

(introductory music)

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MARYN: Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Hi, Maryn here today alone. No interview today. Just me blabbing on about something that's been going in my mind as usual. I think I'm going to call this podcast *Haters Gonna Hate*. And if you know who Miranda Sings, totally not birth related by the way, then you can maybe chuckle with me at the title of this. My oldest daughter is really good at imitating Miranda Sings to the point where she's actually than Miranda. So in our house, we say haters gonna hate a lot. And really it's the perfect name for this podcast, I think.

So here is what I think is a truth, and I'm going to base this podcast on this truth. We can be creative forces in the world. Each and every one of us. We can add something of value because are creative beings. Or we can be consuming people and life sucking forces and add negativity to the world. Those are the choices as I see them. So I do think this pertains, of course, to birth work and mothering. And I want to talk about these thoughts today. Energy is so powerful. So this might be a bit of an esoteric podcast for some although I have some good real life examples on how I see this playing out in the world. And, again, I've been spending time thinking how to best focus my energy, how to best focus my life force, why I believe I'm here in the most positive way that I can.

And I think many people do want to do the same. But for many reasons, some of which I'll discuss, we can get sucked in to doing something else. So it is true that—I think anyway—the Internet, social media, in particular, has constructed this artificial reality. This is something that has really struck me lately, and I wonder if you'll know what I mean. So of course, the irony is you may have found this podcast on Facebook, for example. I will talk about what I think are the positive aspects of this artificial reality. But right now I want to just see if you can go along with me. Let's say it's Facebook, for example, right? That's the biggest social media platform of the moment. Does it ever occur to you how we all are participating in essentially a world that we've created that is not real. So the time you spend on Facebook scrolling around, reading people's posts, doing other things, did it ever occur to you that that's not actually real? Now, of course, the definition of reality can vary from person to person.

But I'm talking about reality meaning real life connections. Kind of like what you can feel in your hands, what you can actually see with your eyes, right? There's this real life that we all live. And there's this artificial reality that has been created by who knows

what? For who knows what purpose? Where it's like this whole other world exists out there of opinions and thoughts and articles and debates. I don't know about you, but I can guess if you're like me and you're just a human that it can be really emotionally draining to be on social media these days. My thought right now is that it's not good for a lot especially when you don't have an intention and you don't have something that you're sharing from your truth. If you're going along with what other people are saying or commenting on this or that or worse yet, like many of us have the ability to—we get involved in debates or some kind of deeper discussion, again, in a reality that is not real. So it's not real to comment and to really share your heart and your truth in this artificial setting where it's just a string of comments. You can't hear how anything is being said. You don't know the person who is saying it.

People, in general, can say whatever they want wherever they want in whatever way they want on social media without being held accountable. And so all of these factors can take what we used to call gossip in real life to a whole new level. I find this fascinating even if, like I said, I'm seeing pretty clearly that it's created this alternate universe that ultimately I'm not sure is benefitting anyone. So more on some of the negatives before I get on to the positives. People in these settings, in this social media setting, of course, we don't need to be in the same location. It doesn't really matter. We don't even know most of the time where people live unless we happen to know them in person. Social media, itself, really has declared their own universe. As far as I'm concerned, Facebook is behind the times and really detrimental in a lot of ways to the education of women, to furthering the normalcy of birth. If you are up at all on these things—and I'm assuming most people are—but if you aren't, I'll tell you that Facebook and Instagram, even though they're kind of the same corporation—Facebook is definitely censoring birth photos, censoring birth posts. Not even just birth, but pregnancy.

I, many times, have had my account suspended because of posting a birth related photos that, of course, wasn't nudity and may not even have been revealing in any kind of way. Just today I posted a photo on Instagram that was not revealing in any kind of way. There was no breast, no nipple, no nothing. Simply mom's face, baby's face. And my sister, who is also on Instagram, sent me a screen shot of Instagram asking her if they—if she thought this post was disturbing. So she was asked to check a box in relationship to my very benign birth post and was encouraged to remove it. So I didn't even know that was going on until today when I had already planned to do this podcast. So we are not, as women, as autonomous beings with the ability to create and make our own choices, we are not being supported by social media at all. In fact, I really think it is turning into the detriment of human integrity. We're not really allowed to have discussions there. And, again, if you're like me and maybe you're not, I don't really tend to want to talk about anything too personal. I personally would never talk about a birth I

attended or review anything with anyone on social media even if it was in a message format. I don't trust them.

And, again, I don't think they're ultimately looking out for any of us. I think they've constructed a reality that is just another arm of the patriarchy because if it wasn't we would be free to share photos, for example. And we're most definitely not. Just yesterday, as well, I believe this photographer—birth photographer—is in the Netherlands. I don't have her name off hand. But she posted a really nice photo of a water birth. And all you could really see was the mom's thigh and the baby through the pool. It was a really cool photo. And I think they did end up allowing her to post it. But who knows what she went through? And that's ridiculous.

So whether you're involved in that level of censorship on Facebook, I realize that most people aren't. But whether you are or not, I think might agree that these kind of artificial realities that social media has started to construct for us are detrimental. And they can throw any of us into an emotional tailspin on the regular. And again, I have just been thinking about this because how does this affect birth work? How does this affect the work I want to do? How does it affect you, if you're also in birth work? How does it affect you if you're just planning your own midwife-attended birth or your own freebirth? I would not doubt that most of you that are and are on social media have been affected by what's going on there. Again, whether it's a negative conversation or a negative comment or just a stalker kind of person or a troll. This all sounds so dramatic. But it's actually happening. And, again, is it real? I'm very much seeing that it is not, but that if we participate in these things, it does start to create this level of reality where, again, we're emotionally affected. We're seeing our posts removed, or we're involved in discussions. And things get heated. And we really feel it. We feel like something is wrong in the world even though it's just a screen. It's just a screen with words, and we don't even know what's going on in the brains or hearts of any of the other people.

So another really negative part of social media, and I think lots of what's going on online, is that there is so much hate. Again, why I wanted to call this podcast *Haters Gonna Hate*. There is so much hate. People are, I think, needing an outlet for their anger and frustration and hurt. And social media, unfortunately, is a really outlet for many people because it's so easy, right? You can log on from anywhere. And you don't even need a computer. You can do it from your phone. You can read these comments while you're standing in line at the grocery store. Maybe you've just had a fight with someone in real life. Maybe you've yelled at your kid or who knows what. And you're already just feeling bleh. Then you get on social media, and everything looks negative. And if you were to just talk uncensored, who knows what you would say? So it's maybe a human characteristic is we just want to unload our anger and hate. But again, I think it's way too easy nowadays.

Something that's been upsetting me, which, of course, has part in the motivation for this podcast is I see it happening even in what I would call likeminded circles. So in my world, birth, midwifery, mothering, that women are policing women. So it's an amazing, amazing tactic that the patriarchy has rigged up for us. They don't need to police us. They don't need to be the one to censor our photos on Facebook. Very often it is women doing this for other women. And ironically, many of these circles, many of these situations or discussions focus on what we might call feminist discussions or feminine issues or women that feel like they're kind of on the radical edge of any of these topics. And they are doing the same thing to women that men—groups of men have been doing to women for decades. Again, which is policing them and dividing them up into groups and telling them that this group is better than that or this group is victimized or whatever.

So that's just a really negative part of social media that I think has flared up in a big way recently and has led me to spending nearly zero time, especially on Facebook, because I just don't see where it's going in a positive way. I was going to do a podcast a couple weeks ago on censorship, but I kind of wove it into this one a little bit because they seemed like they overlapped. Another way things are being censored, women against women, is really what goes on in midwifery on a daily basis. There's all kinds of bullying really all the time. And this type of midwife than that type of midwife. And all kinds of crazy stuff. So I don't really want to spend the whole podcast down in the mud and the darkness of this topic. But I think bringing awareness to it is something that's important. Everything isn't always roses and unicorns even amongst women, even in the birth world. And chances are if you're listening to this and we are friends on Facebook or whatever it is, you've noticed the same thing. So I don't think I'm really telling anybody anything they don't know. I'm just highlighting that this is a problem from my perspective. And it's a problem for me personally but only as long as I choose to participate which is where I hope to cross over into the positive with this podcast.

Any of you that come from the decade of *Seinfeld*, which I'm totally dating myself, but as a New Yorker and as somebody that was growing up when *Seinfeld* was really popular—it's a show that my husband and I probably know every word to every episode. It's one of the few shows that I've ever watched. But anyway, if you know that show, it reminds me of when Seinfeld—Jerry Seinfeld won a race when he was a kid. And when he gets to be an adult, the guy that he beat kind of comes around and wants to race him again. And Jerry's simple response is, "I refuse to run." And maybe you had to see it to think that it's funny. But it kind of reminded me of what my response is right now to social media which is, "I refuse to run." I refuse to play the game. I am not going to contribute negatively to the discussions. I will, of course, post and voice what I feel my truth is. But to me, that's not really up for discussion. So it's partly the way you view these things, I suppose.

But I have things I want to do in this life. I have things I want to accomplish even on a daily basis and getting involved in all of that just doesn't fit the bill anymore. Thinking about this topic too has really humbled me. We're all human, and I think there is just going to be disagreement amongst people sort of until the end of time. I think there's a lot to be at odds with on many days with other humans, and the birth world is so charge with emotion and passion that I definitely don't think I'm perfect. And there are many situations and people even in the birth world that could trigger me into a reaction versus a response. So I feel responsible for that too. And it's another reason that I'm taking a step back from all of that. Kind of like if you don't have anything nice to say don't say anything at all.

And it's made me think because it's happened to me on the other side. I can read on any day a post about how awesome I am. And then the next second I can read a post about how crazy and reckless I am just based on where it's coming from in the world. So it's really made me feel into something more deeply which is we don't know other people when we decide we're going to comment or discuss them. Just like they don't know us really. So even for all the people that listen to my voice week after week, many of them I end up on the phone with or meeting in person and people will say, "Oh, I feel like I really know you." And while that's meant really positively and I love that, I don't know that we ever really know anyone especially when we're just seeing one side of them whether it's on a podcast or on Facebook or Instagram.

So I've thought about that in a really humbling way that even the people that I'm not super fond of for whatever reason I don't really know. I don't really know their truth. And ultimately, in the best possible sense, I don't really care because I'm focusing on what I'm doing. But when it does happen to you, which again with Indie Birth growing and all of those things, it does happen to me a lot. And so I just choose to not participate in that and not do it to anyone else because that seems really crazy. The world really wants us to think in this social media way though. The world I think really wants us to hate. And that might sound terrible, but I think we do have a choice there. It reminded me a lot of birth actually as I was thinking about this podcast. So I do have a podcast on creating the birth that you want versus what you don't want. And that's something that comes up all the time whether I'm meeting with someone here or on the phone. And you might have felt that too. Maybe you're a doula or maybe you're planning your own birth, and you found yourself in this space of like, "Well, I don't want that. And I don't want that. And I don't want there." What do you actually want?

People in general tend to not spend very much time on the positive. They tend to not want to talk about how to make things better. They'd rather kind of sit in what is not going well. So the positive side, of course, of social media and these crazy artificial realities we've created is that we do have the opportunity to connect with one another. And, of course, there's many choices there like I've been talking about. If you're Indie

Birth or a bigger group with a message, it's an awesome tool. And really I'll be totally honest. That's been my main struggle with something like Facebook in the last year. Part of me, kind of the personal part of me, would be fine leaving even though I have friends there and all of those kind of things. But professionally, it's a hard call because Facebook has allowed us to spread our message over the years. And that is a really great tool.

So, again, it reminds me of birth. It reminds me of the medical model of birth where often women stick because they feel like, "Well, I kind of can't do better than this." And so I've been really frustrated, as silly as it sounds, with something like Facebook realizing that I'm indebted to this thing. And I have agreed to essentially rules and regulations that Facebook has said, so complaining about them isn't the most helpful thing to do. Really the most helpful thing to do would be to create a new social media platform and/or other opportunities for really awesome, powerful women to connect on a daily basis. And I don't really know what that looks like. But anyway, I'm just saying I recognize the irony in the situation. Like we talk about on other podcasts, if you don't want whatever Mexican food, don't go to a Mexican restaurant. When we're talking about birth, again, it's the same thing. So if I really can't deal with Facebook censoring my photos, then I suppose I should not be on there because it's their gig even though I don't agree with so much of it, even though it's not run in a way that I think is ultimately kind to humanity. These are just choices that we all have to make every day.

But there has been positive change that has come from our involvement on Facebook and many other people's involvement. Certainly not just ours. Many other people doing great work whether it's in birth or other social outreach kind of programs. We really do appreciate the good of social media. So again, I think it's what I started with which is how do we become people that are creating and adding to the good of the world versus adding to kind of the life sucking force that is possible. How do we stay focused on our goals even personally? And how do we deal with criticism? These are all things that are coming up in a really new way. And that's something else that was really sticking out in my mind when I was thinking about this. Of course, you're listening to this, and this is the time that we live in. You and I. All of us. So unless you believe in other lifetimes, which I totally do—but in other words, this is what our experience is in this lifetime. We can't necessarily know how it felt years ago or decades ago to not be involved this way.

Now if you're like me and you're 40 or older, you certainly can remember, at least, a splinter of life where it was not about a computer or a phone. I certainly remember most of my childhood and even early adulthood not being that way. But those days are gone. And I think it's just a really strange reality that we've created that we can feel these pressures and these emotions of mass groups of people and have these other agendas going on in a place where they're accessible to everybody in the world when it never

used to be that way. So if someone had something to say about you decades ago, right? Especially if you were a midwife or whatever, what was the worst anybody could do? Put something in the newspaper. Or if you were planning a free birth years ago, for good and bad, what kind of support would you have had? You would have only had what was in your community. You wouldn't have been able to access the support of people online. You also wouldn't have been able to access, let's say, the horror stories of unassisted birth online. So it's a double-edged sword.

But, again, I think these are pressures, actual emotional stressors that people didn't have to deal with. And we do have to deal with. And unfortunately, unless things change in some sort of really, really crazy way, our kids and our grandchildren will have to take on even more than we do. And yeah. Even just from a stress level, I think that's a pretty incredible difference on the human form, on our physical health, our mental health, our emotional health. These are, again, things that are relatively new in human life. And maybe our evolution will one day reflect it in a positive way. But right now I think it, to me, at least feels really disjointed and really crazy a lot of days.

So another group of women, which I kind of alluded to—and you may be one—who feel this, are people making birth choices that seem unorthodox. And if you're listening to this, chances are you're making an unorthodox birth choice, or you will in the future whether that means a midwife-attended birth or just a homebirth in general or an unassisted birth. But I work with these women too. And that's another way that I'm intercepting this stress because many of these women having their first babies especially have to deal with the disapproval of their choices, if they're lucky, just from family members. But if they're on any kind of online group or platform or social media, they have to deal with all kinds of stuff, all kinds of negativity and stories and people's thoughts. Did you ever stop and think that with something like social media it's just really crazy that people can voice any thought that's in their head? Absolutely any thought. So that's my main reason for avoiding that nowadays is—no offense. But I don't want to read someone's every thought. I don't want to read all these hundreds and thousands of people's every thought or every complaint or every last thing that pops out of their mouth and gets put on Facebook. That, you could say, is the beauty and the curse of social media.

So another truth, at least for me, and this is one I've definitely experienced over the last bunch of years is that if you are representing something real and that means real for you—true for you, if you're saying something that is important and your truth, there are many people that will resonate. And that's a beautiful feeling. As you're listening to this podcast, you're probably one. Because if you're a hater, you're probably not listening to this podcast. Could be wrong. But usually, it doesn't work that way. People are threatened though when you don't feel the way they do. And, again, that's where this ability to comment and say whatever you want gets totally out of control because

everything is a threat to some people. Anything you say that's your own truth can be interpreted as something that's not true about them which, of course—I don't know about you, but that's not at all what I mean. I can only speak what's true for me. I couldn't possibly say that it's true for me. And then if it's not true for you, it means X, Y, or Z. It's not at all.

But what can you possibly do to control these kind of reactions? You really can't. So this podcast is a great example. Even though you probably aren't a hater, you are here listening because you probably want access to some deeper conversations, I'm guessing. Maybe you're part of the Indie Birth community, maybe you're a friend, who knows what your reason. But this is considered a pretty controversial podcast, if you didn't know. I don't have the all start reviews that some of the birth story podcasts have. And that's fine with me. That's for good reason because birth stories aren't really offensive most of the time. And even though I admire the work of all the other podcasters who get up, so to speak, and do this every week—and I had one on my show last week, the lovely Sarah Bivens. She has a wonderful show.

But in general, a lot of the birth podcasts are pretty, pretty tame. Pretty not controversial. And so that's one way I think of dealing with the controversy that surrounds our choices is just to kind of stick with the positive, stick with it, and go with that. And that's a—there's a huge need for positive birth stories. And I think they are doing amazing work. I'm just saying that that's not been my exact experience with this kind of podcast because people are offended often by me speaking my truth. But what can you do? I think the reason for that—and I think the reason for a lot of the negativity and cat fighting and all of this kind of stuff that's going on that's taking people away from their real mission in the world which is my point is unresolved birth trauma.

So I do want to talk about that for a minute just because I think there has to be a reason, right? When people kind of lash out or don't think before they post or, again, you have all these crazy incidents of trolls and home birth haters, as silly as it sounds, they're out there. And what is it really about? How do we stay unemotional, impartial, and continue our work, right? So the worst part about those kind of things is that it definitely can take you out of your center. I've been there many times. And it reminded me of pregnancy and birth once again. So if we get taken out of our center too often, meaning that we're too susceptible for everybody's last thought and opinion then suddenly we don't know anymore who we are, where we came from, where we're going. It's just like birth. Women that look to the outside for absolutely everything, right? Every assessment of fetal wellbeing, every assessment of health, they don't know the answers for themselves, so they need someone else to tell them. Chances are their birth, their mothering will follow suit. And it will be hard for them to access that inner knowing for as long as they look to the outside.

So that, again, is my take on social media and what's going on is we are looking to the outside for everything. It's like oh, here's an article. What do you think? Oh, here's an article about whatever. This midwife is being persecuted. What do you think? And then god help you if you read any of that, right? Oh, this happened. That happened. Oh, this shouldn't have happened. Oh, she should have been licensed. And it's just comment after comment after comment about people that aren't really thinking for themselves and looking to other people to fill that void.

So we were all taught, I think, unless you're really unusual to care what people think of you. We were all taught that. I was taught that. I spent most of my years being a musician. And I was reflecting the other day how little that was actually about me when I did that. It was more about was it acceptable from the outside. Was it good? Was it perfect? What were people's reviews? And musicians and artists do get reviews often publically, so it's built into the system. So all of this keeps us in line. Even something like our discussions around birth on social media, the photos we post, we are kept in line. We're not supposed to do anything too crazy. We're not supposed to be too big, too loud, too ourselves. Looking for approval has been etched into us.

So I found myself feeling that, like I've admitted to many times. And lately, when I feel kind of triggered by something, I turn it around, and I try to have the feeling and the meditation and the mantra of, "I am enough." And I think something as simple as that is beneficial for most of us. Just to not care. We don't need to care. What if we decided not to care? So what if you're planning this home birth and your mother thinks you're crazy, and you have to deal with her comments? What if you change the story? What if you don't have to listen to that? What if you drop that story and you told yourself, "I am enough"? And end of conversation. That's not something you're willing to do anymore. I think it's really normal to have limits on your emotional space. And something like that, the example I just gave, is a great example. So everyone's thoughts and comments about your home birth is not something you have to have space for.

There's a quote out there. I forget who said it. It's terrible. I should look it up. It's not my business what people think of me. Something like that. Right? Who cares? Who cares? It is your choice. It is my choice to give any of that attention. And sometimes it's an unconscious choice. Sometimes we don't even mean to give it attention, but someone makes a comment about the birth plans that we have or tells us a—my friend's baby died in a home birth story. And suddenly, we've taken on that feeling. We don't even realize we've done it, but we've taken it on. That said it can go both ways. People can say stuff that makes you feel really good or a really positive story. And so I guess the real question is how do you stay really unaffected in the middle? Whether it's your birth choices or whether you're a birth worker. How do you stay in your center? How do you stay in your truth and not be affected by positives or negatives?

I think having a focus is an awesome idea. And that's something I've been doing even more. So my family is obviously my focus and the mamas I serve and Indie Birth, obviously, is a huge part of my life. The community that all of you are. It doesn't have to be online. We have many real life people and people that I communicate with and people that I will meet and people in our school. So what is your focus? Where can you turn your focus so that you are loved and supported and you don't need what's on the outside? My suggestion is to use social media as a tool to connect and to speak your truth, but you don't really have to make space for discussion or approval of your choices. You don't really have to make space for debate. And you certainly don't have to enter into any of that yourself. So be a light warrior. I love that phrase. It's a little maybe clichéd here in Sedona where it's used on the regular.

But I like it because the only way to create change is through love and light. It really, really, really is true. I think we can unite in a way that everybody can speak their truth and be happy and not be offended and kind of make these changes. But I don't think it's happening in the mainstream culture. So it's up to people like you and me, I think, to do that. I think we can use our hearts to lead just like we do when we're walking with women. That's the kind of midwife that many women want to be as evident by our school and women that we talk to every day. We don't want to agree to the structure that's been set by the medical world or the patriarchy. We know where this work is in us.

So we can respond in love to everything. And if we can't, like I said, I often can't. Just don't. Just move. Just remove yourself and recognize that the reason people can often be so hurt and triggered is their own birth trauma, and that's really not your business. And it doesn't need to be your business. So keep going. If you're listening to this and this has struck a chord with you, maybe you just think I'm a big complainer about social media, I don't know. But maybe you're an unlicensed midwife, in which case a lot of this will make sense to you. Maybe you are planning a freebirth, or maybe you're just making really radical choices in other places in your life. And you feel like you're not feeling as supported as you want to. There are a million reasons why haters will hate, right? We could go on and on. And I did. I spent a good part of this podcast kind of being down in the dirt of that.

But I could spend hours and so could you, if we wanted to continue talking about why things aren't working. We could go on forever. But don't let them get to you. Don't let it get to you. Don't let this artificial reality get to you. Just carry on. So if that's an artificial reality, and I think it is, we really can build our own reality whether it's in real life or—I think it is possible actually to build something out in the ethers of the Internet with all the connection we have all around the world in a positive way. I really do think it can be done. I'm not quite sure how. But I don't think it has been done yet. And I think that possibility remains there. Get in touch with your own truth and create your reality from

this, and don't allow other people to have a space in that. What is true for you doesn't have to be true for the person next to you.

Striving for community is always helpful. So again, if you can do that in person, working on that, slowly chipping away, or finding ways to connect in a positive way online. Something like a podcast, I think, is an awesome tool. And I'd love to see more people doing birth podcasts or—on any of the topics of course that I love. I think they are great ways to learn and connect. If you put on this podcast, you're limited to my voice and my voice only, right? You don't have to hear all the comments or negativity or discussion surrounding any of these issues. You can simply agree or not agree in your mind and in your heart and move on. So I am interested in taking back control of my life in this way. I hope you are too. I think, again, we can do this in our own communities, and I think we can do this on social media. And we are particularly interested at the moment in creating a different social media platform. So I'll keep you posted on that. And that could be something that really does come to fruition in the near future.

So whether you're birthing or you're a birth worker or just somebody that's curious about this podcast, thank you for listening. It is up to you to remain focused along with me. It is up to you to choose to put your creative life force, the reason you were put on this earth, into the world. We're all human. It's easy to get caught up in all the grit and dirtiness of just the underbelly, so to speak, of these topics because they are so passionate. But there is good work being done in the world, and you can contribute to that. Thanks again for listening. I really appreciate it. I urge you to check out the Indie Birth site for any new information and stay tuned for all the great things we have coming. Thanks so much. Have a great night.

(closing music)