

(introductory music)

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**MARYN:** Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Hi, everyone. Maryn here excited because I am at the end of this pregnancy and also excited because technically this is episode number 100. So I'm not sure it'll actually appear that way. We may record some other podcast first. Margo is here this week, so we thought it would be fun to do official episode 100 together. But I wanted to do this as well since this baby could be here before I got around to recording this. So I am about 38 weeks and have been reflecting a lot on how I'm feeling and what I'm thinking. So just wanting to share that here today also for myself. I think it'll be fun one day to listen back to these especially podcasts like these and reminisce since it really is such a special time.

So where to start? Hmm. Well, I did make an outline, but I'm not quite sure I have the focus to follow it which is part of the theme, I guess. Having to focus a lot these days. We have our midwifery conference here in just a couple of days. So how is that for timing? And I am pretty sure that I will be able to attend that and facilitate that. It's only a couple days away. And I really believe most of the time that babies are born not necessarily when it's super convenient for us. But if we do have something big going on or, heaven forbid, we're sick or something like that, in my experience, babies and our bodies seem to honor these funny little human timelines we set up for ourselves. So I'm not really worried about going into labor in the next couple of days and am anticipating the two weeks that I have left really although my biggest reflection or the reflection that's coming the most often right now is kind of this obsession with when.

And it's all well and good at some time—at some times. It's really excited. I think that's why we're obsessed with this at the end of pregnancy. Is this the day? Or maybe more in my case what will the day be? Trying to think ahead. Will it be this day? Will it be that day? How many days do I have left? It's kind of this crazy mind trip. And I guess I am enjoying that, but at the same time getting kind of annoyed with myself almost. Like really, why can't we kind of collectively focus on just being in the moment? And maybe some of you do a great job of that. Maybe you do a better job than I do. And maybe I'm the only one. I don't think so though having worked with many pregnant women. I think many—most of us at the end are kind of doing this same thing where we're in the world and we're in our own little world. But there's a lot of calculation going on. And some of it is subconscious even. It's not mental as far as calculating number of days although I do that quite often.

But it's this emotional calculation too. How am I feeling? Does this mean something? Will it mean something? What if this happened? What if that happened? What if I went into labor tonight? It's a crazy, crazy place to be. But I will say it's a pretty refreshing and positive place to be overall. And I think most people would agree with that just for the obvious reasons of being term essentially. Sure. Two weeks until the actual due date. But certainly, 38 weeks isn't unheard of for many women and many babies and is really part of the normal range of birth anyway. So I am confident that a 38 weeker in probably 99% of cases would do just fine and is big enough and can breathe when they are born and those such things. So that's just really exciting to me. And I've mentioned on other podcasts, I'm sure, that I, myself, was a preemie. I was born at 34 weeks. And then I repeated history sorta kinda with my first baby. And she was born between 37 and 38, which, of course, is not 34. But still was unexpected. And she was tiny.

So it's kind of a personal goal and milestone to always get passed that point. And I feel that way really with other women too. That the closer we can get to whatever date we have is truly better just for nursing and that kind of thing. Not that it can't happen before. So it's always just refreshing to me to get to this point. And, again, I'm pretty confident I will get beyond this point as well. Last pregnancy was my first pregnancy going beyond the date that I had. So really my body has been pretty consistent in all of these kids. So let's see. That's seven live births. Like I said, the first was a tiny bit early. But then really everybody else was almost on their date that I had. So my body is good like that. And my last, number seven, was a week late. And that was because I was really, really sick. But funny enough had taken a trip at 39 weeks last time which I'm not feeling this time I would really want to do for whatever reason. So call me crazy or maybe there is something to it, right? That's the eternal question at this stage of pregnancy. Does it mean something?

But I don't think I'd want to go to another state next week. I don't think that sounds like a great idea. But I did do it last time. I went to a midwifery conference at 39 weeks about six hours away. And I was very confident I would not birth there, and I didn't. But I did get really sick, so I came home and sort of panicked because I didn't want to have a baby right away. And my body listened, and she came later than I thought. So I have experienced really—not the full spectrum but more than maybe some people do as far as timing of births. And I just, again, really like this time.

It feels like Christmas to me in a lot of ways. And I think that's definitely the superficial side, I'll admit, and that's okay too. Just like waiting for something that's so exciting and not knowing exactly what it is or who it is and all of those things make it just super exciting. How will this labor go? Who is this baby? Last week, I had the privilege of being with my sister, who is pregnant or was pregnant. She was due a couple weeks before me. And sadly, my visit did not coincide with her birth even though it was supposed to. But even now, of course, getting constant texts and videos of her sweet

new baby, who is only about four days old, it has touched me in such a different way. I don't know that I've ever had something like that happen. Certainly not my sister. We usually alternate being pregnant. So we've never had babies at the same time. But there's been something so super special and touching about seeing her new baby knowing that mine is so close. For example, she sent me this video of her baby lying on the bed. Super cute. And doing all of those motions that I feel this baby doing in utero. So if you've ever been this pregnant, you know just kind of how they squirm and hands are moving. And when they come out and they're laying on your bed and you see the movement, it's fascinating. It's like wow. That's what you were doing in there.

So I don't know. Maybe it's something only I can understand. But, again, just seeing her baby doing that and feeling mine literally do these same movements has been part of this strange mystery that I never solved about pregnancy and birth. I don't know that anyone has ever solved it. And by that, I mean does anybody listening really get that there is a full grown person inside your body that is fully capable at this point of living outside of your body. Yet, they're still in there, and they're doing whatever they do, right? Upside down and all of this strange stuff. And then within minutes, they're out, and they're here. And as a midwife too, I don't think I've ever made sense of that. I remember Gail Hart saying that years ago, so I guess I'm not alone since she has 30 years of such experience. But that. Something along the lines of it's just really hard to believe this process. It's really hard to believe that a baby is going to come out.

So, again, I just am in this funny little spot where I know that's going to happen. I've seen it. I've done it. I've certainly believe it. But there is an element of disbelief and mystery that that actually happens. Seeing my sister's baby is sort of this extra proof right now that that is going to happen. So it adds to the excitement for sure. It also adds to a feeling of missing being pregnant when I'm not, which might sound really jumping the gun. And it might be for you. But I have always loved being pregnant. And that doesn't mean it's blissful and perfect all the time. But I truly do miss it. So having done this so many times, I can anticipate that. So I'm in this spot being hugely pregnant, but I do know very well what it feels like to be on the other side. And obviously, it's a great side to be on with a, hopefully, healthy baby feeling great. It's great in so many ways. But there's just that little part that feels like a letdown to me. And I don't mean a depressive let down. I mean a literal like something has shifted. The baby is out. Pregnancy is gone. And everything seems to shift.

So even the way I'm eating will shift. And obviously, your day-to-day life and all kinds of things shift to be on that side and to be with this new person and to be learning this person's cues and to be adapting to the family as a whole. So I do sense the very much bittersweet, quality of pregnancy during this time. I think before this time in pregnancy it's not real enough. Sure. I might do a thing here or there for the postpartum. But really, it's not real enough, and I think I invest—and most of us do—the energy in being

pregnant. So, again, I'm still doing that. But your mind kind of is thinking ahead. And that's kind of annoying and cool all at the same time. Again, I'll say what I said in the beginning which when I get too deep into that I do try and bring myself back. Take a few breaths and just be in this body with this baby right now with no expectations or dreams necessarily. No thoughts to the future. Just because it takes away from being in the moment.

And I know—I know so well how special these moments are. So I don't want to wish them away. I really don't even though impatience is also part of the process and, like I said, I think culturally we have this huge amount of impatience for pregnancy to be over and a baby to be here. And that could easily segue into a postpartum discussion because really, for most women, the focus isn't on them during the postpartum. I mean it really is all about the baby and what the baby needs. So I have been thinking about the postpartum. And hopefully, if you're listening and you're due to have a baby soon, you have done more planning than I have, honestly. I have done as much as I could. And I'm hoping next week, if I am given that time, I will use it wisely to probably create more food for myself. But as of now, I have a couple things in the freezer. I had a friend that came to make some soup last week or maybe it was the week before. And so we made several jars of nourishing, yummy vegetable soup. I have lots of broth, bone broth in the freezer. And I have lined up help for the postpartum. So I will have someone coming every day for just a couple hours to—not really do anything with me other than hopefully get me some food from the kitchen. But to just kind of help out in the household for a couple hours. Make sure the kids are doing what they need to do, maybe walk a dog, or something like that. But that's what I need postpartum. I need mental and physical help just around the house.

And it's not that my husband isn't capable. But we agreed it's a lot for him to do when he is (a) trying to still work from home and (b) take care of seven kids. So I am proud of asking for that help. And I may not have tons of food, but I will have someone here. And at the very worst, right? I can have her make food or something like that. So it's coming along. But I am not as well prepared food wise as I was last time. I'm also not planning food for my whole family though. So that's a difference. That might sound mean. But I figure my husband and the kids can kind of fend for themselves a bit better just because I have specific foods that I can't eat postpartum. I have a specific diet I want to follow. And so I'm going to focus on that. And he can focus on them. And I'm sure—almost positive—that we will get food from nice neighbors and such that will feed the kids. And that will be super welcome and super appreciated.

So as far as supplies for birth, I don't feel the need for too many. And I don't really have too much to be honest. I am not planning a water birth, so I don't have any of those supplies which to me is just easier. I don't adore birth pools for myself. So it seems like a lot of unnecessary work to do. And as far as supplies for the birth, I, of course, have I

mean all my midwifery supplies that I would need. And I think blue pad or chux pads or whatever the heck you want to call them are one of the only things that are probably necessary. I think those are great to have that way you can birth wherever you want and also great for postpartum bleeding. But funny enough, I'm a little superstitious in buying those. So that might sound funny. But I don't know. I just have this superstition about buying them too early. I guess it's because—actually, I take back what I said about everybody coming on their due date. My fifth baby—her name is Belgium—was born at 39 weeks. And that was just normal for her and me. There was nothing wrong. And certainly, there's nothing wrong with 39 weeks anyway. It just had caught me off guard at the time.

And so I remember very clearly the day before was a Monday. And that was my day to go out and do midwifery appointments. And I felt fine. I absolutely had no idea—like no idea that I would be birthing a baby the next day. So that goes—just goes to show you about signs and all this other stuff that we try and calculate. Sometimes we just go into labor. And there have been no signs. So I had a great Monday visiting all the mamas. And I don't know why other than maybe I knew somewhere in myself. I stopped at CVS, I think, and bought a pack of chux pads. I don't even know why I did that a week before. Maybe I just figured I didn't have them and needed them. Anyway, so call it coincidence, whatever, but I did actually birth the next day. And like I said, there's nothing—I don't think—wrong with birthing at 39 weeks. But in my case, at this moment, I have a conference to get through. And a conference I very much want to be at and get through, so I am not buying any chux pads right now. I'm going to wait until next week and see how that works out for myself.

So that's just the million dollar question, I guess. Like I just said, I think labor can just come out of nowhere. It really can. And that's something that's in my head but then also, as many of you know and are doing yourselves, all the calculations about what this means or what that means. So let's see. What calculations have I been doing? My body feels heavier than it has. And that might sound ridiculous because, of course, it is. I've gained probably about 50 pounds this pregnancy, which is about average for me. But I do feel heavier. And this is going to sound really funny, but I do have contractions every day. And I think I probably have about five contractions a day that are pretty good contractions. So I wouldn't call them labor contractions, obviously, but they do have a more intense feeling than Braxton-Hicks that I was getting at, let's say, 29 weeks. They're stronger. They're deeper. They're longer. And like I said, five a day which that just makes me laugh because it really makes me reflect on how amazing the body is.

So I really don't believe that you just wake up one day in labor. I think it can feel like that. I said I just felt like that with my daughter, Belgium. But I don't really think that that's possible. I really think that there's a lot going on physiologically, even emotionally and spiritually maybe we're not so aware of. But there are changes happening because

labor really is a process. It's not an event. So anyway, it's just made me think more about what is going on kind of silently in my body that I may not be taking stock of that does mean something. And so my five contractions a day I think mean something. It means eventually, right? They'll become something more than that. Slowly. Over time. And to birth a baby, you probably need five contractions in 20 minutes or something like that. So just the funny way the body has all worked out.

So that's been my physical experience. And if you haven't had a baby before or maybe it's your first or your second or maybe even your third, everybody experiences something different. Some women really don't notice much as far as contractions or anything at all. But I think those of us that have had several babies I think there are feelings—again, what they mean I don't know that we can say. But there are feelings. So just pressure, contractions, little cervical twinges, which sounds really funny too if you haven't experienced it. I was saying that to my sister today. That it just feels sometimes like my cervix is doing something. Not necessarily opening but thinning maybe. Or softening. It just feels kind of prickly, and I can't really explain it. Kind of like that section of my body is almost separating somehow from something else.

Of course, the baby is moving a ton still. Has her times that she really goes crazy, which for me is at night when I get in bed. And obviously, is getting bigger. But I don't feel like is completely out of room or anything like that. So head down. And this baby likes my right side. So my right side is pretty occupied with all kinds of parts and feelings. But like I said, seems like there's plenty of room especially on the left. And this baby does go back and forth quite often. So even today, she I say—I may be surprised by that. But for what it's worth, she was on the right as she usually is. And then after I went to the chiropractor, she was on the left. So she kind of does her thing all day. Has a couple pretty predictable hiccup runs. And other than that seems to just be getting ready and grounding herself in a way too. And that's a pretty subtle observation, I guess. I'm not sure that everybody thinks about that or notices it. But just kind of the feelings of a baby getting ready and how that feels on our end, if it feels like anything.

So let's see. Emotionally, I'm actually feeling really balanced which I think can also be a sign. But again, a sign of what? Tomorrow? Next week? If I had two weeks, which I do by calendar, then it's really not that long. So everything I'm trying to add up or calculate in the end, of course, comes back to the same thing, which is yes. A baby should appear within the next two weeks, which is not very long. So I'm feeling balanced, I think, the endorphins do start to kick in at the end. I can't say I'm feeling terribly patient with children. I do think the children and the animals feel the impending labor maybe more than we realize and more than we can even truly understand. But my kids, and I think many others, just get really clinging or needy. In some case, just flat out annoying and hard to deal with trying to get attention, trying to get the last bits of

attention before someone new comes in to the mix. So I get that intellectually. I understand that, but it doesn't make it easy some days to handle it when you're already exhausted and feeling huge and heavy and tired and all those things. So that's kind of the unpleasant but the reality, I think, of being at the end of a pregnancy too that allows us to move on. So kind of when you get to your wit's end in some ways whether it's feeling heavy or whether it's the kids then we are quickly on the other side because that's just the way the life cycle works.

So other than that, emotionally—other than the kids being kind of a stress lately, I'm feeling pretty good about labor and birth. I feel like I've had other births where I've spent a lot more time emotionally, and I don't have a reason for that other than that's what I did. So maybe journaling or really kind of digging into specific fears or who knows what. But this time, I'm just not. And I'm trying not to judge that as anything. And I'm trying not to think anything of it other than I'm doing what I need to do. And if I needed to do something different, then I certainly would. Of course, I'm also trying to make sure I'm not leaving anything out because I am super busy. But I don't think I am. I think every birth is different. Every baby is different. And our past experiences whether we like it or not do influence our births. So that can mean a variety of things. Certainly, that can add fear or trauma or whatever to a birth that's impending because the last birth was hard or whatever it is. And I think I felt like that about Ever's, who was number seven. Number six was difficult. And so I hadn't completely sort of dealt with that. And number seven, I felt like was maybe harder than it needed to be.

So who knows why these things come the way they do? But having had my last birth, I mean truly even though it wasn't a live birth be a year ago has influenced this process. And I think I've said before I think I'll be more ready to talk about that process of pregnancy after loss when I'm through this. But I know that it's affecting the way I feel now. And I'm just trying to observe that. And, again, I don't think that it's a bad thing. I actually feel really fearless about this labor because I've had lots of opportunities to trust my body even a year ago when the baby that died was inside and having to birth him. So in a lot of ways, I feel like a different person having to have gone through that. And I feel more mature and grown up and some of the things I previously would have been worried about for just normal labor I don't really have those worries on my mind this time, again, because of that experience. So I'm really grateful to that experience. It taught me so much about my body and trusting in something bigger than me and trusting in a baby even though, in that case, the baby wasn't a soul that was present. I still believe the soul was able to direct the process, and it was perfect.

So I'm very excited to meet this baby, of course. There really will be no comparison to, again, hopefully having a live, healthy baby on this end after loss. But yeah. It's really changed how I see the labor process for myself and the fears that I may have had previously. So we'll see. That could all go out the window I suppose in the moments of

labor. And that's the funny thing about labor, isn't it? It's just kind of this unpredictable thing. And we might have certain thoughts or ways of dealing or things we've done previously or beforehand. And then in the moment, we really get tested to see if that mattered, if that was important. And you don't really know the path you're going to go down. So I guess I'm saying, at the same time, that I think I have it together I'm not really professing to have it together, and I remain open to the process that this baby needs. But like I said, at the same time, I don't feel like I'm harboring any large fear that could potentially be distracting.

So I am glancing at my notes then. Yeah. It's funny. It's just a bunch of notes that I have made over the last week or so. And like I said, most of it is about signs and just what do things mean and what do they not mean. I have been sleeping really well which I told my husband today, and he said, "Yep. It'll be about two weeks." So he must have his own journal somewhere. And I have to laugh because we're all on that same page of what does it mean. How many days are left? But I can feel that as well. Not that that's the ultimate truth for me or for you. But I haven't been sleeping well this whole pregnancy so to have a couple nights here where I've really been sleeping hard and really not waking up very much to pee or anything else feels really good. And it does feel like in that way something must be shifting because I've had just so many months of not.

So all of these crazy things. What the baby is doing in our bodies, our weight gain maybe although I haven't done that in awhile so I don't know. Down to food. I think food for me has been really hard. And I wish I understood that better because maybe there is a great physiological reason why you wouldn't feel like eating the last couple weeks. I don't know. But I am eating, of course. I'm making myself eat. But I don't really feel like it. And there's really nothing I feel like eating. So I've been a total brat and have just been eating out when I feel like it as healthy as I can but just doing that to survive because I literally cannot open my refrigerator some days and make something. It sounds so spoiled. But I just can't. So if I want to eat, and I do, I certainly can't not eat for the next two weeks, then I just do whatever I need to do. And luckily, my husband is very supportive with that. In fact, he's the one half the time that'll run out and just get whatever it is. But yeah. There's kind of this funny relationship between early pregnancy and late pregnancy I think. And maybe that's a different podcast. But I think food wise it feels very similar. So I totally have had nauseous moments lately that I feel like are just hormonal or because I'm not eating enough and specifically in the mornings.

I used to get up a couple months ago and have a big breakfast. And now I just can't. So I feel like I have to ease in the way you do in early pregnancy. So I might just have a smoothie to start, and then I'll go on to eat more. But it's really hard really in the morning. It makes me feel really nauseous and gross. So that's the fun of the last few



weeks I suppose, at least for me. So anyway, thanks for listening to my very self centered reflections here. Obviously, I share them for myself but also for you because many of you are so supportive and many of you are in the same spot. And if you're not now, as this podcast lives on forever on the Internet, you may find yourself in this spot at some time. And I think this is the community that many of us have. So it's great if you have women around you that are actually due at the same time. Ideally, you could have these discussions and just trade funny stories or ridiculous dreams or crazy cravings that you're having because there really is so much strength in women experiencing these things together.

But many of us don't or don't have the kind of people around that might understand, so something like this, I think, can go farther than just me talking about myself. It gives you things to talk about and think about and add your own thoughts too. So thanks so much for listening to my last few weeks. By the time I see you or talk with you next, there may be a baby on the other side so looking forward to sharing that experience. And wishing everybody well at the same time. So as always, check out our Indie Birth site for the newest offerings. Our Wise Woman Circle is really popular. That's [indiebirth.com/circle](http://indiebirth.com/circle). We're always accepting new members whether you're a midwife or a doula or just someone that wants to learn. It's an awesome resource. And Indie Birth Midwifery School for those considering getting on the path to midwifery. All right. Thank you so much. Have a great day.

(closing music)