

(introductory music)

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**MARYN:** Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Today we have a really special guest, and this special guest is appearing and chatting with me today because we had some requests for people wanting to hear a free birth story of multiples. So I got a hold of Natalia Collini, and she's here with us today. So go ahead and introduce yourself please.

**NATALIA:** Hi there. I'm Natalia. You might be able to hear the sea in the background. I'm sitting on the beach. My family has six of us. My oldest is four and a half. My twins turn three next month. And my youngest turns one in a couple weeks. We are originally from Ohio, and we moved to Alaska about two and a half years ago. And we moved to Nome about six months ago.

**MARYN:** Wow. Awesome. I didn't realize you had a youngest baby. I totally missed that, so that's exciting.

**NATALIA:** Yes. He's a UC too. A free birth too.

**MARYN:** Wonderful. Wonderful. Well, Natalia just sent me her birth story of her twins just a little while ago. So I don't feel as prepared as I might normally be, but yet it's really exciting, I think, for me to hear it for the first time in a lot of ways. Just this whole journey that you had. Why don't you tell us a little bit about your first birth? That way people have some background as to how you got into a free birth situation.

**NATALIA:** Okay. Well, my first birth it was confusing because I kind of wanted a home birth, but I was—we started my pregnancy in Cincinnati, Ohio, and ended it in Cleveland, Ohio. And I was living with my dad, who is an OB/GYN, so I had to follow certain rules. And since it was my first baby, I didn't feel like toeing them. So I went with a hospital birth under midwifery care. And I wanted a natural birth. But due to some pressure on time limitations and medwifery practicing, I ended up getting my—my bag of waters was broken. And then after that, I ended up getting Pitocin, an epidural that failed, an episiotomy, and forceps. And then just a month of painful recovery. Percoset and Motrin induced blurriness. And a poor breastfeeding relationship with my daughter. So I was in so much pain after that first birth that I didn't even want to have any more kids because I didn't want to have to go through that postpartum pain and the depression that followed. So it was very traumatic experience for me.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. That really, really, really sounds like it. And wow. I am just so impressed. I have to say it's kind of stating the obvious here. But that your dad is an OB. That's just interesting to me, and I just have so many questions, I guess, with the story to come. I'm just so intrigued and—yeah.

**NATALIA:** Yeah. It's definitely an interesting way to grow up being around an OB. It was around me my whole life growing up hearing about babies being born, being in that lifestyle, visiting his office. And I wanted to be an OB when I was a little girl. I wanted to help people have babies just like my dad did. And now I am helping in my own way by sharing my story of free birth.

**MARYN:** Yeah. That's just amazing. So I mean I'm guessing having grown up that way that your first birth looked pretty typical, right? To kind of what you had known and learned and heard about.

**NATALIA:** Yes. And see the thing was I had watched *The Business of Being Born* and all those other documentaries before that birth. So I knew that there was a better way, and I had hoped that I could have avoided that. I wanted a natural birth in the hospital birthing center. It was a birthing center attached to the hospital. So I use air quotes when I say birthing center.

**MARYN:** Right. Right.

**NATALIA:** But then I ended up with that typical experience that everyone else gets that I saw in the documentaries. And I thought I'd be special because I was the OB/GYN's daughter. But I wasn't.

**MARYN:** Wow. Yeah. Well, you're right. Nobody is special in a sense of being in the system when there's no good reason for it. So I hear you on that. So yeah. Tough recovery. And then how soon after were you pregnant with the twins?

**NATALIA:** I found out that I was pregnant with them a week after Anastasia's first birthday.

**MARYN:** Oh wow.

**NATALIA:** We were really excited. The fear of having more children had kind of worn off as the pain dissipated with time. So I was just excited to have another kid. I went in for my first appointment pretty early. I think we were about eight weeks in. And my midwife, who I should mention, is—was more of a family friend because of my dad's profession. So our relationship was stronger than and more intimate than it is with most people. Her daughter babysat for my oldest. We knew each other on a very personal level. She suggested after seeing my urine test that I might want to get a dating ultrasound. She seemed to think that I was further along than I was. So I went in for

the ultrasound. And they told me that I was having twins. And then—yeah. It was really crazy. I was not expecting it. I've always wanted twins or to be a twin. So I was excited. But then they wanted me to meet with the high—he's—it's blanking on me. The title. An MNM. A not an obstetrician gynecologist. But the intensive—high risk OBs.

**MARYN:** Like a perinatologist kind of guy?

**NATALIA:** Yes. Thank you. Yes. Thank you. They suggested that I see him. And that kind of freaked me out a little bit. And he came into the room and told me that I was having monochorionic/diamniotic twins—identical twins. And he told me that I was considered high risk because 10 to 15% of identical twins—which identical twins are 10% of all births. So 10% of 10% have a serious condition called twin-to-twin transfer syndrome. So because of that, I needed to be treated as high risk. I needed to have many visits. Once I hit 17 weeks, they would want to see me every other week and have an ultrasound. And that I needed—I couldn't be seen by a midwife. I had to be seen by an OB.

**MARYN:** So interesting. I mean I just always marvel at the lessons we're given through our pregnancies and births. And I won't assume to know your lessons. I just mean it's interesting given your—given your past history and your family that you would be presented with such a situation.

**NATALIA:** Mm-hmm.

**MARYN:** Yeah. So what was your reaction to that? And how did you deal with that?

**NATALIA:** I think I was really excited to start off with. I wasn't really sure what he meant by everything that he said yet, at that point. My husband was still on his way home from visiting his parents. So I hadn't even told him yet. And I—Joy gave me a picture of the twins' ultrasound and told me to show it to my dad. And then she's like, "Text me and tell me what he says when he gets it."

**MARYN:** Yeah. What did he say?

**NATALIA:** Well, I got home, and I showed him the picture. And he says, "Oh, congratulations. You know you're probably having a C-section, right?" I wasn't very happy to hear that especially considering how traumatic my last birth had been. I guess my excitement fizzled out at that point. I started doing some research on twin births—natural twin birth outcomes, twin-to-twin transfer syndrome, and I started getting really scared because there was not a lot of good news to find. And there's actually—besides the fact that there wasn't a lot of good news to find, there is very little news to find

period. It's pretty typical that when a person is having twins they see an OB/GYN and then, hopefully, don't get a C-section.

**MARYN:** Right. Right. Yeah. You're right. I mean and in most places—I mean regardless of them being identical or not, I mean I know here, at least, I don't think anybody attempts vaginal births with twins at this hospital in this teeny, tiny town. So yeah.

**NATALIA:** I guess what happened next after that was I needed to figure out what I was going to do since I wasn't allowed to be seen by my midwife anymore. And I didn't want to just jump right on to an OB because I saw how close I came to a C-section. In fact, there had been a point where I was so scared and so tired and in so much pain that I had begged for a C-section. But my dad and Dan didn't let that happen. So knowing how close I'd come with the first birth, I really was scared about putting myself back in that situation knowing what could very—most likely would happen.

**MARYN:** Yeah. For sure.

**NATALIA:** I started doing a lot of research online. And I found a clinic that claimed to be the first official birthing center in Ohio. And I got the—they were willing to see me, so I scheduled an appointment. And when I told my dad that I was going to go see another midwife, he actually winced when I told her—told him her name. Yeah. He told me that he didn't like her. He didn't think she was a very good midwife. And sure enough, the next day, he came home from work and told me that Joy's midwifery practice was willing to make an exception to their no twin pregnancies rule and take me on as a client with a backup OB.

**MARYN:** Oh, how convenient.

**NATALIA:** I know. So I—after that, I told him that I still wanted to go see this other midwife at least once, so that I could know that I was making the right choice. And I felt a lot of pressure from my dad and Joy. I felt a lot of guilt over my decision to want to birth at a different hospital. And I didn't like that I was feeling that guilt either because I knew most people don't have to worry about those kinds of decisions.

**MARYN:** Yeah. I mean that had to be a really double-edged sword in a way, right? I mean he was helping you out and making sure as your dad, of course like any dad would, that you were going to be well taken care of.

**NATALIA:** And that wasn't the kind of care I wanted.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. I can't imagine honestly. Can't imagine. So did you meet with this other midwife then and get a feel for how they would do things?

**NATALIA:** I did. I got in there. I understood right away what my dad meant about him not liking her very much. She had this sales persony—person attitude. She's super up—cheerful and up—outright. She wanted to—I'm so sorry.

**MARYN:** That's okay.

**NATALIA:** She wanted to assure me that I could deliver them, if I wanted to, have no problem having a—I'm really sorry. I'm sorry. I know you're recording. I just—

**MARYN:** Yeah. It's okay. It's okay. When we get away from our children, sometimes I know my brain takes awhile to just go.

**NATALIA:** I'm not sure what happened. I just had a complete brain fart for a second.

**MARYN:** That's totally okay. Well, let me just ask you some questions then. And then you can just kind of answer for awhile.

**NATALIA:** All right. That sounds great.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Some of the things that I'm sure people are wondering and that I try and get around to. So you're investigating midwifery care. When did it first dawn on you that perhaps none of these people were the right choice and that you were going to do this the way you were going to do it?

**NATALIA:** It probably didn't come until half way through my pregnancy. By this point, I had met with the OB. The backup OB that Joy was—would have had with her. If I had stayed with her. I had met with the other midwife and realized I didn't want to go with her. I had got—met with Joy, and we had discussed everything. My fears, the other midwife, what I wanted, and I had met with the backup OB. And I had gotten her answers to my questions which were I would have to have an IV. I'd be able to birth and labor in the same room. If twin B was transverse after twin A was born, they could try to manually turn the baby instead of immediately sectioning me. But then she said—but then she said that I would have to birth in any position I wanted to as long as she didn't have to get on the floor because she—because she couldn't get on the floor. So I had to accommodate her.

**MARYN:** Oh my gosh. Was that the light bulb moment there? Or one of the light bulb moments?

**NATALIA:** It was the light bulb moment that I'm not going to be birthing at that hospital. But for awhile after that, I was going around telling everybody, "I don't know. I'm probably going to just accidentally have this baby at home." And I was feeling a lot of stress. I sensed that I was developing a legitimate phobia of sections and hospitals.

And I didn't feel like I was in a good place emotionally. I didn't feel like I could make smart choices because I just wanted to avoid the hospital no matter what.

**MARYN:** Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah. Understandable. So when did you come to this idea of free birth or unassisted birth? And is there something that—not convinced you. But really influenced you.

**NATALIA:** My aha moment that I wasn't going to be at the hospital was one night when I was taking a bath. And I just kind of thought to myself, "You know what? I'm not going to go to the hospital. I'm going to have this baby at home, and I'm going to figure out how to do that." At that moment, I felt a huge weight lift off my shoulders, and I knew that I was making the right choice. And then I knew I was going to have a home birth. And it wasn't free birth yet. Over the summer, I read a couple books. I read *Birthing Multiples*. There we go. By Elizabeth Noble. It's a very, very good research—resource for twin births and pregnancies. Natural twin births and pregnancies. And I read *Unassisted Childbirth* by Laura Shanley, and that was when I knew that I was having an unassisted childbirth. It was a very good, philosophical book, and it really helped me to feel like that was where I needed to be to feel safe and in my comfort zone.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. I think that is such a wise way of putting it. And that's a fabulous book, of course, too. But I feel like I talk a lot on these podcasts about just finding that voice in you that knows. And that unassisted birth isn't for everybody. It's not that at all. It's just that when we tune in we often do feel what's right for us whatever that is.

**NATALIA:** Mm-hmm.

**MARYN:** Yeah. So then how did you proceed in this pregnancy with twins? What did you consider to be your prenatal care? Were you checking in with somebody? What was your focus?

**NATALIA:** I ended up staying with Joy as far as prenatal care goes. Once I made the decision to home birth, I did have to tell them that I was going to do a home birth, but I never told them that I was going to UC because I did not want to have to deal with that. And I knew my father would say no. So she offered to stay on as my midwife doing prenatal care in the hospital in case something came up and I had to transfer, so that I would have that backup. and I did that. But after reading my books, I kind of changed my view on how the prenatal care should go. And I was not—I guess I should back up and say I ended up having four ultrasounds with that pregnancy because I had a couple subchorionic hemorrhages at one—at certain points in the early pregnancy. And I ended up declining the every two week ultrasounds after 17 weeks that they told me I needed to have. I, during that pregnancy, had read about the potential risks of ultrasounds and decided that four was enough and that I was going to trust my intuition

on the twin-to-twin transfer syndrome because I read a lot of research. And it pretty much said that scientists have no idea why it happens. They have no idea how to prevent it. You just either get it or you don't.

So I just made up my mind that I was going to be part of the 85% that didn't do it, and I ate lots of healthy food and made sure to get plenty of horizontal rest. And I just—then I had a dream at 20 weeks where I was told that I would have twins with TTTS. But in my dream, I sensed that it wasn't going to be life threatening. So after that dream, I kept rolling with it. It had been after I made the decision not to do any more ultrasounds, but it kind of firmed up my belief that I was making the right choice. There was a peace after my dream that the TTTS wasn't something that was going to make or break my birth.

**MARYN:** Right. Right. Yeah. It's so curious and interesting how dreams speak to us as well. I think when women are taking control of their pregnancies more and really using their intuition and their inner voice those things seem to definitely come through.

**NATALIA:** Yes. At least for me, they do.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. Well, again, that's wisdom to share with other women. How many women out there think that they don't have intuition or don't know how to use it? And I always kind of say, "Well, you have to practice it," and dreaming is one way that we can do that. So that's really interesting. So I mean I just have to ask too. Not to totally focus on your dad being an OB, but I'm just so impressed that you were able to find your center with that. And then just make your own plans and not take into account what everybody else thought especially with twins. I mean that's just above and beyond even an unassisted birth of one baby, I guess.

**NATALIA:** It wasn't easy. I mean I had a friend. She's also a home birth junkie, I guess you could say. She and I both talked about home birth all the time. And she was going to be my doula for my home birth. But once she knew I was going to have a free birth, she backed off pretty quickly. And by the time I moved to Alaska, she sent me an email telling me that she felt that I made some rash decisions, that I was, I guess you could say, crazy, and that she didn't feel like continuing our friendship anymore. And me having a twin UC had a lot to do with why she backed off.

**MARYN:** Wow. Wow. Wow. That's—yeah. I mean I believe it. We just don't live in a culture and society where we're really trusted and respected that we will make the right choices for ourselves and our babies. I really believe very, very deeply that there is not a woman alive that wouldn't make what she believes to be the right choice for her baby or babies.

**NATALIA:** Absolutely.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. Well, that's hard. So did you feel like you had support during your pregnancy? Were people aware—other people aware of your plan? I mean your husband was on board. How did it feel to have this plan going?

**NATALIA:** I felt pretty good about it. I was part of a free birthing group on Facebook. I had a lot of support there. And besides that, my husband was mainly my in person support. My plans went pretty smoothly. After I hit 24 weeks and knew that the babies would survive—God forbid anything happened to that point—I was able to really relax and just eat and grow and get ready for the twins. I ended up getting my first set of contractions around 34 weeks. I was a little—I was scared because that was a bit early for me. I had decided that I was comfortable with birthing them at home at 35 weeks but not before that. So the fact that I was having contractions just a week before then that didn't go away for three days scared me. But I used every technique I could think of, and I got them out. Or—I'm sorry. The contractions. The contractions went away.

**MARYN:** Yes. That is what we want to hear. Wow. Yeah. That's an amazing power of our minds and bodies as well.

**NATALIA:** Oh, I guess I should also mention that I was so huge that I was not able to find any comfort in any way, shape, or form. In fact, I had to go see a chiropractor for about ten weeks before because I couldn't sit. I couldn't stand. I couldn't Facebook. It hurt so bad all the time. And having myself adjusted once a week was the only thing that brought any relief. And then my chiropractor told me my hips were out of alignment and that me getting the chiropractic (*audio cuts out*).

**MARYN:** Yeah.

**NATALIA:** - helped them on top of giving me pain relief.

**MARYN:** Yeah. I can't imagine. I can't image being pregnant with twins. That must be a whole new thing especially after having just had a singleton.

**NATALIA:** I couldn't even wipe after—I know this is too much information. I couldn't even wipe after I went to the bathroom. In those last couple days. I was so big. I just couldn't reach around my big belly.

**MARYN:** Yeah. That's impressive for sure. Two babies. Two babies in one uterus. That's amazing. So how did you prepare, if at all, in any specific way for twins? I mean that's one thing. And then, of course, free birth as a whole other thing, so anything you could share with other people possibly considering the same thing as far as preparation or anything like that?

**NATALIA:** My biggest concern about birthing twins alone was about delayed cord clamping. Everything else seemed pretty standard. Baby one comes out. Baby two



comes out. Placenta comes out. No big deal. You just have one extra baby to deal with.

**MARYN:** Yeah. It's a great way of looking at it.

**NATALIA:** But I was really stumped on the delayed cord clamping aspect. That was no information anywhere on whether it was safe to just let baby A go with the cord and then let baby B go with the cord when they shared a placenta and had blood pumping to both of them at the same time. I even signed up for an online class from a well-known midwife specifically to take a class on twin birth, so that I could ask that question. And she didn't have an answer for me.

**MARYN:** Hmm. Interesting.

**NATALIA:** So that was my biggest concern. And I just decided that nature must know best. All other mammals have multiple babies in nature all the time. And they don't bleed out, or their other babies don't not get enough blood. So I decided to trust my instincts on that one despite what other people said about twins and delayed cord clamping.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean I think when faced with these topics though that—what else can we do when there isn't anything else to turn to.

**NATALIA:** An answer. Yeah.

**MARYN:** Right. I mean that's what we're left with is how would it happen naturally. How would it happen? I mean that's what you got to go with. So yeah. So you went into labor then at what? 35 or 36 or—

**NATALIA:** It was 35 and 3 give or take. I was a little disappointed I couldn't hold out longer. I was hoping to wait until I didn't have to be pressed for time on my dad coming home from work.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Gosh. That's very stressful.

**NATALIA:** It was a little bit stressful. But I guess I was a lot less stressed than I would have been if I had known that the destination was going to be a hospital.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. For sure.

**NATALIA:** I went into labor on a Saturday morning. My dad was only working until 6:00 that night, so I knew I had to either go get a hotel room or deliver the baby before my dad got home from work.

**MARYN:** Wow. That's quite a timeline.

**NATALIA:** I decide—we decided—my—Dan and I decided that we could probably get the babies out before my dad got home. He had a tendency to stay late, so we could do it. I just couldn't relax and take it as slowly as I wanted to. So I did some laboring in my dad's Jacuzzi. But that was really slow going. So by the evening, I realized that I had to get out, and we moved into my bedroom. We turned down the lights, had some incense going, just trying to be in a relaxed mood. My husband spent a lot of time downstairs with my oldest, and my brother was over. But I don't—he didn't even know I was in labor upstairs.

**MARYN:** Wow. That's really amazing. I mean just to be able to function under those circumstances, I think.

**NATALIA:** I was raised in a high stress lifestyle, so, to me, that was no more stressful than many other days that I had been raised in.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. Well, and I mean I think you definitely have to put it in perspective just even hearing this story that what was your alternative really.

**NATALIA:** That's true.

**MARYN:** Right. If it was to go to the hospital or a birth center then being at home even under a time constraint was less stress.

**NATALIA:** Mm-hmm. That's very true.

**MARYN:** For sure. Yeah. So by all accounts, at least what I've read of your birth story, it sounds like the birth went really well and was pretty straightforward and simple. And anything you want to tell us about that?

**NATALIA:** Because I know I was on a time constraint, I was trying to go for the position that got babies out fastest. So I was just trying out different positions. And then I finally found this one in a deep squat where I could feel the baby—my amniotic sac bulging out. So I knew that was the one. I knew I just needed to stay in that position long enough and push hard enough and that I would get them out. And I did.

**MARYN:** Mm-hmm. And were they both—were they both head down?

**NATALIA:** They were. They were both head down. My first baby I pushed really hard. I could feel her descending. And then when I would ease up, she would just right back up inside of my uterus. Or I guess not my uterus. My birth canal. And then I finally, with the next contraction, I just pushed as hard as I could because I knew I couldn't wait anymore. And I felt a little bit of tearing. But then she just popped right out. I could hear her amniotic sac pop. And then she just slid right out.

**MARYN:** Wow. Wow.

**NATALIA:** And she had a really short cord, so I immediately scooped her up. I couldn't quite get her up all the way, so I was kind of hunched over. She was fine. She was crying a little bit, but she was great. And I actually forgot that I had another baby coming because I was just—I was just so happy to be holding her and so glad that that pain of pushing her out was over with. And I'm just sitting there holding her. And then all of a sudden—not even a couple—not even two minutes later, I felt my uterus contract. And before I could move, before I could do anything, my body just kind of pushed. And I felt a slithering. And the second baby just shot out. Same pop of the uterus and just slithered right out. All in one contraction without any help from me.

**MARYN:** Wow. That's amazing.

**NATALIA:** Yeah. But then I looked down, and there was—the difference with this one was this baby looked like it was black. Where the other baby in my arms was a little—like a little baby. Like a little white baby. So—

**MARYN:** Yeah. That was definitely a shocking description in your story. I was like, "Wait. Let me go back and read that again." She said the babies were two different colors.

**NATALIA:** The first thought that ran through my head was how did I birth identical twins where one baby is white and the other baby is black. I couldn't think straight. I couldn't rationalize anything. All I thought was how did this happen?

**MARYN:** Crazy labor brain.

**NATALIA:** And I had my husband turn the lights on. And we realized that the baby wasn't black. The baby was maroon. Purple maroon. It turned out that my babies had TTTS just like my dream told me.

**MARYN:** Yeah. That's amazing. That's really amazing. Wow. So we can talk about—a little bit about your experience after that in a minute. But I have one question I really wanted to ask.

**NATALIA:** Sure.

**MARYN:** What do you attribute that really smooth, quick birth to? I mean I know you were waiting on your dad. You had these time constraints. But from a physiology point of view, that's really just a really efficient, amazing birth, and people have such a stereotype in their heads about how complicated twin births are and vertex and breech and this and that. I mean how was it so straight forward? What do you think played into that?

**NATALIA:** I think what played into it is the fact that I had made up my mind so many weeks ago that I was going to be part of that 85% where everything was going to be okay. There wasn't a doubt in my mind that those babies weren't going to come out all right. I knew that no matter what happened there wasn't going to be a problem. I trusted myself. And I trusted them. I don't know. I don't know why. But I just—I had no fear. My biggest fear was that my dad would get home before the babies were born. I didn't have a fear that something was going to go wrong. I was just scared that I wouldn't get to do my thing before my dad came home.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I mean the other thing I think that's really inspiring as well is with your first birth, obviously, you did have that trauma. And you had to have had questions, I would think, after the first birth. Does my body work? Can I do this? Do I need a lot of help? So to go on and to just really trust in yourself, in your body, and your babies to do it perfectly when that hadn't been your experience. I just think that's so inspiring.

**NATALIA:** Thank you.

**MARYN:** Yeah. You're welcome.

**NATALIA:** I had been able to do a little bit of soul searching during my pregnancy with the twins to kind of come to grips with the fact that it wasn't all my body and that the hospital had made some mistakes. I mean I hear about people that labor for 30, 40 hours, and I was pushed to deliver that baby less than eight hours after I got in. And they broke my water. So it wasn't like a, "Oh, well, you have to birth within 24 hours of your water breaking." It was, "You got here at about 11:30. Your baby was born at 8:00," and they rushed me through the whole thing. So once I realized that, I was able to really calm down about whether I did something wrong or whether my body was broken or not.

**MARYN:** Yeah. For sure. And I think that's another thing to highlight as well. So many women have had traumatic births, obviously. And I know from the work that we do that once women learn about the way things actually work, it's not a matter of blame. It's more like they can look at the past situation and really see it for what it is and, exactly what you said, they realize it's not about them. Their bodies really did a great job. It just was so much interference.

**NATALIA:** Mm-hmm. Exactly.

**MARYN:** Yeah. So that's perfect. Yeah. Perfect illustration of that. So you had these beautiful twins at home. It was a—sounds like a pretty blissful, easy birth. And then you realized there is this condition present that you had sort of been aware of and

feared a little bit. So tell us a little about that or just highlight the important points if you think you can do that. Or however you want to do it.

**NATALIA:** Sure. I didn't fully understand what was happening at first. I don't know what it—what I think—I think it was how quickly everything happened from realizing that she was purple to my brother coming upstairs because my—Dan came and told him that I had had the babies, and him being in shock. He called my dad. My dad was calling me and telling me he's going to call the cops if I didn't get to the hospital immediately.

**MARYN:** Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness.

**NATALIA:** I just—I didn't really have time to think and realize that I knew what was going on and how to deal with it. I had so many people yelling at me and telling me what I needed to do next. But my dad ended up telling—calling Joy. She came over. She examined me real fast. She examined the babies. She and my dad discussed the whole situation on the phone, and they decided to bring me in. Joy drove us.

**MARYN:** And was she concerned by what she saw with the babies?

**NATALIA:** She wasn't scared. If anything, she was really amused. She had never done a house call before. And she was joking about how my dad was going to kill me. She thought it was exciting to come in on her first free birth.

**MARYN:** Of twins no less. Yeah.

**NATALIA:** Yeah. Of twins no less. She and my dad did discuss the ruddy color of the baby and that it was concerning, so we did come into the hospital. And at this point, I tried—I like to say this is where my perfect birth turned into a nightmare once we got to the hospital because the next part of it wasn't so great.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah.

**NATALIA:** When we got to the hospital, people really freaked out about the color of my baby. I'm sure most people—given how rare of a condition this is, I don't think anybody knew what was going on.

**MARYN:** Right.

**NATALIA:** In fact, if I were to pull up her medical records, I'm not even sure if anybody ever said the words twin-to-twin transfer syndrome to me. Now that I really think about it hard.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. So maybe they were just more freaked out that you had come in from a home birth with twins, or what do you think it was?

**NATALIA:** Home birth. They were freaked out because it was a home birth with twins. They were freaked out because the babies were only 35 weeks old. They were freaked out because the baby—baby B was purple. Like scary purple. Like it was very concerning. It wasn't like she was just a little bit red. I mean eggplant purple. And the reason why ended up being because she had a hematocrit of 75 whereas her twin only had a hematocrit of 35, so she had twice the amount of blood in her body as her sister did. And this was after the delayed cord clamping. So in theory, everyone was—everyone had told me that baby A was going to get all the blood, and baby B would be left with nothing. But in the end, baby B still had more than baby A. So my delayed cord clamping theory was proven right, I guess, in that scenario.

**MARYN:** Yeah. And it just goes to show you too truly nobody knows everything. And truly, we collectively don't know anything really about birth, I think, in a lot of situations when the exact opposite can happen as to what you expect. So you spent some time in the hospital then with—was it both babies or just baby B?

**NATALIA:** Well, baby A was in the hospital for six days. I blame myself for that one. I had the option of leaving her at the first hospital we went to instead of transferring her to the second one because there was nothing wrong with her. But I thought that keeping them together would be the better option. But once they got her in that NICU, they didn't want to let her go. They really wanted to punish me for what I did. And they didn't treat my babies very well even though I was there almost all the time. They didn't treat us very well at all.

**MARYN:** Oh, that's heartbreaking.

**NATALIA:** I was very fortunate in that one of my very close friends—she is a bit older than I am. And she was able to kind of have that motherly protection over me that I didn't have anywhere—from anyone else. And she helped me advocate for myself when they were really trying to bully me with formula and calling Child Protective Services on me. They didn't want to—they wouldn't let me touch my babies for days on end.

**MARYN:** Oh my gosh.

**NATALIA:** Baby B, the purple baby, she—they kept her under bililights for days on end, and they wouldn't let her have water. They wouldn't feed her. They wouldn't let her have formula. They wouldn't let me nurse her because she wouldn't pass her meconium stool because she was under these bililights being dehydrated. And her skin was cracking and bleeding. And I wasn't allowed to touch her except to change her diaper. And—

**MARYN:** That's heartbreaking.

**NATALIA:** It was. It was very hard for me. And I had another kid at home. And then my first baby went home after six days, and I had six more days with the second baby. So for 12 days, our lives were just chaos and dealing with this hospital. And they all knew who I was because my dad had worked at that hospital for 20 years.

**MARYN:** Oh wow.

**NATALIA:** And they still bullied me. It didn't matter. And maybe they bullied me because of that. Because I should have known better because I was the OB's daughter.

**MARYN:** Wow. Well, that's really unfair. I mean that whole thing. But yeah. You know well that that happens. And for people listening that have just home births, just simple home births, never mind unassisted, never mind unassisted with twins, I know having accompanied women to the hospital as well that it often is really unpleasant and that we are treated this way just for the choices we have made. So what words of wisdom did you come away with to frame it in as positive a light as possible so that the time you spent there was in complete vain? What wisdom can you share with other women that might have to look to the hospital for medical treatment at one point or another?

**NATALIA:** Trust yourself. And don't let a doctor bully you. And if you need to have somebody there with you, then find someone there to be with you whether it's a parent or a husband or even a friend because they don't know everything. They didn't know what was going on with my twins. A lot of the interns that talked down to me, condescendingly, they had no idea what they were talking about.

**MARYN:** Right.

**NATALIA:** I probably knew more about twin births and pregnancy than almost everybody in that hospital because of the self research that I did. And nothing that they could say to me could change that. So don't trust—don't let the hospital bully you if that's what they're doing. Always trust yourself no matter what. Because you're the only one that's got to live with those decisions. They'll forget what they did to you hours, minutes, after they do it, but you'll have to live with it forever.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Those are very wise words. And I hope will give some women confidence because certainly it happens whether it's before labor or during labor or after birth and yeah. Having your baby admitted seems like one of the hardest things that we can go through for sure. So thank you for sharing your whole story and that part of your story as well because I think it's really, really just real life and important and valid that we talk about all kinds of situations and the way we deal with them when we're really choosing to advocate for ourselves.

**NATALIA:** Absolutely.

**MARYN:** Yeah. So any parting words tonight? This has just been an amazing story, and I'm so thankful to you. Do you have anything you'd like to share with women about any of these topics at all? No pressure.

**NATALIA:** When it comes to twin births, the one thing that I see more than anything when I see people that are interested in having twins at home or unassisted is—or even twins in general because I've been on twin forums that are just twins. Medicalized twin births. Is do your own research and tune everybody else out. Because when it comes to twins, they're—especially identical twins, there is very little known. And especially—I am—maybe three years later, there's a little bit more known. But when I was researching, there was no information out there. Nobody knew the answers. My dad, who has been practicing OB/GYN for 20 years, didn't have the answers that I had questions to. So don't listen to them when they say you have to have ultrasounds every appointment because you have to make sure the babies are growing right. If you don't feel that that's right, then ignore them. Ignore all the people who think what you're doing is dangerous if you feel that it's right for you because when it comes to twin births nobody knows better. And if you want to take the time to do the research to know better, then trust yourself.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. Those are amazing words from you. And you are an amazing woman. And I'm just thrilled to have this podcast now for people that have been asking about multiples. You're just the perfect person to have on. So I'm so glad it worked out. And I just want to thank you again.

**NATALIA:** Thank you.

**MARYN:** Yeah.

**NATALIA:** Well, thank you.

**MARYN:** Yeah. No problem. I know it's great to have you as a resource as well. I'm sure if women have particular questions we can get them in touch with you. And yeah. Just have it available.

**NATALIA:** Oh, absolutely.

**MARYN:** Great.

**NATALIA:** Absolutely. I was just going to say my—you were going to link my blog. You can get in touch with me that way, or you can find me on Facebook. I'm happy to talk about multiple UCs, free births with anybody who is interested. I didn't have the resources when I was going through it. And I just—I want to make sure that any woman



who is trying to make that decision with an identical twin birth has those resources that I didn't have. A support. Someone that went through it. So yeah. Absolutely.

**MARYN:** Yeah. That's wonderful. Thank you so much. That's an amazing thing. Especially in this day and age where so many of us really do go to the Internet, unfortunately, to find our community, to find our tribe of women that understand. So we will definitely link to your birth story and your blog, so anybody that would like to read the entire story from start to finish that'll be available—linked with this podcast. And then you can contact Natalia yourself, if you have questions, or want to know more. So thanks so much again, Natalia. It's been an absolutely pleasure talking with you tonight.

**NATALIA:** Oh, it's been my pleasure. If nothing else, I got a chance to get away from the kids for awhile.

**MARYN:** That's awesome. Well, great. Thank you. And thanks for listening everybody. As always, just check our website for the newest blog posts and, of course, podcasts and all of our free classes and our five-week online series, How to Have an Indie Birth. Thanks so much and have a great night.

(closing music)