

(introductory music)

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MARYN: Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Hi, it's Maryn here. And if you're a devoted listener, you've noticed that there's been kind of a break in podcasts. Nothing purposeful. Just busy. Life. Busy with our midwifery school and mamas here and, of course, kids, so I thought today would be the perfect time for, I think, a topic that has been well awaited by many of you. I know it's a topic that many of you suggest when I ask for ideas. So today, mothering and midwifery. And I'm sure you could come up with ten more ways to say that. How do we do these things together? How do we get started in midwifery when we are mothers? Or how do we continue in midwifery? How do we make it work?

I'm not sure I have any true answers for you today. Really, like all of these podcasts, I love to share my experience with you, and I'm honored that many of you hold space for my sharing. But ultimately, questions that are as deep as these need to come from within. So really my story is just my story. And maybe you can glean something from it or maybe you won't. Who knows? But perfect timing, like I said, because I really have been busy, and it's, honestly, felt hard to balance things. Mothering, midwifery, school, business, all of these things are part of my life. And in the end, I think there is a flow. There is a perfect flow that happens. And sometimes that's in the flow that doesn't feel like it's flowing, if that makes any sense at all. Meaning that sometimes things are working really well and great and I could have done the podcast at a time like that. And it's not that things are horrible or not working. It just seems like sometimes not everything flows together as well as it could. But I think that's the crux of the issue right there. Being a mother, being a midwife is there are roadblocks here or there. When we imagine a stream flowing there are some blockages sometimes or some things that redirect the water this way or that way.

And I think that, just saying that alone, is a really good thing to put out there. That there kind of isn't a stopping point. There isn't this perfect ideal scenario where you're just super woman, and you have it all balanced out. If you do, it probably won't last for every long at least if you're anything like me. Literally, might feel like seconds. Or if you're lucky, a couple of days where you think, "Man, I've really got this. I've really got this thing called crazy life being a midwife and having children." But if you're like me, then a couple of days later it's a complete opposite, and you feel like you're not actually doing anything worthwhile or whether that's midwifery or maybe it's about your kids. You feel like I'm not doing this right. Or I'm not being the mother that I could be. Whatever it is.

So that's a long intro into what I want to talk about today, again, because so many of you out there have asked. We have a school full of students and another class incoming, so I think this topic will never be old. There will always be someone looking to figure out how to make this work for them. So the notes I have are from a little while ago. I think a lot of it is still pretty much the way I feel. I just had never gotten around to recording this. I think there are so many levels to this topic. So many that are super personal. Why we came to being a mother, how we came to being a mother, how long we've been mothering other people. And then the same with midwifery. Where we are in our journey, how we came to it. Was it before we had children? Was it after? And then all of the other complicated stuff. What are our beliefs about birth and motherhood? How do we think these things should overlap? And, again, I can't answer any of those for you. It's just some things I've been considering.

I think one of my more jaded thoughts here that's at the top of my notes is that often becoming a midwife is not a priority for women because they feel like it can't be. Taking care of women, in general, isn't really a priority in our culture. And I'll probably talk more about that. So we're constantly finding this challenge in just being mothers even or just being midwives or really the two of them together can just be overwhelming for people because it's hard to take care of women. And we are often not being taken care of. Maybe we're not taking care of ourselves. Maybe we don't feel like we're being supported by the outside world or our partners or our families. So already we're kind of at odds with this topic. If we aren't watching women being taken care of in a way that supports their growth then we are one of those women that aren't being taken care of.

So when that happens, women feel like they have to find a way to make it work. And I think that's a lot of the questions that I hear out there, at least on social media. Women that are really, really, really deeply passionate about birth. They want to become midwives. But they are looking for this way to make it work. And I kind of have that in quotes. Because what does that even mean? How do we make it work? So I think I have experienced this. I am not surprised if other people have as well. That when we do go after something bigger than our families so midwifery or maybe it's even being a doula, we are often told we are selfish. We might even feel that. We might take that on and feel guilty. But the other side of that is it okay to put your passion on hold. Is it okay to wait to ignite your soul's mission? These are all very good and complex questions.

There are schools of thought on this. I will definitely say. And I'm not of the school of thought. I'm really not. I'm not one that says, "No. You should definitely wait until your kids are older. Kids come first. Family comes first. They'll never be young again." That's something I feel like I hear a lot. Your kids will never be young again. You should soak up that time. I'm not completely on that side of the fence. But I'm not on the other side of the fence either that you should just go after what you want. You just should not worry

about the fact that there are people that rely on you. I don't think there is one answer. I do think the issue with the first side of the fence—so that's the one that says, "Kids come first. They'll only be little once. Don't ignore them," is really, really not helpful for a woman that really does have this passion deep in her heart. So I am not criticizing at all women that truly, truly, truly 500% feel that their role is to be home with their children at whatever stage their children are at. There is nothing wrong with believing that truly, for yourself in your family, at all. But if you're someone like me that adores their children but could not be home with only them 100% of the time, then it's really a soul hurting idea to hear that you should be home with your kids. Or they're only little once, and you're missing that.

I know until I really started to feel into that and work through some of those feelings that I felt a lot of guilt and shame around my choice. My choice to pursue midwifery when my second baby was only a tiny little thing. He was only four months old when I started an apprenticeship. And my second, my third, my fourth babies all existed—their babyhoods, their childhoods existed during a very intense time of my life which was my midwifery apprenticeships. Easily, one of the hardest things I've ever done. So I've done that part. And even now as a midwife having the rest of my kids come through that path when I'm at that place in my life, it could easily make me feel, again, like I've done it wrong. How horrible that I would do that to my children when they're small. And so anyway, I've been there. I understand those feelings. And I think really all each of us can do is figure out are those really our feelings. Or is that something that society has dumped on us? Is that another manifestation of the patriarchy telling us that we should be home caring for children and that anything we truly care about on a soul level must wait? So, again, not criticizing either one, just you have to figure out what's right for you.

I do think we are having to recreate our role as powerful women. And I think that is kind of a facet of this whole discussion, and really a staple of what any birth is about. So how do we birth powerfully? How do we mother in a powerful way? Well, I think 99.9% of the time the answer comes back to the fact that we need to find or rekindle our knowing with the deep power that we have as women already. And I think that's exactly this conversation. So why would we feel like we needed to wait if we didn't want to? Why would we feel guilty for leaving our children to go to a birth with presumably a partner, dad, or close family member? We have to reinstate the power that we have in birth in our mothering for us to make the choices that our hearts are telling us to do. You deserve to live your passion right now, if that's what your heart is calling you to do. And so do I.

I know, for me, that maybe way before children I thought that children would really hinder my dreams. And for those of you that don't know, I was really in a different line of work back then. So I was a professional musician of the classical variety. And honestly, in my musician days although I was obviously a lot younger, in my 20s, I really didn't

think I would have children which, of course, is the cosmic joke now, right? But the reason I didn't is because music was really not lending itself to having children, being pregnant, raising them mostly because the demands of music are unique. Practicing multiple hours a day, lots of traveling, not a lot of money. And, of course, honestly, some of those things are true about midwifery too. But anyway, back then, I didn't see myself having kids because I really thought that they would make it impossible for me to do what I wanted to do. And I guess that's probably true with music for me because I did leave that world and get into midwifery with my second child.

But I know now that that is really far from the truth for me. That my children have been my biggest teachers and continue to be. That they have helped me discover my passion. And honest to goodness, it's not that it's not hard. But I don't feel that they take me away from birth. And I honestly don't feel that birth, on most days, takes me away from the bigger picture of being a mother. Yes. Birth may take you away from a birthday party or whatever it is. But I don't feel like it detracts from the bigger picture. I was looking at some birth photos yesterday that a mama sent me. She had her baby about two weeks ago and had a birth photographer there which is always super fun because you get these fantastic birth photos. And then, of course, there's always some of me or Anica and, in this case, there was some of me and Deva, who is my seven month old. And it struck me. It was such a poignant moment seeing these photos of me holding her while this mom was laboring. And me holding her while this baby came into the world. And then another birth last week, a similar thing. I just kind of felt it. I didn't have any photos of me to document it. But just holding Deva on my lap, she was kind of squirming and talking as this mom birthed her baby and taking photos with my other hand.

Now I'm not saying that to try to appear to be super woman. I found it more just beautiful for me in my own life to feel, "Okay. I don't have this all together." And none of us ever will most likely. But there are these moments of clarity and beauty where I can be holding my baby and be attending to a woman and feel like my life is pretty awesome. It's pretty perfect in its imperfection. So I know now it's possible to have children around to do this work. And maybe that's just what I'm here to share with you today. That it's possible. That your version might look different than mine. But ultimately, it really is possible.

The book, *The First Forty Days*. I'm sure many of you know this book. If not, you will want to Google it or look on Amazon or whatever and get a copy of it. I don't have the author in my brain at the present moment. But, again, the book is *The First Forty Days*, and it is a great book of recipes and really some cultural traditions and history around the period of postpartum. And even though I've known this knowledge for quite a few years as far as taking care of yourself and resting and community support and all the things that we know that postpartum should be, it really reminded me when reading how

not supported we actually are. So many of the ancient traditions outlined in this book were sacred, and they focused on the health, the wellness, the longevity of the mother because she was the head of the house in these matriarchal societies. So that right there is a huge difference, obviously, with the culture we're in now. We live in a patriarchal society.

But when women were the head of the family and the head of the community, it was no brainer. There weren't books needed to teach these things. There wasn't classes. It was just understood that if you wanted to take care of the society, if you wanted to see it thrive and grow, you took care of the women. So I think we can all do our part just reconnecting, reacquainting with this kind of information because it really does matter. And if we are practicing as midwives or even training as midwives or even doulas, I think this is great information to impart to other women, so that it's paying it forward. That we want to be the change. we are the change we want to see. We are all of these things. And if we want to get to a place one day where perhaps our daughters want to be midwives that they have a way easier time of integrating mother and midwife because really it's one and the same which is a nice quote I'll get to in awhile.

But we do need to reconnect women, I think, with this information which, of course, is what a lot of these podcasts do and a lot of the work that we're doing and a lot of the work that you're all doing because otherwise it comes out of nowhere. I think it is rather striking though that women that do want to become midwives aren't yet fully connected either with this information. So I think that's part of the struggle. What could society look like if women ran the show? And we're not going to get that overnight I realize. It's probably a matter of decades, if ever. But we can certainly hold that knowledge and this idea of women being really important. We have to live that. We have to live that for that to be a reality. Anyway, I think that book is awesome. I think it's another resource to remind women, to reconnect them with what they know, but it's certainly not common knowledge.

So right. There are some parallels there I believe with women pursuing midwifery that this is sort of new, feeling new, this information. And a lot like the information in the book, we have to make a choice. Are we going to put a lot of effort and time into these detailed postpartum meals? Or are we just going to go back to our normal, modern life and not take the time? That is one of the key differences I think with the patriarchal model. We talk about that quite regularly in birth and on these podcasts. And it's not meant to portray that as evil really. Really, it's not working. I think we could probably agree on that. But it's not like one is really better than the other. It's just as women we would thrive and function better in a matriarchal society. And I think many of you would agree our whole world would. And issues like this wouldn't be issues because women would just be living out being women. And being a midwife is often just living out being a woman although it's really hard work.

So let's see. What else do I have to say about this? Another issue, I think, that comes up in the midwifery world—and this is probably going to be slightly offensive to some people. Is that we need to be making money and often people even enrolling in our school want to know, “Okay. So when I'm done with this school, what kind of money can I make? What kind of job can I have?” And it's a complex conversation. I'm definitely not one that doesn't think we deserve to make money in birth work. So that's not where I'm at, at all. I think we should be paid for our time, for our knowledge, for our efforts. But this view of it being more of a profession is definitely more on the patriarchal side of things and I think can make the apprenticeship model, in particular, seem really awful and really ungratifying. So that's some, again, reeducation, I think, women have to do. Most people don't get paid for apprenticeships. I sure didn't. And I wouldn't pay an apprentice. So I think there is learning that has to be passed down. There is an understanding for the modern world we live in and the fact that apprenticeships aren't always the easiest thing for people to do. But also not wanting to enter into this midwifery and birth work as a job in the strictest, malest sense of the word.

I know many of us that have partners—many of them, because they're male—most of them—are thinking along those lines too of like, “How can we afford for you to be a midwife? How can we afford for you to leave the house whenever, right? For as long as it takes without pay?” So again, these are complex questions. And I feel like some of the answers aren't quite black or white. They're kind of somewhere in the middle because yes. Like I said, as a midwife, I believe we should be paid or whatever, remunerated, whatever that is, that you would find acceptable in your life. But entering into midwifery doesn't guarantee a pay structure, I guess, is what I'm trying to say. And whether or not you are a midwife for purely money is going to come back to your beliefs about birth, your function, why—whether it be in the system or outside of the system. I certainly do know many midwives, especially ones in the system, that are purely in the system because of the financial arrangement that that brings them.

So I'm not telling anyone if that's right or wrong for them. I feel fortunate that I can do midwifery in the way that my heart calls me to do and not feel like I have to meet a certain quota money wise to feed my family. Obviously, there are some conflicting things that come up here. So again, settling in with these questions, talking them over with a partner, and I think going deeper because money, for example, is important. It's obviously the way we function still in society, but I do think there are deeper things going on. And I would say the same to a woman that came and wanted to hire me for being her midwife. Money is not the be all and end all. That is not why you hire someone. And to me, that is not why you go into midwifery. It might be part of it, but I think there are definitely some other things there. Apprenticeship and midwifery just don't come with those kind of guarantees unless you have a birth center that makes X

amount per year. But, of course, then you get into all that other complicated stuff I would imagine that those of us that have our own private practices don't have to deal with.

So let's talk more about how to balance mothering, perhaps, with attempting to learn or apprentice. And I will say too that I think some great resources for this—not to put any of our students in our Indie Birth Midwifery School on the spot—but I think almost all of them are fantastic resources for such a question. These are women that, for the most part, have children. Some have grandchildren. Some don't have children yet. But for the most part, have children and are actually doing this. They are actually balancing their life in this way. They are actually completing this school, and some of them are doing an apprenticeship at the same time. So there are women out there living this, and I would encourage you to find them. We do have an Indie Birth Midwifery School prospective students group, and that would be a great place to ask these kind of questions or brainstorm. How are you making this work? What have you learned? Because this is just my perspective here.

So when I was an apprentice, and even now, I think that you have to make it a priority. So sometimes I think the idea of becoming a midwife or apprenticing has this rock star glam to it, has this really elevated kind of job energy around it. And while I love being a midwife and doing this work, I would say it's so not that. In fact, I was talking with another midwife the other day, and we were reviewing some case studies which is also less than perfect scenario kind of stuff. And she said out loud, "Sometimes when people ask me how to become a midwife, I just don't even know how to answer them because it's so hard. And it's so not the kind of life that I really would wish for anyone. It's more of a calling. It's more of,"—as my music teacher in my college would say, "You have to want to do nothing else." And funny, when I was in music, he would say that, and I thought, "Oh, I definitely want to do music." But when it came down to it, could I do something else? Well, obviously, I could, and I did.

And so with birth work, I really do think that same principle applies. If there is anything else you could do with your life, go do that. Really. Because it's not an easy path. It's not easy by any stretch. It's not glorious. Yes. It's often beautiful. And yes. It's often heart fulfilling. But honestly, it's often heart wrenching just as much, and it's hard. So that isn't my plug to throw in the towel or turn off this podcast. It's just the honesty really. Let's be honest here because we're talking about a very tough topic, which is how to balance this with being a mother. And ultimately, if this isn't something you really, really have to do, then just don't stress yourself out. Don't try and balance these things. So I think that is just an honest truth that a lot of women out there that are thinking they want to do birth work or apprentice, they don't actually. And maybe they'll figure that out at this point or that point. But in the end, it won't really be a thing.

So I think another point that comes up when I think about balancing an apprenticeship or being a midwife with mothering is that we really have to love ourselves first. And we have to do that or learn to do that or be in the process of doing that. It's not that we ever have it done before we can truly move on to having other people under our umbrella of care. Self care is a huge topic, and I have done a podcast on self care. And our students did a whole ten-week quarter on self care with Emily. And that wasn't even meant to be a ten week over and done kind of thing. It was just an intro, so that hopefully these students have a really great basis for taking care of themselves. Whatever that is. Because, again, it's so individual. Do you have routines or rituals you like to do? Is there something you have to do every day or every week to keep your sanity, to keep your focus? And I would argue that there is. It won't be what it is for me necessarily, but I do think especially when we are apprentices or midwives and mothers there has to be set select things that we know bring us back to focus. And we have to be able to access them and actually do them.

And I say that from experience obviously. Because when I find myself kind of spiraling down, maybe I'm exhausted. Maybe the kids are sick, and I've had three births. Or maybe a birth didn't go well. These are all reasons why life just can seem like it's crumbling down on you. And if I didn't have the resources and people that I do in my life that I have purposely set up, then I might just not get up the next morning. Or I might truly quit this work. And I think that is another thing that comes up. How many of us have said along the way, "This is it. I'm done." You will say it as a midwife. I promise you. You will. You will say you are done. And you might be done. And I might be done one day when I say that. But ultimately, I know right now that what that really means is that I have got to get focus again. And I have got to find myself before I can possibly take care of anyone else.

So Julie, if you're listening—my friend, Julie, who is in our school—I thought of you just now because after a couple of births Julie texted me and just said, "I hope you're taking care of yourself. What are you doing for self care?" And she said she was going to check back on me. And I thought, "Wow. That's a really awesome gift for her to give me." And I think that's a really nice thing to do for each other whether we're apprentices or doulas. Whatever. It doesn't matter. If you have friends or colleagues that are doing this work, that's a way for you to help them out too, and, hopefully, they'll give that back to you. So that was a wonderful way of feeling like yes. I am reaffirming my connection to my self care, and it gave me a kick in the pants to be like, "Okay. What is my plan?" I am really overworked right now. I am really tired. My baby is not sleeping. Whatever. What am I going to do for me? And so today, actually, it was to go to yoga class and then to go to my favorite juice bar and take care of myself in a physical way. And believe it or not, something like this podcast, at times, can feel more like a healing

experience. And today, it kind of feels like that because I think this is an important part of me that needs to be shared as well.

So, again, self care. I could ramble on for the next 40 minutes. I'm not going to. But you need to get a plan. And like I said, we have a course in our school. It's not going to be offered now for a whole other year, but you can totally just take that course even if you're interested. If not, there's all kinds of books on self care. And ultimately, it's just developing what works for you and not feeling guilty, not feeling like you are taking away from anyone when you practice self care. I think that's the biggest misconception, and I don't even know that I love the word self care. But whatever, that's what we have right now. Taking care of yourself is not you not taking care of someone else whether it's your three year old or a mama that you serve. You taking care of you makes it possible for you to get up in the morning, for you to have energy to do any of the things on your list that you need to do. So it is not a waste. It is not a hobby. It is a must.

Hmm. So what other words of wisdom so I possibly have? I guess I could talk a little bit more about bringing a baby to births because I feel like I've definitely gotten that question over the years. I have been bringing a baby of mine to births for 13 years. I have some rules around that. So when I was an apprentice, my rules really were largely based on what was working for the midwife I was with as well as her clients. So I can recount just a handful, maybe two, maybe three, births where I wasn't really welcome to be with my baby. And that was totally fine. And I didn't go. I had in my favor the fact that the midwife I worked with, at least the one I mostly worked with in Chicago, had her own baby, I think, most of the time I apprenticed. So honestly, it was both of us with our babies. And I'm not saying that should be the way you do it. I'm not saying that works for every pregnant woman. I'm just saying it worked. It worked for her clients. It worked for me. I was super grateful. And I loved, loved, loved and still do admire her, the midwife I worked with, for imprinting that in my own consciousness, for reminding me that we don't have to separate work and motherhood.

We can. And sometimes we need to. But we don't have to because someone else has an expectation of what's appropriate. So I loved that about my apprenticeship. I was never looked down on, or I never felt weird or strange bringing my baby when I needed to other than the times, like I said, where it wasn't appropriate. So that has just been my way. And I say, and I have said, it always works out. Having a baby at a birth has never not worked out. And I realize that sometimes it's because other people are really helpful. So I want to put that out there. Now that I am the midwife, not the apprentice, sometimes the success of having, let's say, Deva there has been—my apprentice has been Anica. And if Anica is listening, I will say a public thank you to her that yeah. It doesn't always just work out. She has several times picked up my own crying baby from a bedroom and held her while a baby has been being born or while I needed my hands for something else.

So I very much do appreciate and recognize the fact that it takes a village sometimes. It's not all just miracles and rainbows and unicorns when you bring a baby to a birth. But I also do have a deep trust that it works out, that Deva is meant to be there if she is there with me. I'm relaxed. So for the most part, she's pretty relaxed. And that has been the way with my other babies. I'm not nervous or uptight about having them there. I think if you are most babies can feel that and feed off of that. So it might not work, but then you have to figure out, of course, how you're going to leave a nursing baby home. So that's another issue, I think, that comes up when you're thinking about being an apprentice or training to be a midwife in any type of way. That if you're nursing a baby, it really does limit your freedom. I think that's just the fact. I'm not saying that's bad. I know that's temporary. And I've been trying myself even to really love where I'm at with Deva. She may be my last baby. I may never bring one of my babies to births again. And so when I'm up in the middle of the night nursing her because that's what she wants to do right now, I'm trying to find my passion for that because there is a lack of freedom. But there is also, of course, the trade offs of being super closet to this adorable baby and knowing that she's taken care of.

So it's, like I said, not all unicorns and rainbows. We have to accept that we have limits when we have tiny children. And we have to work with those limits as best we can and be honest with ourselves. Something that we've been trying to be really honest about here at Indie Birth and some of you listening may have been affected by this is that we are not super welcoming of babies that aren't nursing newborns at some of our skills workshops or conferences. The reason being that we need people to be able to focus. We want you to be able to focus. It is not necessarily the time to have babies running all over a tiny little room especially when there is equipment around or medical equipment or tools or whatever. So that has been kind of a, I think, pretty bold thing we've done. I'm sure some people have really appreciated that on behalf of their own learning and being able to focus. And I know people have not appreciated that.

Back in my student day, I graduated from Ancient Art of Midwifery Institute. And the kind of mode in that school, at least at that time, was just this more inclusive like we bring babies everywhere. We have babies at workshops. We have babies at conferences. And while there is a beauty to that, I know that I found it really distracting to learn when someone else's kid was screaming. And we're not talking little newborns here. We're talking older, two, three, four-year-old children sitting in on sessions. So I'm really opinionated about that at this point. And again, it's not because I don't think kids are awesome and great. It's because I think, as women, we deserve the time to learn. We deserve the brief 12 hours sometimes to get away and immerse ourselves in our passion, and I think if the world isn't supporting us in that then there is a problem. And we need to address that and not just bring kids along everywhere because we don't have any one to watch them. I don't think that's ultimately serving ourselves. I don't

think that's respectful of ourselves, of other people, and ultimately, let's be honest. If you have your two, three, four year old along, you're probably not retaining too much anyway.

So where do we claim this time? How do we claim this time? Whatever the time is, whether it's not, whether it's in 10 years for you, how do you claim the time to grow and learn? Because you can't do it all. As I gave credit to Anica, which was very sincere, I would have to give equal, if not way more credit, to my husband for all these years of him supporting this crazy life that I live. And I'll be honest. Without him, it really wouldn't happen, so there's really this catch-22. We can criticize the patriarchy, but then many of us married to men have to find a way to engage them or encourage them to engage in this lifestyle, this way, this being with their children in a way that they weren't taught because we do need them. We do need them because we cannot be everything. I cannot be the mother to all eight of my children 100% of the time and be a midwife. I've accepted that. And I can't do it. And I'm happy for the help. And I'm happy for the fact that he understands that we need to do this together.

So let's see. Let's see. Our school, of course, was created with this in mind. These women are working hard every day, every day of the week, on this school, and it's all online. So they are finding a way in their own lives to structure this. How do they get the time? Is it two hours this day? Is it five hours the next day? So, again, I would encourage any of you to talk with any of the students in the school if you want more ideas on this kind of thing is working for them. So balancing motherhood and apprenticeship, for me, was based on a few principles. The first is something that I just brought up which is I don't think mother, in quotes, as a sacred and respectful term isn't all that children should ideally have. Now I get it. sometimes it is all they have. That is it. And that's what it is. I think in most cases they have a father, hopefully, that's present. But even if not, our community support. This is something I know that many of us are looking forward to changing one day.

I think it's healthy for my children to know and feel deeply on a soul level and a physical level that my husband is there for them. That no. He can't breastfeed them, obviously. But they are safe with him. And when I start to leave Deva, which already is making me super sad because I haven't left her at all—when I start to leave her about the time she turns a year, I won't bring her to births anymore because having a mobile baby, to me, is a whole different ball of wax and not something I think I want to do. And I don't think it's something she probably will want to do. But when that time comes, I will feel sad to get up in the middle of the night and leave her next to my husband in bed. But I know 500% that she is safe with him and that, no, he can't nurse her. but he can comfort her, and he can hold that space for me while I am gone. And that is the best feeling in the world.

So I don't know how to fix that. I'm not trying to be judgy about situations and relationships where that's not the case. I'm just sharing that that's what is my solace really, and I couldn't do that work—I couldn't do this work without that. The role of a father taking the baby is really another podcast. I see very often that, as strong women, we want to do it all. We want to be the only. And that can backfire on us. So I think finding our balance. And certainly, I've had time—more time than most people with eight children—to figure out that balance. But still, I catch myself feeling like I need to do more than I am capable of. So today, actually, I have a great anecdotal story here from this morning. So I was out on a hike like I do every morning. And unbeknownst to me—or maybe I did now, but I forgot—I don't know. My husband needed to make a phone call which we trade off with work, so that meant I should be home. So he's not snippy or anything like that, but he texted me while I was not home. And I was kind of far away from home on a trail. He texted me, "Hey, I need to be on the phone now." I was like, "Oh god. Well, I'm hurrying." But I was on the phone with Emily. And we were kind of talking about that.

So I thought my husband took the baby. In all reality, he actually—one of the kids was watching the baby for a couple of minutes. But I thought, for whatever reason that he took the baby with him on his phone call, like took her in his arms and was walking down the street. And so I said something to Emily about, "Oh my gosh. I'm hurrying home. Jason has a phone call, and he took the baby." And she was like, "That's awesome." Her husband is awesome too. So she's like, "It's so great." But then she was like, "But wait a minute. We would not say that probably about a woman or a mother." We would just expect that, of course, she took her baby to do the phone call. But yeah. Still we all have a ways to go, right? So that was very, very cool thing to point out, Emily. Thank you. That, yes. It was very cool of him had he actually taken the baby. But yes. It's also something that was needed. And that would have been fine. It wouldn't have been like above and beyond. It would have just been normal. I am the dad. I'm going to take care of the baby.

But that's not what most people are living in all honesty. And, again, that's not a judgment thing. Most people have more typical job schedules and that kind of thing where most dads, fathers, aren't even home during the day. So anyway, I thought that was kind of a cool thing to point out and made me realize too that yes. I can be grateful, and I am grateful for his help and the way we equally parent. But at the same time, it shouldn't be anything crazy, right? Pick up a baby. Take care of a baby. That's what we do.

So let's see. I think too that the qualities that we work on to be midwives, to be birth workers, are things that we work on to be better mothers and that they're one and the same. And that I want to develop these qualities in both areas of my life. So some things that come up are being loving, being passionate, being focused, being

dependable, being reliable, being responsible. I want to be that person in all aspects of my life. I don't have a separation between mother and midwife when it comes to those qualities. So let's talk about kids a little bit, babies and kids. I think that kids can be groomed, so to speak in the best possible way, to be children of midwives. And as I said, my kids have been in this lifestyle for virtually their whole lives. My oldest daughter wasn't. She was two when I started an apprenticeship. But really, I don't think she has very much memory of me not doing this work.

So some of these tips kind of were passed down from the midwife that I worked with, and I will share some of them with you. One tip she shared with me is that it really depends how we structure our lives. So that's something that I feel like was a gift to be aware of so early in parenthood. So before school, before kids are aware of holidays, or traditions, or we trick-or-treat on Halloween or whatever it is, I was aware that those are constructs that we put into our lives because we want to, right? They're voluntary. They're not necessary. So just think about that, I think, especially if you have small children, and you're able to restructure your life. How many of the things that you're programming them with do you really want, do you really believe? And I say that completely honestly because there are people with religious traditions, for example, that are very important. And I'm not saying anything negative about that at all. If there is a religious tradition that's important, then you will keep that because it is important, and you will structure your lives around it. And then should you miss such an event, you will find a way to communicate that to your children or rectify it or whatever it is.

But so much that is structured in our lives is not necessarily things we purposely put there. They are things we grew up with, or we just think are habit. So Halloween, like I said. That's a great example. My kids have been taught to be really flexible with non-religious holidays. We're not religious anyway, so I admit that takes some of the pressure off. But I think a lot of people would admit that so much of what's going on holiday wise isn't religious anyway. So much of Christmas, Halloween, Easter, whatever it is. So I've always been really relaxed about those kind of holidays. I don't have a thing I always do. And really, like I'm trying to communicate, it's because I don't want to build in an unnecessary structure that's disappointing to them should it not happen. So I guess you could say I'm setting it up so they're not ultra disappointed. But I really didn't start with the intention of only that perspective. I really came at it from a perspective of, "Hey, every day is important. Every day is beautiful. Every day is worth living, and so let's do our best with every day and not put all this crazy focus on one day or two days," because then when that doesn't happen especially for young children it can be really, really hard and really earth shattering.

So I think I've succeeded somewhat in that. I think my older kids—they can laugh about it more now that we've really never done anything super traditional. Maybe we'll celebrate Christmas one year and get a tree. Maybe the next year we'll do solstice.

We're kind of always changing it up. There is not really a huge defined thing that happens. Birthdays. I found birthdays to be the most challenging. But my kids know that we will always celebrate their birthday even if it's not exactly as planned. If there is a party scheduled, the party will still go on even if I'm not there. And that's just the way we've done it. Again, I'm not saying that that's the answer for you or that that's 100% or that my kids won't grow up and not have liked what I have done for them. I'm not sure. My daughter's birthday, my 11 year old, was a couple weeks ago. And she knew, just like she always does, that we were going to do this certain thing. We were going to go shopping, she and I. But we had a couple of days picked out. So the deal was if a baby comes, then we go to the next available day. So yes. She's 11. She's old enough to understand that. Not all young children are. But, again, just building in this feeling of flexibility, this feeling of yes, it will happen. I really do promise that it will happen. I just can't always say when. And then the obvious. Making the most of it when it does. Fully participating as much as you can.

For me, it's like putting down my phone. Not engaging in other kinds of work or conversation when I do have these special moments. But honestly, isn't that the greatest life lesson for all of us? Are we ever guaranteed tomorrow, right? Are we ever guaranteed another birthday? It sounds kind of dark, I guess, to some of you. But really, it's been very life affirming to do midwifery because we aren't guaranteed anything really than what we have in the moment. And we can learn to make more of the moment. And that's something I'm always working on too. So I won't pretend I have that down but being present is hard in our life, in our society, in our culture. And I think midwifery forces me to be more present in birth for the moms that I'm serving and then it forces me to be more present in the moments that I do have with my children.

Something I've always noticed about going to births and maybe some of you have feedback about this is after a birth, after a baby is born, after I witness this baby coming earth side, it's both just totally ordinary and normal. And on the other side, it's truly like the world has different colors. And I've always said that. It seems like the world is in Technicolor after a birth. And I think it's because you're simply present in that moment. So when I leave a birth and I'm cleaned up and all of the things and I'm tired, I come home, and I literally see my children through different glasses. Like I said, yes. I may be really tired. I might go to take a nap in the next hour. But when I first come home, hearing their little voices or seeing them or hearing about what they did yesterday, it is more powerful than any other day when I'm just moving along in motherhood kind of getting burnt out hearing kids all day. It takes on a really special importance.

So I think that's my root of confidence for myself and, hopefully, for many of you to kind of feel and gauge whether that's true for you. Is that life can be so much more meaningful with birth work. It's just finding our way to it and finding our way through it which, of course, is the hardest part. So I have kind of a quote here from a Facebook

friend. Her name is Erika Andrews, and I'll have to tag her in this podcast. She had posted this awhile ago. I want to say it could be close to a year ago about her view of motherhood and midwifery. And I asked her if I could quote her right there on her Facebook page even though we don't know each other terribly well at all. Only because it was exactly what I wanted to say. Way more eloquent than I can probably say it. And probably, if I was just going to go with her quote, didn't need to babble about this for the last 40 minutes.

But anyway, so this is quote by Erika Andrews, who I believe is a newer midwife. So she wrote this in response to those who always ask her how she does it and to insinuate that you can't be a good mama and a midwife simultaneously. So I'm going to read her quote. "Even my kids are proud and excited about this new adventure. 'Take my picture by the table, Mama,' he excitedly shouts. His excitement fills the space. Smiling, I happily oblige. This is happening, and my children get to be a part of it. So many people ask me how I manage midwifery and motherhood. But honestly, I can't think of any profession more suited to motherhood except for midwifery. I mean midwifery and motherhood are already sacred sisters linked intimately at the heart. For my family and I, we have found that while midwifery can be hard it's just as hard as life gets. It is life. And it just flows into mothering and family. Yep. Birth can take two days. You can have back to back births for three days in a row. Lots of energy goes out. All the time. Midwifery is deep, deep soul work. But it is sacred too, and I have raised my children to recognize it as such. So when I am gone, they know it's because of a new soul joining us, and they beg to hear the story as soon as I return home. Their faces beaming, hearts bursting. Alas, absence makes the heart grow fonder, and my random bouts of space holding away from them seem to help them appreciate the mother they have. That's a big win. And lastly, mothers are doctors, police, on call social workers, and so much more. Motherhood doesn't define us. We define motherhood. And my motherhood looks like this. My kids come to work with me and know what a midwife does. And it just works." #midwiferyandmotherhood

Thank you, Erika. That is a gorgeous, gorgeous quote of your life, and I wholeheartedly agree. So thanks for listening today. You can always get me at maryn@indiebirth.com if you have any feedback. You can always leave me a review on iTunes too. I think people find that annoying when I ask. But truly, it helps more people find this podcast. And it's extra tricky because many of you are listening to this podcast on our Indie Birth site, which we love. But iTunes is actually where a lot more people find these podcasts. So thanks, again, for listening. Have a great day.

(closing music)