

(introductory music)

**DISCLAIMER:** *Taking Back Birth* is a production of the Indie Birth Association and indiebirth.com. No material on this podcast should be considered medical advice. Birth is not a medical event.

**MARYN:** Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Hi. It's Maryn. And I want to talk about pregnancy after loss today. So after miscarriage or stillbirth and feeling like this podcast in particular has been a long time coming for me. Really wanting to piece together some of my experience for you and some thoughts. Miscarriage, as you know, is really common, and I know quite a lot of people as well that have experienced early and late miscarriages, of course, and also stillbirth. And happily, many of these women do go on to get pregnant again, and I am one of them.

So just wanting to share my experience and see where that goes today. I think it's a subject that many women would like to talk about more especially one on one. And, again, because loss in pregnancy really is pretty common, many women will go through this experience of being pregnant again. So this is still a pretty fresh topic for me, if you look at the big picture. I had my late miscarriage about a year ago. And I just birthed a live, healthy baby as many of you know about a month ago. So it's still pretty new in a way to have processed what happened during her pregnancy and how the loss affected the pregnancy and even the birth. So what I'm sharing or talking about might actually shift for me over time, and I would imagine that that is true for many women in this scenario. That our thoughts and our feelings do change over time and as we have different experiences.

So I couldn't really talk about this until now. I definitely was making a lot of notes during Deva's pregnancy for sure. If for no other reason than for me to remember how it was. The difficult parts and the really beautiful parts. But I couldn't actually talk about being pregnant after loss until I was on the other side, so to speak. Now admittedly, that might have been partly superstition. But also, I just didn't feel like my perspective was complete. And as I just said, perhaps the perspective still isn't complete. It will change and shift over time. But that's just being honest. And when I look back at my notes, I think I made quite a lot of notes around 30 weeks of Deva's pregnancy. And I very clearly, in the notes, said, "I can't really talk about this. I can make some notes, but I can't quite go there yet."

So ironically or not, I have even a second set or actually it was the first set of notes about pregnancy after miscarriage. And this came before Sable, before my late miscarriage. So I had a very early miscarriage before him. So there's been a lot of loss, in a way, for me in the last year. But I do think it is interesting that I had this early

loss and then I made all these notes on how it felt to be pregnant with him, of course, not knowing consciously 100% that I would also be experiencing loss in that pregnancy. So going back and reading the notes from when I was pregnant with him and viewing his pregnancy as a pregnancy after loss is kind of wild in a crazy way. I think a lot of the notes I made were almost telling, in a sense that I knew he wouldn't stick around either. But I guess what the notes taught me is that every pregnancy after loss or, like I say a lot of the time, every pregnancy is so different. So that was kind of my fresher perspective on loss reading those notes.

The notes that I made when I was pregnant with him—and, again, had experienced I think a five or six week loss before him—were, like I said, specific to what I ended up experiencing although there may be common themes for those of you that are pregnant again after some kind of loss. The themes that were really present for me in his pregnancy were lack of connection, not really wanting to share my pregnancy, kind of wanting it to hurry up and get through it, waiting for the loss to happen, kind of holding my breath. So really not very positive themes. But, again, that can be common, I think, although for me, like I said, it ended up being more telling of his pregnancy than maybe a more general pregnancy after loss theme. As I talk about Deva's pregnancy, those weren't the themes. And she definitely came after loss. So, again, just showed me already that things can just feel different depending on our experiences and our types of loss and even the pregnancy that we're holding.

Everything works kind of synergistically together it seems. So when you're pregnant after loss it's not just about the loss, it's also about that pregnancy. And so, again, with Sable's pregnancy perhaps because it wasn't going to last my experience with loss was pretty dark honestly. And I don't know that that's everyone's experience, but that was mine with him. But like I said luckily, in a sense, that wasn't what I went on to experience with Deva. It was very, very different.

So in that way even entering into my pregnancy with Deva, my last pregnancy, I felt like I had no idea what I was doing. And being pregnant felt really new even though I've been pregnant lots of times. It felt kind of like uncharted territory like I really just didn't have any idea at least in the beginning what I was doing, how this would go. Some days I didn't even know how I felt about any of it. Was I worried? Was I not? Was I still grieving? Was I not? It could be so complex, and then it could be so simple at the same time. So, again, that's something I experienced.

Of course, I didn't know how it would play out, right? That's the gift that hindsight gives you. I didn't know in the beginning of her pregnancy what would happen. If it would be another loss? Or what lessons I would learn? And, of course, as I'll talk about, I did come to feel differently about that through the pregnancy. There were tests and stresses, but, ultimately, at a certain point, I didn't expect loss. I didn't think that that

would be her story. Not that that made it easy every day, but that just wasn't the theme. So I think pregnancy after any kind of loss requires us to be brave. And, of course, we all are whether we think we are, whether we want to be, we are. And we are even if we don't attempt pregnancy again. But I do think it takes a certain kind of—well, bravery really isn't the right word. But a certain kind of something to have a loss and to try again. And I can totally see why people don't try again. In fact, after Sable was gone, I swore up and down at least for a small amount of time that I would never do this again. And I think that is a really common theme. Really common. And how long it lasts of course can be varied.

So for me, that period was pretty short, but I did say, "No. I will never risk this kind of loss again. I will never put myself in that position where this is something that could happen." But I moved past that as pretty much anyone that gets pregnant after miscarriage, again, does in one way or another. And for me, it was feeling like I don't really control things anyway. So to not try when I felt like there definitely was this baby out there felt really fearful. But I do remember feeling like I was stepping off a cliff or like I was on a roller coaster ride. And that probably is the best analogy for me at least because once you're on that roller coaster, you're on. You're on. You don't know what will happen. And you don't have a choice to get off. And you're just on it. And somehow you have to figure out how to make the best of it.

So of course how to make the best of it is a huge topic. Whatever that means. And so I'll share a little story about that. So after Sable was gone and I wasn't pregnant yet, I had moved into the place where I knew I wanted to be pregnant again. And I forget how I got in touch with a grief counselor kind of person online. A woman in the birth world that at least I had seen briefly that specializes in loss. And we did a free phone consult. And she was a lovely woman. She had personal experience with loss. Obviously, had a very nice business helping women like myself through loss. And during the free consult, I did share that I wanted to get pregnant again. And of course, she thinks that everyone should benefit from her services, which is totally understandable. But she said something like, "Well, I really think you should do this counseling with me, and here is why. Here are the steps we'll go through, and this is the time we'll spend because you really shouldn't go into another pregnancy grieving at all. You really should be clear." And I don't remember exactly the words she used. But in other words, she implied that I had work to do before she felt like I could be pregnant again.

And honestly, I got off the phone just feeling sadder. Like not only did I not have a baby in me anymore that was alive, but here was this mountain put in front of me from her perspective of work I needed to do first. And I was very aware, of course, that I was in the middle of it anyway. I mean grieving a loss of any kind is work whether you like it or not. And I had put in, of course, lots of work, so this feeling like I wasn't good enough or I wasn't done was upsetting to me. And I know it wasn't personal. That's what she

believes. And she was right. There was grieving that I was still doing. But I guess the end to my story is that was my choice and what I learned from that is I needed to be in the spot I was in. And I needed to have things worked out in Deva's pregnancy. It's a really nice picture and idea that you can get done with grief. That you can wrap it up and tie a bow on it and ship it off and you're done. But that's not the way grief works. Not for me and not for most people. Things pop up when you least expect them. And in other words, if I had sort of taken her advice to heart whether I had worked with her or not, it might have been years before I felt ready to attempt pregnancy again.

And while that might be a great idea for some, that just wasn't the way I knew I was supposed to go. So it made me think of lyrics to a song. If you've ever listened to Trevor Hall, who is a wonderful musician—he has this really awesome song that will make you cry especially if you are in any of these situations. And it's called *You Can't Rush Your Healing*. And I would listen to this song when Sable was gone, and I would just bawl and cry. And the way music can do that. Really feeling every word as if it was written for me. So the lyrics are, "You can't rush your healing. Darkness has its teachings." And that's exactly how I felt about going into Deva's pregnancy. My grief wasn't neat and tidy and wrapped up with a bow. It was often dark, but yet I recognize the teachings in the experience. And so that's how I entered into my next pregnancy. So I don't know if that helps some people or makes you feel less alone. That there is no right way to do it. An expert, so to speak, on grief although they're really needed in our world—everybody has their own ideas about how you should proceed.

And if you lost a baby for some reason that you think was definable or preventable and truly most losses aren't either of those things, then you might feel like there are certain things you have to do—to get in order before you attempt pregnancy again. And so everybody is different. I can't really say for everyone how that looks. But just for me, that wasn't really what I felt like I needed to happen. So I did not take her advice. And I was probably pregnant pretty shortly after that. Now, of course, it did bring up just the pregnancy in general but also that conversation kept replaying in my mind. Maybe I'm not ready to be pregnant yet. And maybe because I haven't worked it all out, what if? What if I have another loss? Or what if I go crazy? What if I emotionally cannot handle this because I'm not doing it right, or it's too hard? So these were thoughts and things running through my mind which certainly didn't make it easier at times. But I didn't expect the journey to be easy either.

So with Deva's pregnancy once it moved passed the early period of pregnancy, I knew she would stay. Now that's not to say that getting passed the part where Sable didn't stay—so around 16 weeks—it's not to say that I didn't have those thoughts, and I didn't worry extra. I did. I did. I did. I did. And I think for sure once she was moving and kicking all of the time that was a huge relief and a huge weight off. Definitely that early period in pregnancy where you kind of don't know what's going on other than not feeling

very good. That was hard. And again, I think that's probably a common theme although it does depend, I suppose, on when you experience loss. But not knowing for sure is hard on anybody.

So with knowing Deva would stay when I got to that point, I would cling to that. And sometimes I doubted myself. And sometimes I doubted her. And sometimes I wondered if I just was making this all up so that I could cope. And making it up, I mean this connection I felt with her. I talked a lot about that on the spirit babies podcast last week. I did have moments where I doubted this connection. Maybe it was just a safety net. Maybe it was just all in my head so that I wouldn't have to face the possibility of her leaving. So of course, now in hindsight, I do believe that we did have a connection, and we do. And that that was real. That I was feeling that. So connection can be hard in general in pregnancy. And it can definitely be hard after loss. And like I said, I did experience that in the loss pregnancy itself. Just not feeling connected to the baby, not feeling connected to anything really even myself.

So that is hard. And I think it's just something that maybe comes in time. And with loss, pregnancy after loss, I do think that for me some days it was just a matter of getting through the day and getting through hours and breathing and having friends to talk to. And that's where having more of a community even one that is on the phone or whatever is helpful. And that's what most of us are lacking. So those kind of resources and maybe I'll talk about more definitely were helpful to me.

So let's get into more of the worry and fears just because of course that played a theme in her pregnancy even though they came and went and sort of manifested more in the middle of pregnancy. But I would be lying if I said there weren't fears. And I would be lying if I said I didn't think they had meaning. I knew they did. And I knew that I would have them. So maybe I set myself up for them. Who knows? But I did worry about her health at various points. And I did worry about my body's capability, which I'm not saying any of this makes sense on paper because I do trust my body. And I would tell myself these very factual facts such as I've never had an early baby. Really. My first was almost at 38 weeks so not 40. But certainly, I've never had a preterm baby.

So I would have those kind of worries though. Like what if I can't hold this pregnancy? And it was bizarre, right? Because, again, that didn't really come from anywhere other than my brain being fearful. Now with the loss that I had with Sable, of course, he was held in my body for four plus months. And he wasn't even alive. So having these fears about birthing too early was just something my brain would latch on to, and it was just a way of working through some fears. So I really thought a lot about how I would know if something was wrong. And I might talk about some more examples of that. But how would I know if something was wrong? Because once I passed early pregnancy, it seemed like—well, and in reality I think it's true, I had a lot more to lose.

And that was a really hard part of being pregnant again. It was such a catch-22. Now certainly early loss isn't easy. But I know, for me, I've certainly handled that better than a later loss for obvious reasons. So there was comfort in still being pregnant, but yet the bigger she got I thought some days just how much worse it would be which was a really fatalist view and not necessarily like me. And it really had nothing to do with anything. It wasn't because I thought something wrong. It wasn't because I didn't feel connected. It was just simply fear, and it was fear coming out of this grief. And then that's probably exactly what the grief counselor meant. But I think I was more willing to face it in the pregnancy for whatever reason.

So ultimately, I'd say the fearful experiences I had during her pregnancy strengthened my faith, strengthened my connection with her, strengthened my faith in my body and the process. Ultimately, to skip ahead just a bit, her birth was amazing. And I attribute it to kind of having put myself through the wringer in a lot of ways during her pregnancy. I was just so damn grateful honestly to get to labor and to know she was well that it was probably the easiest part of this pregnancy. And previously, I have never felt that way about birth. Honestly, I've had really easy pregnancies even emotionally. So I feel like I've maybe struggled with birth more than some other people perhaps. But this was the complete opposite. It's like I paid my dues the whole pregnancy. And the birth was great. And that may or may not be a common theme. I don't really know.

So back to the fears, specifically what I was experiencing—and this was just one of the fears that came up—was I would listen to Deva's heartbeat occasionally with a fetoscope. Now I don't recommend that necessarily. I think a baby kicking and moving and good growth and all of that is pretty indicative of a healthy baby. And of course, I know all these things, right? And I also know that listening to a heart rate doesn't really often tell us that much meaning that in the UK, I believe, they don't listen to the baby's heart routinely. The midwives anyway. Because they believe it's kind of silly. Again, if the baby is growing and moving and whatever then, of course, the heart is beating. So I know all of these things. But I listened anyway. And I would listen maybe once a day or every couple days. And that was fun at first just hearing it and finding it. I had never heard Sable's heart beat with a fetoscope. He just didn't get to that point. So it was great in a lot of ways.

Until one day I think I was about—gosh. I'd have to look. Maybe 24, 26 weeks. Something like that. And I found her heart rate right away. And I listened. And it was really whacky. It was skipping and kind of in a strange rhythm. And, of course, my heart—my own heart literally went into my throat. And everything, every fear, every part of grief, every part of the losses came back. And I was paralyzed. I was absolutely paralyzed by what I had heard and already in my mind what had been created what it could mean. So this is when it's not so fun, I think, to be a midwife because I do have access to information. And if I was a mom at home, let's say, doing her own prenatal

care, I might not even listen. And I know plenty of women that don't. So all the women that maybe could have heard the same thing on their own babies maybe never would. So I suddenly wished I was one of those people that just was content to not listen and enjoy good movement. But I had gone down the rabbit hole as naively as ever.

So I told a bunch of midwives. And what can anyone say, right? I know this as well as they do. There's nothing to say. There's, "Well, you could do this. You could go get it checked out. You could go to a perinatologist and go through the wringer and have tests and a fetal EKG or whatever it is. Or you could wait." Really those are the two options. And then, of course, what most of us do too is go down the Google rabbit hole and go there. So it was a very rough experience. And I am really glad to be on the other side of that. But it really was necessary as hard as it was. All the tears I spent crying about what could be wrong with her and really the moments I spent listening in panic because, of course, you can't—I can't—well, I eventually didn't listen. So it didn't get me caught up in that. I had to make a deal with myself and with her to not listen anymore.

But, of course, I did before I got to that point. And so I would hear the same thing every time. And I even got out the Doppler and recorded it and sent it to a couple people. And everybody was like, "Huh. Yeah. That's weird." One elder midwife even was very concerned. And she told me, "Come to me." She's about a six-hour drive away. "Come to me. I'll hook you up with a perinatologist. I really think you should get that checked out." She's like, "I've never heard that that early in pregnancy." So that was not comforting but ultimately propelled me to come to my own truth about this, right? So I sat with it. And I had to decide for me and my baby what was true. Was there something wrong? Did I need help? Did I need to go down this technology route? Or not?

And ultimately, I think having experienced loss was a gift at this moment even though I didn't see it that way then. And by that, I mean—or I mean I knew what it was like to sit in my own grief. And although it was a fear, it was like, "Well, if this baby doesn't want to stay, if there is something going on with her where she can't be here on earth, then I'll accept that." As hard as that will be, I've been there. I guess I would have to accept that. And the other part of me knew that I knew. And I spent a lot of time connecting with her in dreams and journeys specifically looking at her heart and talking to her about it. And I would say to her, "Deva, I don't know what's going on with you. But I trust that you do. I know you want to be here, so I'm going to trust that you're fine. And if you're not fine or if you really want to go down that route of going to a doctor and getting tested, if that's what you need, then I will do it. And I won't be scared of it. And I will do it. You just need to tell me."

And every time I connected with her all I got was, "I'm fine. This is just developmental. There's nothing wrong with me." And it was kind of hilarious. As a 28-week baby at that point she was moving really often and strong. And when I would go to listen with the fetoscope during this time, she would push it away. She would kick and move and get the heck out of the way. And that's the message that just kept coming through. Trust me. Trust this process. I know you hold you grief. I know you are scared, but this is okay. And that is all I had. So that's not something that I realize everybody can relate to although probably people listening can. But I had nothing else. I didn't feel right, again, going down the mainstream rabbit hole although, like I said, I would have. I would have for sure if I had felt like that was necessary. But whenever I thought about going that route, all I felt was fear. And it was my own fear. And for me, that meant that's not the right way. That's not where the signs are leading. And you're going to sink, and you are not going to be able to swim anymore if you do that.

So that was a really rough experience. And I did give up listening. And I'm really proud of myself, honestly, for doing that. I just decided that's it. I can't stress myself out like this every day. And this technology even though it was a fetoscope—this tool is taking me away from the truth. It is taking me away from her. It is making me not listen. It is making me a scared little rabbit, so I cannot do that anymore to me or to her. Because my heart, my own heart, would start racing every time I went to listen. And I was just bracing myself. And, of course, before I decided not to listen, I would hear the same weird pattern. So it was just futile. So this was my faith being tested.

And it's almost like some days I wonder if together Deva and I manifested that just so I would have a chance to trust and to work through and to heal because that was part of the grief process for me. And many times I came back to this sort of knowing that it was the right lesson. Something about Sable that really bothered me was that I did hear a heartbeat, and I heard a heartbeat several times with a Doppler. And then one day it was just gone. Excuse me. So I kind of had this issue with listening to heartbeats. It felt really traumatic. And actually, I don't even have that Doppler anymore. I sort of had to retire it because it felt like it just kind of held that energy as crazy as that might sound. So I had issues around baby heart beats. And I think Deva came to help me heal that.

So obviously in the end, it was all fine. And I didn't listen for probably two months. And then as I got closer to birth, I felt renewed and connected. And I knew deep down that she was fine. I had had many months to get back in touch with that. And sure enough. I listened, and it was absolutely fine. So it was a developmental thing. And it did last for awhile. For as much as I can tell, it wasn't like a one day thing. It was a several weeks thing. So that doesn't mean that that's how it will play out for everyone. But the other side of the coin is that, of course, babies can sound fine and not be. And that was a very present thought in my brain too. That we can't control everything. So especially with a pregnancy after loss. If you're looking for every last reassurance that everything



is fine, that's great. But it doesn't mean that everything is fine. And I guess that's really just the way it is in life. We don't know ever how things will work out just because we're here today doesn't mean we'll be here tomorrow. So lots of big picture things came into view. And like I said, ultimately, I'm grateful for that even though it was very difficult.

So other things manifested during her pregnancy that were hard. But ultimately, it was a matter of connecting. And something that really helped me—and I said this in the spirit babies podcast—was having lots of pregnancy journals of my own to read. So just little things. I always feel enormous in pregnancy. And I had all these worries that maybe along with her heart rate there was something else going on. And was I too big? And was there too much fluid? Really it was comical in hindsight all the things that I could worry about on a given day. But often when I would read my past journals, I would have said just the same thing with my other children. And so that gave me kind of a laugh some days and just perspective and calming some other days that I was almost like making things up.

And I don't think that's a strange thing to do when you're pregnant after loss. I think—yeah. You're just more aware of what can go wrong. You're aware of your lack of control and all kinds of things can pop in. But like I said for me I felt pretty aware in the sense of them popping in. And it wasn't easy. But if I could work through it and just find my center again then they would usually pass. And then I might be on to the next fear. But one thing at a time.

So the next kind of test I had was experiencing lots of contractions at about 29 weeks. And talking to other moms that have had losses whether, again, miscarriages or stillbirths that felt like a fairly common theme. So if you're listening to this and you're pregnant after loss, don't take any of these things as word of God. They're just people's experiences. So it doesn't mean that you will experience it that way. But it seems like that having some preterm contractions, again, isn't a crazily unknown experience. It seems like it does happen. So for me, that felt like another test even though when I was in it it was really crazy and scary. I really was having contractions. I wasn't making that up. It wasn't just in my head. And all those same feelings that I've already talked about came back. Can I trust my body? Can I trust my baby? And more of those feelings of wow. I have more to lose now. And when I finally got to the bottom of what that was for me—and it was after a whole day of contractions and a very serious consideration, honestly, of going to the hospital. I did not want to have a 29-week baby at home.

But what got me to the bottom of my own issues was realizing how much pressure I felt. And not literal pressure. But figurative pressure to bring this baby here safely. And feeling guilt in loss is a hugely common theme that probably deserves its own podcast because I think even when you're really aware and you know it wasn't your fault—of course, it wasn't your fault. And we don't even know why some babies don't stay. Most

of them. You can't help it sometimes. So during this period of having these contractions, when I finally let myself feel it, which was hard because I just cried and kind of threw a tantrum and lost it basically, it came back to that for me which was I feel so guilty. I feel like I didn't do it right. I mean why would that baby not have wanted to stay. Why didn't my body keep him alive? And what if my body just can't do this anymore? What if it is flawed? What if I can't bring this baby now here safely? What will people think? What will my husband think? What will my kids think if it's my fault again to lose a baby?

And, of course, I don't really believe that it's my fault or that it's anybody's fault when they have a baby die. But I'm just being honest that these were the emotions—maybe heightened, of course, with pregnancy hormones—in these moments. I don't believe that I could have done anything. But, again, in these moments, that was what came through. And I needed to lose it. Like you do in labor, again, which I think is why my labor was fairly simple. I had lost it so many times during this pregnancy. And it wasn't something I was talking publically about at all. I just couldn't. And I didn't want to share it then, and I didn't want to even talk about it. So these dark times, I think, are common during pregnancy after loss. And, again, maybe pregnancy in general. But there were so many lights, I think, in getting these messages.

So I had this day of contractions that was quite scary. I came across these feelings. And then basically, I had to figure out how to surrender to them. And I think that is something that we do. We do it whether we've experienced a loss or not. But perhaps it's more prevalent in these pregnancies after loss. We have to surrender. We have to stop controlling or trying to control every last thing. We have to release this guilt that we could have done anything. That implies that we lost control, right? So lose control. Lose it. And that is what I told my body. So these contractions went on all day. They were still going into the night. And I was exhausted, of course. Mentally, emotionally, physically. And I had already uncovered the part about being pressured to bring her here.

But when I laid there in bed that night, I told my body, "Just do what you got to do." I was so damn tired. I was just like, "Contract if you have to. But keep this baby in. I can keep this baby in." And that was a renewed determination that I never would have expected myself experiencing. I mean I've never had a preterm contraction. A real one. Not a practice contraction. But this was uncharted territory for me. And I had to find my center and my power and say, "Absolutely not. We are going to be pregnant for 10 more weeks," which funny enough is just how it went. She was born at 39 weeks. But I had to find my center and be really strict with myself. You're allowed to freak out. You're allowed to be scared. You're allowed to go crazy. But you will keep this baby in. And that is how it is going to be.

So I think we can have these dialogues with ourselves. And they sound kind of funny. But really if I had had a midwife that I was working closely with or if I was the midwife honestly for someone experiencing that, I think that would have been partly what I would have said too. Maybe not as harshly. But you need to find your center whatever it takes. You're fine. You're healthy. And this baby can stay in. So that's what I did. And after that, I have to say the last 10 weeks was pretty easy and blissful. Of course, in hindsight, I think we can forget some of the challenges of later pregnancy. But nothing major, right? I was uncomfortable. I had heartburn. All of the silly things. But I had done it. I had ridden essentially what felt like a tsunami at the time—the hardest roller coaster I had ever been on. And I got through it.

So that was amazing and was full of lessons and gratefulness and gratitude and grace and faith and all of the things that we kind of are glad to feel. So that's not to say I wasn't anxious for Deva to get here. But, again, I felt like the worst was kind of over. And really it was. Like I said, the rest of the pregnancy was fairly simple. And the labor, which I'll talk a little bit about, was really great and almost enjoyable. So to talk about the labor for a minute, I don't think there's a way that pregnancy after loss looks in labor and birth. Again, not to put ideas in people's heads but I think labor can be a challenge for some. Depending on a million, billion things. So perhaps with a stillbirth, labor is way different for those women if their baby died in labor or before labor. Certainly, that's going to take on a different feel with different issues.

So I can't speak ever for anyone but me. But this labor was kind of like the fruit of all of my work. That's what it felt like. It felt like I had gotten the challenges out of the way. I was fully aware of between worlds in this funny way that I haven't ever been. I can't really even explain it better than that. I was so aware of life and death in the room when I was in labor, but I wasn't scared of it. And I knew she would stay. And I knew my power, and I knew everything I had been through. And frankly, I just felt fearless. If I do go on perhaps to birth again, I don't necessarily expect to feel that way again. I think it was unique to this pregnancy and, like I said, really a gift. Really honestly. It was a huge relief to have this experience at the end.

Something I experienced during my labor was an acute awareness of the baby. And that wasn't something I had ever felt before. And I hear women expressing that sometimes. Like, "Oh my gosh. I just wanted the baby out." I really didn't have that feeling of like, "Oh baby. I can't wait to meet you." Certainly, some women do. But I think a lot—in labor, it's just like we need to get this baby out. And then, "Oh baby." But during Deva's labor, my focus was her. And, again, I've said it before. You can read that in her birth story. And you can watch it on her birth movie, and that's [thebirthmovie.com](http://thebirthmovie.com), if you haven't seen her movie. But I don't know what it looks like honestly to you. When you're watching someone labor, you don't know what was in my

head. But I was very connected with her. I was not afraid, and I wanted to meet her so bad.

So that's kind of what I felt the whole pregnancy. And that, of course, is a common theme I would think with pregnancy after loss. Just really, really wanting to meet this baby and getting through it. So just finishing up here, I did want to talk just a tiny bit about the postpartum period after a pregnancy that's come after loss. And if you are pregnant after loss, again, maybe you don't want to listen to this part. Not because there's anything bad that I'm going to say. But I'm not trying to shape anyone's experience or influence it. And yeah. You might want to see how your postpartum goes first. But nothing super awful. Just kind of I'm going to reflect on how the postpartum was challenging in some ways coming after loss. But the more I think about it on the days I've felt less emotional—Deva is almost six weeks now. So I've had kind of good days and bad days, as you can imagine.

But the more I think about it the postpartum period is really just rough for a lot of us and can be transformational. So I don't know that it's always just rough after loss. It's certainly just rough sometimes. But her postpartum was a lot rougher than I had anticipated. And so that was kind of a similar theme that came and went through this whole experience. And I think that I'm still not through. I think sometimes grief pops up at really random times. And that's rough because we think it's done, and we think it's over. And the hardest part of her postpartum was or is the fact that she is so here. And that's not a bad thing at all. That's the great part. She's so here. She's so beautiful and joyful, and I love her so much. And I've waited so long. But it's just this black and white. It's the light and the dark of seeing that and feeling this unexplainable sadness sometimes that, again, doesn't make sense in your brain.

Because your brain says, "Oh my gosh. Stop. You have a healthy baby here. You're good." And that's what I thought would happen. I thought that loss would come with so much healing with a live birth. And it does. It does. It does. But it also comes with this sadness that I didn't expect. It wasn't like 100% gone. Sable, I didn't forget. It didn't make it okay. Didn't make it less sad. And like I said, on some days, it made it sadder. And you might feel that way too if you've been through this experience. Again, no matter when your loss was that this baby made it. But the other one didn't. And why? And, again, your logical brain—and this isn't just logical. I do feel this in my heart. But your logical brain knows that you wouldn't have the one baby without the other. That genetics are—just we're all so unique. And that moment that conception occurs produces that unique person. And that could vary by the second or the minute or whatever. So it is true that a loss baby, if you do go on to have another, brings a unique baby that you would never have had without the loss.

So again, I knew—I know all these things. And I feel them. But it just make it hard in some moments. And I think that's okay. Funny enough the friends close to me that I have that have experienced loss in a similar way as myself that birthed again before me certainly knew this. And they were kind enough, I guess, to not really share that when I was pregnant. So I guess that's why I put a disclaimer on listening to this part if you weren't there yet just because that was done for me. And I felt like that was kind and compassionate because no one needs to hear that necessarily when they're pregnant, again, after loss that the postpartum might be kind of icky at some points. But it is a truth, I think, that is true for many of us. And, of course, I'm sure it's not true for anybody. But it was an experience that I really didn't expect. It brought up feelings that I didn't know were still there.

And so, again, that's what I mean by saying I'm not done either with this experience. I'll never be done. I think birth and death changes us forever. So we can't really ever have the final, final word on any of it. But that's where I am now. And as I said, it certainly has gotten better—whatever better means. Better, to me, means that I'm not feeling sad all the time. And, again, that doesn't mean that I forgot or it isn't something that's affected me. But I'm not feeling that as intensely and probably partly due to hormones as well. So I know too and I've come to feel more that it's okay in the sense that he is still around. It is cool, right? That our bodies hold cells of the babies we've carried whether they're living or not. And so the memory of all of the losses I've had will always be in my body.

So that's where I am at the moment. Again, kind of a bittersweet reflection. But pretty real. So a couple suggestions just to put them out there for people that are wanting some as far as more about making it through a pregnancy after loss. It's kind of clichéd but one day at a time, like I said. Some days it was one hour at a time. Just to breathe. Just to cry. Just to journal. Just to be afraid and connect with—at least, for me, connect to something bigger. That was really all I had in many moments because nobody—my husband, my best friend—nobody could say everything is going to be okay. Really. Not when I was kind of at my bottom. There wasn't really anything anyone could say to make it all better other than, "You'll be fine. Or you'll get through this," or whatever it was.

I think focusing on nourishing myself on all levels was something I was doing. I don't know that I thought about it like that at the time. But now that I'm reflecting and looking at journals, that was something that gave me peace. Feeding myself. Getting out to take hikes and being in nature and just being able to talk to myself or to connect with this baby. Definitely not getting over tired and scattered and all of the things that can play into fears that we're feeling. Prayer. Connection. Meditation. Whatever you need to do to be quiet. And really I think that goes for every pregnancy. 15, 20 minutes a day of quiet. And whatever you do with that, if your mind wanders or if you pray or

whatever it is, is good. And that was my only chance, I think, at finding my center during this. And, again, there is no right way. So what if I had had or what if you have a pregnancy after loss just kind of a mess, right? Meaning that you never have it together, and you're never centered.

I think that's a way it can go. And I don't think there's anything wrong with that either. I just had it as my intention—and I do think it was partly Deva as well—that I didn't want to experience it that way. I wanted to try as best as I could, again, to find these places in my experience where I could find my quiet. That's just always my method, I guess you could say, for dealing with fear or issues is to just find that place that knows. So it varied from day to day. Like I said, some days I was a mess, and everything was a big deal. And the world felt like it was going to end. And then the next day, I'd be okay. So I think that kind of thing is also grief. It's also just being a human. It's also being a pregnant human with hormones and that. So not really putting a label on it. In hindsight, if I could do that better, I would. So maybe that's a good suggestion. Just to not label it as this is awful. This is hard. Just let it be what it is and then move on because you probably will.

Having a network of people, of course, is helpful. Now for many people, that's online. I did share online a couple times. I remember sharing on Facebook just that this pregnancy was really freaking awesome. But it was also really rough after loss. And I saved that post somewhere on my computer because the responses were just loving. And if you were somebody that—if you remember—responded then thank you. Thank you for that love when I needed it because it was just people saying, "I get it. Or I love you. Or you can do it." And sometimes that's all we need to hear. Again, there's nothing anyone can say like, "Your baby will be fine." Or whatever we think we need to hear to be okay. We're not going to get that. And really we shouldn't because I think it kind of loses the making ourselves figure it out. So love is needed. So go to the places you can get love and support and a listening ear.

And so if that's you, I'm certainly available as a listening ear. Just email me or find me on Facebook, and I'll be happy to hold space for you during moments in your pregnancy after loss where you kind of just don't know what to do. Consider birth trauma healing, if that appeals to you. And there are many specialists and that kind of thing out there. Grief counselors. There certainly are people who are trained to lead you through in a way that you might find helpful. And I think finally just know you aren't alone. Know that many, many, many women experience loss. Many, many of those women do go on to be pregnant again. And many or most of those women make it through with a live baby. So just reaching out to people that can understand or communities or groups or whatever it is and just taking that breath and knowing that you will get through it. You will be okay.

So thanks for listening. Like I said, this podcast has been a long time coming. So it feels like a really big step for me, personally, to have talked about it. So I would love to hear your experiences with pregnancy after loss. And as always, check out the Indie Birth site for new information and content. Thanks so much. Have a great day.

(closing music)