding something else to focus on rather than where I was in the labor. So this time, again, my intention is the exact opposite. There is no plan. There is no practice that I'm doing. There is no real preparation other than believing that I can do this, of course. And setting this intention. That I fight nothing. That, as the saying goes, you don't push a river. There's no pushing this river this time. And I don't know what that means. And there's part of that that are—not scary. But that unknown. We all know about the unknown in labor whether it's our first time or eighth time.

So this time I guess I'm embracing the unknown. I'm not going to push the river. Whatever that means. I'm not going to assist my body. I'm just going to witness. I'm going to look and watch and not make a plan to interfere with myself. That's the goal anyway. But I feel like focusing on that rather than a technique or a way out for the next

ten weeks is the best preparation that I can do. That every day whether it's through affirmations or just simply having these thoughts and connecting with my baby that I say the same thing each day. And that when I visualize this labor, it's just me in my body dealing with whatever it is because I know I can. And for me, trying to find a way out is harder. It's more painful. It takes longer. So that's what I'm thinking about.

I think having a birth where I truly don't assist my body especially during the pushing part is something I would love to experience. I've been listening to lots of MP3s through the Ancient Art of Midwifery Institute, which is the midwifery school that I graduated from. They have many conference recordings from the Trust Birth conferences, which are mind boggling and amazing. Many of the recordings are. In fact, most are. However, I have selectively been listening to a couple because I don't want to hear things right now about birth complications or the more clinical nature of birth. I'm very well aware of that part. Right now I'm listening to the inspirational stuff.

And the great birth stories and there was a particular MP3 called *Pushless Birth* that I hadn't listened to before. And it's fabulous. And it's just a panel of women talking about not pushing during their births and what this means and how they came to this and how it felt for them. And how it changed how they thought about birth and what they thought about birth.

Now the idea is not new to me. And I've certainly witnessed fetal ejection reflexes and births without pushing of any kind on the woman's conscious part. And it is amazing. But I haven't personally experienced that. And I feel like in my past births there's always been something where I wasn't as committed to the idea. I thought it sounded great. I wanted to try it. But in the moment of it, in the heat of the moment, I had some reason why I needed to assist my body. And everything turned out fine, so it's not a matter of having had a bad experience. It's simply having this deeper belief now through the last couple years—this deeper belief that our bodies don't need assistance. And these podcasts in particular have been focused so much on not interfering but mostly from the outside, right? We don't want interference. Or I don't want interference from anybody or anything from the outside unless it was really warranted.

But we don't talk a lot about how we interfere with ourselves. And for me, in the birth process, this has been a way that I've interfered with myself. I know that at a deep level. And, again, it's not that anything bad or horrible came out of it. It's just I'm feeling more committed this time to really honoring my body. And it's done this so many times. It does not need me and my brain controlling it. I know that. So that particular subject has been really helpful.

Also listening to other recordings, other panels, of women sharing their birth stories about unassisted births. And that has been really helpful. I like hearing stories just like

you like listening to these podcasts over reading something somebody has written. That seems to be the way a lot of us connect with the sound of someone else's voice and actually hearing where they're at and what their story is. It's really powerful. So, of course, I have the bonus of listening to these recordings although you do too. And I have the bonus of talking to women daily—to strong, amazing women daily about their amazing experiences. And this includes friends that are pregnant locally and includes women all over the world honestly who I've had the good fortune to be connected to. Mainly through these deeper beliefs about pregnancy and birth.

And I'm finding that really amazingly encouraging this time. My sister is another one who has had really great birth experiences and can be one of those people that reminds me what it's all about. So for me, it's less about the label of what this birth will be. I'm listening to these recordings of unassisted births. And certainly, that would be the community, I suppose, that makes the most sense to where I'm personally at. But it's less about that this time. Because I don't really know who will be there. I, of course, don't have plans for a midwife or a doctor to be there. Of course.

But other than that, I don't know. I'm not focusing on those details this time. I'm focusing really internally at this point. So I don't know who will be there. If I'll have a pool set up, where in my house I'll be. I have no idea. I have no idea where the kids will be. I haven't made any plans yet for them to not be here or to be here. Even though I think that's a great thing to think about, and I would certainly recommend to most women that they start to think about who will be where or who can take care of who. But I'm ignoring my own advice at least for right now. It feels right to not make those plans.

I have no idea the role my husband will really play or not. I have some ideas. And through the babies that we've had together, he's played many different roles honestly. From doing nothing to not even being in the room when the baby was born. To being really present and physically involved in the labor. So I'm open to any or all of those options. I just don't know what the course will be, and I'm trying to not really see it as being any such course.

I think in a lot of ways I would love to experience this birth as no big deal. So what does that mean to me? I don't know. It just means no plans. As much as I love birth photography and I have really amazing pictures of my last birth, for me, it may mean none of that this time. It may mean no phone calls to the friends that are supposed to come. It may mean a lot less attention to this labor. Have you ever had a labor experience or even been with someone—another women—who is very aware of the start of labor? And plans are made. The house gets that buzz. That buzz that labor has started. I kind of don't want that this time. I'm already scheming how long I can keep this to myself.

For me, that would do a world of good. Not being—not feeling committed to anybody else's expectations. My own expectations truly on how long it takes or when it starts. I want to ignore the clock. I want to take my own advice this time. So I want a no big deal labor, if that's possible. My baby and I may work very hard. And I'm not ignoring that that could be the case. But, again, there's something for me that wants this to feel more intimate. Wants this to be more of a sacred connection between myself and this baby and the work that we're going to do. So I don't know that I want any outside attention this time.

Because with that outside attention, even when they're loved friends and family, there's something about that, that I think makes many of us feel watched. And people are waiting. And, of course, it's all for good reason. But I do fantasize about not having that this time. Simply going about my quiet way. Shutting the door. Laboring alone in my room or the bathroom. And not really alerting anybody to what's going on. It's not because I don't support having people there. It's not because truly there isn't or aren't people I trust. It's quite the opposite.

But I know deep down in a way I didn't before that my body will work best in this way. Not feeling watched and judged. And I'm anxious to try it. I'm anxious to give it a try. And if it feels wrong or if I feel like I want people around then I most certainly will do that. And that's part of this no plan. I would love to just have a sense of not being watched. Not needing to perform. And, again, even with people you love around. For me, I've always felt just that little niggle in my brain of being aware that I'm being watched in labor. I don't know if everybody feels that way.

I think some women have—I don't know. Perhaps better coping mechanisms. Or, again, when we're talking about the hypnosis, they have tools that they really, really rely on. And they really use well to go somewhere else during labor. But for me, I've always felt people on the outside. And I would like to see how it is to not have that this time. So this baby is communicating for sure through dreams. And I believe that a lot of what I've just told you—the way I feel and what I'm seeing or not seeing is coming from this baby. This isn't me being pregnant just being pregnant alone. This involves another soul. And I truly believe that these messages and these visions I'm getting and this space I would like to hold for myself is coming from what this baby also desires.

And, again, that's the beautiful thing of birth and why women do choose different things and why different things are right for different women. Even if you just considered that their babies are playing a part. And that babies do, I believe, ask to be born in different ways. And we don't always know what those are even up until the moment of birth. So these are just clues. Again, not a grand plan. But I think the baby has something to do with it. Every message I've gotten from this baby so far is about simplicity. And I don't know where that's coming from. It's not something my brain is spelling out for me. It's

simply when I connect I get this feeling from the baby. This calmness. This idea that this baby has done this before. That the baby is not worried. The baby does not have stuff to work through necessarily at this moment with thinking about labor. And the baby is actually encouraging me to be simple.

So this is in direct contrast, by the way, to my last birth. And it's not that it was—not that this—it's not that the previous baby, who is a wonderful year and a half year old now, was making me be complex or was sending a different kind of message. But my life was a lot different. And hence the birth was following in that path. A year and a half ago I was dealing with a lot of fear from inside and the outside. And this had to do with my role at the time in the midwifery community. I was still a licensed midwife and was dealing on literally a minute-to-minute basis with legal ongoings trying to find my way through this really confusing world that I had entered into. Because by being a licensed midwife, I had allowed myself to go to this place where, essentially, birth is medical. And there are rules and regulations surrounding birth and what you can and cannot do and what women can and cannot do and who is safe to be at a birth and who is not and what's not safe and who determines safety and all the things I've talked about on these podcasts have been part of my journey.

So for me, the world of birth was a lot more complicated last time. And I was pregnant, obviously, which only made it harder trying to find my place. These beliefs that I had about birth that I've shared with you over the last couple months are not new to me at all. So what was I doing in this world of essentially medical birth even if it was homebirth? What was I doing there? That was something I was figuring out. And if you don't know, I essentially left that world leaving my license behind after the birth. A couple months after the birth.

So I needed to go that route. I needed to feel the fear from inside and out. I needed to go through this pregnancy doubting almost everything about myself even though my beliefs about birth were very deep inside of me. I needed to reconnect with them again. And I often felt really alone. And when I chose an unassisted birth for the last baby, it felt completely different than where I am now. I chose that option for myself and my baby out of what I felt were very few options. So having a licensed midwife at my birth last time—well, and this time but specifically last time—was not an option because of what I learned, what I had discovered. And friend or no friend there was not a licensed midwife that would have been welcome.

So I guess my innocence about birth—at least the politics—were pretty much shattered. And I felt like being alone with my family was my only option. It was the best option because it was the only option. So there was lots of fear there that I had to deal with. I mean when you're in the midwife world—so this world of government controlling birth through midwives. Midwives are a very well meaning, often wonderful, loving people.

But super impose politics on it, and you've got a different matter. So here I was straddling two worlds. And being part of this system that said birth isn't safe. Unassisted birth certainly isn't safe. And having friends that were part of that world—midwife friends—try to counsel me out of being alone. Well, what if this happens? What if that happens? And it was really hard because I didn't have the answers other than this was the only option for me. And I had to find my way through it.

It was very hard dealing with those thoughts and opinions. When you're pregnant, it's that much harder. That much open and susceptible to other people's thoughts and what they think and what they believe. So it was a difficult pregnancy for me emotionally. And the birth—the labor and birth itself were difficult. It was probably my most difficult labor and birth. And looking back the reasons for that are really clear. It was just the manifestation of this tangle I felt myself in. Honoring this deep belief that works, that birth works best when left alone. Wrestling with the other side, the other side that told me I was part of that world because I was needed. And midwives are needed to have safe birth experiences.

These two things often don't go together. So that was my labor. It was difficult. I was very focused on how long it was taking. I wasn't very relaxed. The tools I had prepared such as the hypnosis were not doing it. But yet, I hadn't made the intention to be fully present in my body for this experience. I wasn't welcoming it. I was rushing it. I was anxious for it to be over and for me to meet my baby. So although difficult, it was the most rewarding experience of my life. And was the moment in which I had to embrace this deep knowing. And that's been the short path of the last year and a half. Giving back a license and then being able to focus on birth in a way that is right for my soul and that includes lots of new ways of working with women, of course.

Some want unassisted births, truly not wanting anybody there. And some follow the same beliefs that I have which is it's not necessarily about who is there. It's about your intentions and what you desire and what you believe about how birth works or not. So the most rewarding experience of my life taught me what was true about birth. And hence, my baby's name is True. He's a wonderful, happy, amazing, beautiful little being that through his pregnancy and birth taught me more than I ever could have guessed. Because all along even though I was struggling, especially emotionally, this baby remained constant. And had he ever said, "This isn't the right way to go," I would have listened. He never did. He encouraged me just as this baby is.

This baby says, "Birth is simple." True said, "You know what's true about birth. Follow your heart." You can't go wrong following your heart. So that's not always the easiest thing to do especially in birth. Hence, it being a very difficult but rewarding experience. So, again, little side track there, but this time is not about that. It's a completely different baby. Completely different part of life. Completely different attitude and people I



surround myself with frankly. This baby is telling me simple. And the dreams I've been having this time have echoed the simplicity. So with True, a lot of the dreams were quite complicated and, at times, literally complicated where I would wind up in the hospital or something like that.

And it's not that I took them literally. Deep down I knew that that would not happen. But they were very real fears. Again, because of the political situation in particular. So this time the dreams are really simple. And I don't know what that means. I don't necessarily think dreams are literal. So in these dreams, so many of them—in fact, all of them I've had so far—the births are really easy and fast to the point where some of the births the baby is just there. It's not even a dream about labor. Although I do think that this highlights the fact that last time, I paid a lot of attention to the time and how long it was taking.

So this time I don't have the expectation of it being fast. I don't even want to care. I don't want to look at the clock. But, obviously, it's something that is still on my brain. The dream I had just last night was birthing the baby in the back of a car in a shopping center. And it was just kind of like no big deal. I think I even had clothes on. And suddenly, this baby was sitting in a car seat. It was a very bizarre dream. But the feeling was again one of no big deal. Baby is here.

So that's really fun. We'll see, I guess, how that plays out. But that's the feeling I get. And in turn I feel really excited about this upcoming experience. I feel open to new possibilities and less controlling, again, than I felt in the past. So I don't have any real plan of the way it should look. However, deep down, I do believe in my heart that it'll be simple. That this baby will show me that birth is simple. And that's exciting. I feel grounded in a very primal way this time. Again, back to my little talk about not minding if I was alone or such things. I don't feel that again in a way of not trusting people. I just have a more grounded feeling in my own physical and spiritual self this time. That I feel unafraid of birth in a really big way.

So I trust my body. I trust my baby. I trust this process. I know that I'll know what there is to know if there is something. And I'm really seeing it. I'm feeling it as an initiation. And I think every birth truly is an initiation. I don't know that everybody feels that way or certainly we don't talk about it. But I've had a number of babies and each time has initiated me into something. Some deeper belief. Some bigger picture. Some lesson. It's never been just a birth for me. It's always been transformative. Some of those experiences have been really unexpected. But this time I am sort of gearing up for some kind of initiation. It doesn't have to be big and dramatic or anything like that. But I expect change to come in my mind or spirit or something like that.

So that's where I am. Ten weeks about before we anticipate this baby coming earth side. And I expect the weeks to fly. And I do know I will probably get more detail and I'm happy to share that if it's at all half interesting in the next couple months about birth supplies. I do want to talk about birth supplies and getting things ready and that side of things. But for today, I'll leave it at that and allow you to think about that and where you're at in your pregnancy, if you're pregnant. Or just to kind of let these thoughts roll around in your head.

And if nothing else, I think it gives everybody a window into the unique experiences that each of us have pregnant. That there is no one way to go. That what we experience at any given moment during pregnancy is reflective of where we are in our lives and what's come before and what's to come ahead. So I don't think we stand in isolation at any moment during pregnancy. It's just a part of the whole.

So thanks for listening. As always at Indie Birth, we offer a five-week online class that goes into the details about physiological birth and how best to prepare yourself. And this is not just for unassisted birthers, by the way. We do have quite a few that have found value in this class. But just as many that are planning midwife assisted births or hospital births. The knowledge is really, really available and can be utilized by all of us. So I encourage you to check that out. And thanks so much for listening.

(closing music)