

(introductory music)

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MARYN: Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. I am Maryn. And today I want to talk about undisturbed birth. It's kind of in quotes. One of the main foundations of what we believe and teach here at Indie Birth is, indeed, undisturbed birth. I'm going to talk about what that means and how we can all contribute to making sure that this is happening more often than it is. I believe—and I think it's in the science which is something we'll talk about a lot, I think, today—it's in science. It's in research. It's in our DNA. It's in our genetic code to have babies without anybody interfering. And I believe that undisturbed birth is the secret to our survival as a species although we're a very resilient species. And, obviously, we can have babies under really poor circumstances, for the most part. Humans are resilient. We're able to still do this.

But I think undisturbed birth is the secret to our survival. But not just our base survival but our transformation. I'm not going to get all crazy, Sedona, spiritual on you here. But in your own way, shape, or form, you may join me in the belief that we are evolving as a species. We don't know exactly where we're evolving to. Higher consciousness is my belief. And so even in a very simple way, if our consciousness is evolving so that we can meet the new demands of the new universe so that we can connect with this new paradigm—which we talk a lot about as far as birth goes—but there is a new paradigm existing and coming full force. And that's in every area of life, I believe. Not just birth. So if we're going to meet this new paradigm and survive it and transcend it and be with it and transform, I believe undisturbed birth is one of our number one—or I should say one of our best chances of that happening.

So what is undisturbed birth? I always say—and I don't think this is quoting anybody. At least not verbatim. Birth as it was meant to be. Just think about that. Think about the way mammals birth. Birth as it was meant to be. A process. A physical, a mental, emotional, a spiritual process. A transformation. A physiological process. One that happens just because it's the way our bodies work. We don't need to direct it. We don't need to control it. We don't need to think about it. We don't even really need to understand it, if we have the confidence to do that. It will happen just like other acts in our body happen without help such as digestion. Birth really is the same way. And when it's undisturbed, that means that nobody has messed with it. Even the mother. I think birth can be disturbed by the mother herself. Possibly. Mainly in her allowing others to disturb it.

But birth as it was meant to be. And this is not a new concept, I don't think. It's certainly not new to me. It may be new to you. But it's not my concept, and it's not Indie Birth's concept. This has been around for awhile. And awhile. That's actually kind of funny, right? Because women birthed undisturbed millions of years ago most likely. So, again, it's not something that we've invented in the present day. We're simply returning to this knowledge. And, again, there are other people that are at the forefront of returning this knowledge to women as well. Dr. Michel Odent is definitely one of them. Dr. Sarah Buckley and her book, *Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering*. Those are great examples of people that are also actively trying to return this knowledge of undisturbed birth whether it's through books or scientific research or whatever. Mine seems to be these podcasts and connecting with women on personal—on a personal level.

And so there are many people out there contributing to this idea that undisturbed is not something new. This is something that women have always done and have always known. And it's more about reconnecting women with that knowledge now and helping them to intellectually understand what that means. Their bodies really do already understand. So intellectually understand. But it's a lot about releasing fear and releasing the beliefs that we have in this day, in this culture. All those things are all rolled up into why undisturbed birth isn't happening much. So home birth is not enough. And that could be another name for this podcast. It has come to my attention—today in fact—and it does come to my attention quite regularly. But since I was recording today, it was serendipitous timing. It has come to my attention that women—even planning home births—often have no idea what undisturbed birth is.

And I'm not saying that, hopefully, in a judgmental way. There's certainly lots of things I don't know or understand. But because this is my passion, I want women that are planning home births. I want even them to understand. And I think having women that are already of the understanding that birth is natural. It should take place at home. These are the women that we want to reach first, I believe. And have them understand what an undisturbed birth is because I can tell you having had many home births before that not all were undisturbed. So home birth is not synonymous with undisturbed birth. And I think there's just lots of terms being thrown around and confusion. And then don't forget, there's always sort of the stereotypes that go along with natural birth or home birth. And people on one side of the fence, and no one is listening to anybody anyway. So who cares about all that? Those that are ready will hear the message.

But undisturbed birth doesn't have to happen at home, believe it or not. I think it's pretty rare in my opinion and my experience to have undisturbed birth happen at a hospital. But hey. It's not place dependent. And, again, that is just a really big misunderstanding. And for as long as we misunderstand that, then this message won't get through because it's not about place. It's not really about what you're going to label

the birth as although undisturbed birth is natural. But natural is also a term being thrown around even in hospital births where women possibly that are receiving epidurals or this or that are still saying they had a natural birth. So whatever. On one hand, call your birth what you want. But just for sense of clarity for the bigger picture, we need to be clear on undisturbed birth not being dependent on location.

And, again, I couldn't say enough just based on what I hear on a daily basis that home births are not—99 percent of the time in my opinion, in my experience—they are not undisturbed births. And why does this bother me? I'm sure you're wondering and some of you are wondering why that sounds pretty judgmental. And why I care if a woman says she had a nice wonderful home birth? Why I possibly could care that it wasn't undisturbed? And we'll get more into that. But let me just say for now, that it does matter. That we need to have a bigger picture here than each woman at her individual birth. Although each women and her baby are so important. We all contribute to a greater consciousness.

So it does matter. And it matters for the future of the human race. It matters for our children. And it matters for the kind of society that they will grow up in. So I'll get more into that. But in case you were wondering. So why does nobody know about undisturbed birth? Why don't people really know how birth was meant to be or to look? And the first thing that comes to mind and I'm just sort of spewing here is that we don't have the kind of communities we used to have. And I mean used to. Hundreds of years ago. Thousands of years ago. Millions of years ago. We don't have those communities anymore where we lived together. We watched women. We watched families go through their childbearing year cycle. And we were part of it just because we were a part of the community.

So there may have been and probably were women that were more interested than others or possibly had more experience than others and sort of were the earliest midwives because I do believe that women have always been with women in birth. They weren't always telling them what to do though like they are now. There weren't always rules and regulations that put one woman above another. And the one woman being above being the one that wasn't even having the baby. How ridiculous is that when you see it from that perspective? That there could be somebody above the laboring mother to tell her what to do, how to do it, how long she has, and how things are going. Wow. That sounds insane to me when I say it that way. But in other words, we don't have that experience anymore. We haven't walked with other women. Unless you're somebody that attends births as a profession right now, you probably haven't seen anybody else birth, right? Other than yourself. Maybe your sister or something like that.

But we don't see women birth anymore, and so we don't remember what it looks like. And we don't remember the variations and et cetera, et cetera. Birth is a medical process in the U.S. And I think it's safe to say in most developed countries and most of the world that really when you get down to it birth is a medical process in most people's eyes. And they can say what they want. And they can write what they want. But really that's not what's happening if they're saying they support natural birth. Or heck, there are even midwives, right? Saying, "Oh, we're all about natural and home birth." They're still supporting the belief that birth is medical, and that's probably another podcast.

But I think that's the truth because if they weren't, they wouldn't have licenses. They wouldn't be supporting rules and regulations around how a woman births because we all know, hopefully, that the process differs at least a little bit from woman to woman. We're all very unique and individual. They wouldn't say that prenatal care—quote on quote—was necessary or beneficial because it's not. They wouldn't say that lab tests were required. Here in the state of Arizona vaginal exams at a home birth are mandatory. There aren't—there is no declining a vaginal exam if you are a home birth client of a licensed midwife here in Arizona. So don't tell me that birth isn't medical as a cultural belief. It very much is. I would say it's 100 percent medical. There are very few women that choose outside of the system.

And the reason these very few women are choosing outside of the system—I know because I'm one of them—is because they don't believe birth is medical. But, again, this is not the norm. So, again, back to why undisturbed birth is something nobody talks about or knows about. It's not happening. It's not happening. And, again, midwives even aren't familiar with this concept. I hate to say it. Ask your midwife. Has she read *Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering*? Does she understand the hormones of labor? And then to give back credit where credit is due, there are wonderful midwives out there. So many wonderful caring women who just want to serve other women and can't. And that's sort of in quotes. They can't. They can't allow undisturbed birth to happen unless they want to lose their license. Unless they want to go to jail essentially. That's kind of where we're at.

So those are some major reasons why undisturbed birth isn't being talked about and isn't happening. And, again, in a midwife scenario, midwives that are familiar with how birth looks for real they aren't really talking about it, in my experience, with their clients. Because it's something their clients, frankly, just can't obtain with them. And so they'd be out of work if they went around town talking about undisturbed birth. Nobody would hire them because they can't allow these births to happen. So that's the sad truth. And why I'm not a part of that system anymore and why I'm here talking to you instead in hope that you will go against the grain and figure out what undisturbed birth means and want that for yourself and your baby and do what you've got to do to obtain that.

So as a result of people like midwives not knowing what undisturbed birth is or not allowing it to happen because they can't, women and families don't understand. And, unfortunately, many smart, educated women are choosing midwives and just assuming that this is holistic. This is holistic. They're going to get a natural birth. They're going to get a home birth. It's all going to be wonderful and great. Not knowing what they don't know. So it's sort of one of those hamster wheel situations because how can you know what you don't know if you don't know it. And if you don't want to know, well, that's a whole other thing.

So I think many women don't want to know. And I'm basing that on just anecdotal evidence, obviously. In my opinion, at least women here locally don't want to know. They're either going to do the hospital birth thing. Or if they're choosing home births, they're choosing licensed providers because they don't know any better. They don't know their options. And they don't know what birth can be. And I think that's the really positive of viewing this. As I sit here and look at a glorious photograph taken at a birth that I was honored to attend of a mom having an undisturbed birth, holding her baby in her arms, I wish you could see it too. Because it does happen. It can happen. And we are all more than capable. And frankly, we all deserve an undeserved birth. Our babies deserve undisturbed birth. So it's just a matter of getting the word out. And, again, having women and families that are open to the idea that they don't know everything, and that there is better. That a midwife attended home birth, for example, isn't the be all and end all. That there's an even greater opportunity that awaits them and their baby and their family. And an opportunity that could change their lives absolutely forever.

So on a less positive note, I think that many women are in very traumatic states about their births. And, again, not to keep harping on home births. But, hey, if you're listening to this, you're probably already a little bit outside of the box. And so sometimes I think my words make the most sense to those that have had home births before and are curious about what they missed. Just today I got an email from a woman, who said just that. She said she had had a couple home births. And she started listening to these podcasts, and a light bulb went off in her head. And she realized why she could never put her finger on why her home births weren't all she wanted them to be when on the surface—right—everything was great. Healthy mom, healthy baby. Home birth. Great. But she knew there was more. She felt that deep inside that knowledge that she hadn't yet connected with and knew there was more.

And it wasn't a matter of blame. She had that experience for a reason, but it wasn't until she started listening to these podcasts she realized, "That's it. That's what I haven't had yet. I've had home births. They've been great. But I haven't had an undisturbed birth, and I want that. I want that for me. And I want that for my baby. And I want that for the human race." So, again, back to the trauma, even women that have had home births have trauma. That's the truth. There is no saying who experiences trauma from what

kind of birth. We can't say that from the outside. I definitely can't say that from the outside. I've seen women have what I would say are beautiful, amazing births. And for some reason or another, it feels traumatic to them. One part of it. So it's not what it looks like from the outside. Even women having had nice, normal home births from the outside experience trauma. It could be—and this is my own experience. Something like a hemorrhage. Excuse me.

How many women. Gosh. If I had dollar for every woman that's had a home birth that comes to us and says, "But I hemorrhaged," that's not normal. Go listen to the podcast on hemorrhage and the fear around hemorrhage. So these things happen even at home births that we've come to think is normal. Someone touching your baby. That's not normal. Putting a hat on your baby at a home birth, not normal. Listening to your baby with a stethoscope when there is no need, not normal. These are all things we've gotten accustomed to. And trauma might be a big label to put on them. I'm not going to say that for anybody else but me. But I know my experiences at my own home births have looked wonderful on the outside and have left me with a longing and wanting more and really a degree of trauma. Because I didn't know anything about bonding and attachment then. I didn't know anything. I thought the birth was the birth, right? And the baby comes out. And the baby is fine, and you're fine. And that's a lovely home birth. No.

It's not. There's more to desire, and there's more that we're capable of, frankly, as a species. And, again, back to mammal births, it is about the mom being with the baby. It's about that mom delivering her placenta. And you don't mess with that. And I think anybody that knows anything about animal births, even if it's just you've watched one on YouTube, you don't get in there and mess with that because you're messing up that relationship. And it's funny, right? We all know about animals, I think. You don't want to get in the way of a mama animal and her baby because what if your smell gets on the baby and she rejects the baby. I mean we seem to know more about the way animals treat their young than we do our own. And we don't know or understand that the same applies to humans. So when that midwife gets in there at your home birth to put a hat on your baby or to listen to the baby with a stethoscope for no good reason, it's the same thing. That touch, that interference, that voice, that noise, that light, that sound. It all interferes with bonding.

And when we interfere with bonding and attachment, what are we interfering with? Think big picture here. Well, let's start small first. Nursing. We're interfering with nursing. How many moms and babies have nursing problems? Are they all due to interference at birth? No. Most definitely not. But a lot are, I would say. Parenting issues. Then the kid grows up and there's all kinds of stuff there. Where does that come from? Is it all related to undisturbed birth? No. But I think a great deal of it is. And then bigger picture, these babies grow up to be adults. And they're unhappy and

can't hold relationships or, worse case scenario, are doing something really harmful to themselves or to other people. This starts at birth. This starts at birth. This is why birth matters. It's not our arrogance as some would claim when they hear about natural birth or free birth. "Oh, those arrogant women. They just have to have it the way they want it. They just have to be the heroes. They just have to have the adrenaline rush of birthing alone." Nope. It's not what it's about. It's not what it's about for me and the women that I support and help teach. It's about giving them the opportunity to realize their own power because when a mama is powerful, when a woman is powerful, her baby feels that. And her baby is confident. And they are both confident, and the relationship is so grounded.

And that doesn't mean it's perfect. No relationship is perfect. But this grounding of confidence and love and support and attachment makes them both able to go into the world fully functioning. It's hard to be a mom. So the attachment at birth matters. And the only way we get this, for lack of a better way of describing, super high quality attachment is to have an undisturbed birth. And, again, this—does this mean we don't attach with our babies if we don't have undisturbed births? No. We're remarkable. Babies born by major surgery are capable of attachment. And so it isn't a guilt trip. We all do the best we can. My first baby was taken away from me at the hospital. So if there is guilt to be had, I certainly have experienced it.

But I knew I could do better. I wasn't willing to hang onto that story to make myself feel better and to go out into the world and say, "Oh, it doesn't matter because it happened to me. And look at me. I'm fine." I wasn't fine. I wasn't fine. And it wasn't until my last baby, the seventh—you can read her birth story on Indie Birth, The Free Birth of Ever Wild. It wasn't until my seventh birth that I truly feel like I healed that. But we have to admit that we did the best we could. But we could do better. So it's not about blame. It's not about guilt. It's not about my birth was better than your birth. It's about we want to better ourselves so we better the world. That's what undisturbed birth is about.

So the birth matters. But it's not just the birth that matters, right? We don't just somehow get through a pregnancy willy nilly and then have this glorious free birth, undisturbed birth, in whatever way it looks undisturbed. We really don't. And that's why I created these podcasts. If this is your first one, go back and start when I was like six weeks pregnant. And I take you through a whole pregnancy where I, myself, was exploring these ideas of how do I create an undisturbed pregnancy. Because I wanted an undisturbed birth, and I know. I've had six babies before that one. I know that you don't just go into labor and have an undisturbed birth without knowing anything. I mean in this day and age.

Sure. It's in my body. It's in my genetic code. But not so much when you're in the real world right now. At least for me. So what did I have to do? I had to take back my

pregnancy. And as someone that was trained as a midwife, I already had experience taking care of myself. But not like I did this last time. This last time I took it on. I took it full on. And for me that meant not consulting anybody to the outside. I focused on myself and only myself and my baby. All aspects of myself. So we don't neglect the spiritual side. We acknowledge the emotional side of pregnancy. We acknowledge all the aspects of ourselves in pregnancy because without that development and that care we leave something out. And then it comes up at birth.

So we look to the inside. That was the theme of all of these podcasts starting from six weeks pregnant. Look to the inside. You are the authority on your body and your baby. And I always have my little disclaimer, of course, because I mean it. It doesn't mean we don't ask for support or love or guidance. Or we don't go to somebody for an appointment. It doesn't mean that at all. It means we ask ourselves first. And then when we go to somebody and they say, "Well, I think A, B, or C," we go back. And we sit with it. We don't rush into anything, and we say, "Okay. What do I think about A, B, or C?" And we ask our babies. And we say, "Where am I at?" Do I need this? Do I need medical assistance? Do I need outside care?

And sometimes the answer is yes. So undisturbed pregnancy doesn't mean that we're perfect or that everything goes as planned. It doesn't mean that at all. We might choose medical intervention, but it's our choice. And we're very aware of that choice. So undisturbed pregnancy is also nourishing ourselves. And that is a huge topic that Margo and I teach about. This all is really having an undisturbed pregnancy. We acknowledge all the ways that prenatal care—and that's in quotes—takes place. So, again, listen to all these podcasts. What does prenatal care mean? What does that mean to you? What is it really? Is medical prenatal care what you want? Do you know that's what you'll get if you go to anybody else basically? And if you do decide that, that's fine, but what about all the other aspects of your care. Medical care is not taking care of yourself fully during pregnancy. That might be one part of it for you. One spoke on your wheel of prenatal care, but it's not the be all and end all.

So that's the irony really, right? Is that we're made to believe that that's prenatal care. But if that's your only prenatal care is going to a doctor or midwife, you're actually neglecting yourself and your baby, in my opinion. If you're super healthy, that's cool. I'm sure it'll work out fine in that regard. But because we're so complex, there's so much that we can attend to if we choose to in pregnancy. So we don't give it away. We don't give away our pregnancies. We create undisturbed pregnancies through all of these ways. We don't rely on anyone else. We don't rely on a lab test. We might choose to do one. But we don't only do that and take it as the—as I keep saying—be all and end all.

So that's huge. When we go back to the original question, why don't women know about undisturbed birth? Well, they're not having undisturbed pregnancies. I mean women seeing midwives, planning home births are getting ultrasounds just routinely for no good reason. They don't even know the risks of ultrasound. That's another podcast, by the way. They don't know the risks of lab testing. They don't even know why they're doing it. No responsibility. They think planning a home birth is enough. They're super cool, hippy, crunchy—whatever silly label you want to put on it—people, and so they don't need to try any harder. That's the feeling I get.

And, again, why does it matter? Why do I care what they do? Because it does matter. It matters in the big picture of the world. If you don't have a pregnancy where you take responsibility, you won't have a birth where you take responsibility. And then it'll spiral into all the things we've talked about. So on a positive note, as we sort of wrap it up here, how do we let more women in on this secret when they don't even know there is one? How do we teach them about undisturbed birth and pregnancy? We spread the word just like I'm doing today. Spread the podcast around if you don't want to talk about it. Or don't feel you have the platform to talk about it. Spread the podcast around. Women seem to love these. And I'm very grateful because this is just me speaking my heart. Spread the podcast around.

Look at our other resources on Indie Birth. Lots of blog posts. We have free videos where we teach you to palpate your own baby, listen to your own baby's heart beat. We have many paid classes. A whole do it yourself prenatal class. What does it mean to read a urine stick? Why would you do that? Why would you take your blood pressure? How do you take your blood pressure? We're all about informing women of their choices, so it's not about just sitting around and hoping your pregnancy goes well. It's taking responsibility in whatever way, shape, or form that is for you. So we do have a five-week online series called How to Have an Indie Birth. And that's sort of like the ultimate thing that we teach about. An undisturbed birth is a very large focus of the class. But lots more detail about how to obtain that and what gets in the way of that. And we have had just great reviews from women all over the world. The Netherlands, Australia, Virgin Islands, everywhere. We have women enrolled. And they're finding it so helpful whether they are planning a home birth with a midwife or planning a free birth. It is safe to say, at this point, it has been very helpful to a lot of women.

So those are the ways that I know I'm trying to spread the word. You may utilize those resources as well. But in your own community, you may create this atmosphere. So there may just be other woman in your town that wants to talk about it or gets it or just knows something is up. That's often how it starts, I find. It's like a bug in the air. So you meet somebody that had a home birth but just wasn't quite happy. And you live in a tiny town, and she doesn't have any other option or so she thinks, right? There's no other midwives, and she doesn't like the one she hired or whatever it is. And before you

know it, you're off. And you have a community being created that wants to take back responsibility for their own births. And you put together a reading group, and you all read *Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering*. Or you all take our How to Have an Indie Birth class together. Or you just have a once a month discussion or get together or tea or lunch or supper or who knows what. But it's about creating this community, so women know they're not alone.

And if you've had a really fantastic undisturbed birth, regardless of how it's happened or where it's happened, then you need to talk about it. And if you have a story you want to share, we're happy to help you spread your story. So I just want to close this on a really positive note. I hope this was positive and inspiring, but I want more for humanity. So for anybody that, again, thinks this is about one upping each other with our births it's really not. Let's create a better place for our daughters to have their babies. I want more for humanity. I want more for my children. I want more for the human race. I look ahead hundreds of years, and I have really high hopes. I have ideas of a utopia of sorts. And I don't think that's naïve. I think we are totally capable of that. We are spiritual beings. We are amazing souls all in these human bodies, and we are capable of more, frankly. The way we live right now, I think, is sad and is a testament to the way birth is as well. Those two things are not unrelated.

So the problems we have in the world just name one. There's a million. Are they all related to the way people are born? Maybe not. But from my perspective, of course, and my passion, it seems like we could do a lot, if nothing else to improve the way people are born so that they go into the world as loving, caring beings that care about their world. So I want you to think about how you can communicate that it does matter. It does matter. For longer than we probably know. So I'm talking about my children. But really it's our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren and our great-great-grandchildren. And I think we will be affecting more people than we could ever realize by getting this word out.

So I hope you enjoyed this today all about undisturbed birth. If you're interested in learning more about having your own undisturbed birth and what that means and how you can create this because you can, please take our five-week online course called How to Have an Indie Birth. You can do it all at your own pace, so there is no rush. There's no hurry. You can do it in a group. You can listen to it with your partner. And you will be part of an intimate group of Indie Birth women and families that are changing the world through birth. So thanks so much for listening and have a great day.

(closing music)