

(introductory music)

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MARYN: Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Maryn here and wanting to talk about baby movement today. So more specifically, we're talking about in utero baby movement. I think the term fetal movement is so clinical, and I have used it and probably will continue to use it in certain situations. But, honestly, when you're talking about your own baby calling it fetal movement seems really weird to me since it's not a fetus. It's a baby to me and my body.

So I'm about 20 weeks, and I've had this podcast kind of deck for a couple of weeks. So I started thinking about it 17, 18 weeks of pregnancy just because that's when the movement starts getting more regular for many women and babies. And it's fun. And it's a huge focus of this part of pregnancy. And really that continues to be a huge focus until the end. Obviously, it's just not that way in the beginning, right? Before you can really feel anything, you have different ways maybe of connecting or maybe assessing growth or not really doing anything. Just kind of hanging out and waiting to feel that first little movement.

And that's definitely how I felt. And it's been so exciting. Every time I do this it feels like the first time in a lot of good ways. And it has been really fun waiting to feel and to identify what's happening in their as best I can. And now, of course, like I said, to continue to feel movement all the time and in different places and using that to connect with the baby. And just overall be reassured that a healthy baby is active. And an active baby is usually healthy. And that's also a nice feeling.

So I know I'm not alone in thinking about things like baby movement. Certainly, people that wouldn't get this whole thing or put on this podcast. But that's not you if you're a dedicated *Taking Back Birth* listener. In general, women care about baby movement whether or not they listen to this podcast. Just get on Google as I often do just kind of to get a lay of the land in mainstream world. And baby movement or fetal movement or search for any of those kind of things will bring up a huge amount of articles and message boards and women wondering, "What's normal? What's not normal? How does it feel to you," which is really kind of cool.

So today I thought we'd focus on this kind of thing. What movement is, what it can feel like, how it changes, and I'd share some of my own stories too. So, of course, pregnancy has various stages of feeling real or perhaps unreal at many times. And movement, by the baby, really does make it real. And it made me think of one of my textbooks, Anne Frye's *Holistic Midwifery*, which, of course, I've had what feels like forever.

And I remember when I first got it and anxiously and excitedly read through it, I was sort of captivated by a beginning chapter that talked about the signs of pregnancy. And, of course, I had already been through some of my own pregnancies. I was a midwifery student, so it wasn't like completely new. But I remember thinking it was just curious that many of the signs of pregnancy that women have or the symptoms we know—I mean if we're connected, I think, that this is real that it means we're pregnant. But kind of to the world, there's no proof yet. Sure. You could get a blood test, and that would maybe be more proof. But even that, like what's the ultimate proof of pregnancy?

It's not even just a growing uterus or missing a period. It's a person moving. That is the ultimate sign of a live pregnancy. And so that's cool, right? It does make pregnancy real, and it got me to thinking that maybe in ancient times before women really had a lot of this knowledge, textbook knowledge about numbers and cycles and/or technology, of course, that feeling a person move inside of your body had to have been just sort of over the top exciting or mysterious to women that didn't have access to the things that we do now. So maybe that sounds crazy, but it just had me thinking that.

If you lived in ancient times, what would you think? I don't know. Did women know enough to know that missing bleeding meant something? I'm sure they did. I'm sure that became a pattern that they were able to figure out. But still, in that interim time between missing a period and feeling a baby move, what do we have? We have little tiny signs or symptoms. Yes. We have a growing uterus. Some women are more in tune with that, and some really aren't. So, again, just reiterating that a baby moving inside of you is a definitive sign of pregnancy. It's no longer a presumptive sign, which was all about that Anne Frye chapter years ago.

So I still feel like it's just such a super cool time. That moment of connection. And for me—for me, not everyone—even hearing a heartbeat before movement, yes, it's exciting. But movement is still, to me, the best. Like it's so visceral. It's life. It's the life force, and you can feel it. And that's just different than especially hearing a heartbeat with a Doppler even though that's super exciting for many people too. I have Doppler issues, so I won't go into that.

But I heard this baby with a fetoscope before I really heart—before I really felt definitive movement. So, again, this is my own experience that hearing it was super exciting and, yes, there is a live baby in there. And everything is good at the moment. But still, movement kind of trumps all. And actually hearing movement is really cool too. And that's something I have noticed that you can definitely do with a fetoscope. So you might be able to hear movement first with a fetoscope before you can even feel it, which is wild, and/or hear a heartbeat. So if you haven't played around with a fetoscope and you're, let's say, 15, 16, 17 weeks pregnant, you may not get a heartbeat yet just because it's hard to hear with a fetoscope, if you're not experienced and sometimes even if you are.

But listen for movement. So to me, and I'll talk more about what it sounds like, movement sounds like thunder. And once a baby is strong enough, then, of course, you're feeling and you're hearing it, so at that point you can kind of put the pieces together in hindsight and say, "Oh, that's what movement sounds like. I did hear that." So that's a really cool thing. You can hear all kinds of sounds, of course, when you're listening. You can hear your own pulse, and that's mostly what we hear with a fetoscope. We're hearing our uterine arteries. We're hearing our aorta. We're hearing the placenta, which is our own heart beat, not the baby's. And so there's lots of maternal pulse, and that's why it can be hard to find a tiny, little baby pulse under there.

But, again, movement can be louder than the baby pulse, so sounding like thunder or just kind of hearing thumps and bumps is really cool. And I know that has definitely given me reassurance because, again, finding a heartbeat isn't always the easiest. But you can usually plunk down a fetoscope at the gestation mentioned and even now, of course, and within seconds hear a baby moving which, again, is so crazy. And we'll talk more about it because you might not even feel that movement. I know hear all kinds of movement in there that I'm not actually feeling in my body yet or even, maybe, just the way the baby is positioned. So it's kind of a cool thing.

But I always forget how cool it is, obviously, since I'm doing this podcast. I've had many pregnancies, and I've never talked about this before because it's also something I think you can take for granted in the best possible way. Having a moving healthy baby is great, and it's pretty normal. And it's expected. And so maybe it loses its luster at certain points just in different pregnancies. We kind of get used to it. But it's still so new in this one that I don't feel that way.

One thing I have noticed is that the new baby movements are so memorable, but they're also not memorable because, hopefully, by the time you birth there's a full term strong baby in there that has completely different movements than you feel at 17 weeks or 20 weeks. And so I've always theorized that when you're left with that great memory of that, that full term pregnancy baby, you're left with those strong kicks and the rolling and the way you can see your belly move, and that if you get pregnant again and you're experiencing it, 17 weeks doesn't really feel anything like that. And so you have to reacquaint yourself with what's normal for what gestation.

So a common thing I know that working with women sometimes comes up is just that, and I'm going to talk more about it. Is how much is my baby moving? Especially at an earlier gestation. And all women, I think, having occasional worry about is it enough. And I'm going to talk about that. But, again, I think the most obvious thing is that if you've had a full term baby moving in your body that you're left with that memory, so that's all. You're left with that memory, which is great. But then you have an 18-week baby or something like that in your body, and it's not the same. And so it can be like reacquainting yourself and wondering, "Is this normal?" But it's just not the same. You can't really compare a one pound baby and the strength of that baby to a seven or eight pound baby. It's just completely different.

So, again, I'm about 20 weeks. And the movement started—I think I felt the first kick from the outside because you feel the little stuff happening in, which I'll talk about. But the first kick from the outside at about 18 weeks ish, maybe a little earlier. Maybe a little later. An old midwives' tale that I've always enjoyed says, "When you feel the first kick from the outside," and if you want to know what that means more I would say if someone else can feel it. Like your partner. They put their hand on your belly enough, and they can finally feel that tiny little tap, which is really all it feels like. It doesn't necessarily feel like a kick, at that point, although it might.

But the old midwives' tale says, "That from that day it's five months to birth." So that's been pretty accurate for my babies down to the actual day. I can think of my fifth baby, Belgium. She wasn't due until May 25th. And on December 18th, I felt her very first kick like very prominently kick from the outside. And I thought, "Huh. Okay. Well, we'll see. That's kind of cool," because that would have her due on May 18th, which is a week earlier than I thought. And sure enough. She was born on May 18th. So everybody's body is different. It's, obviously, not a super scientific formula, but I think there is something cool to it that you're about at that point anyway. 18, 19 weeks at about five months until birth. And that that can just help confirm the date especially if someone was questioning or just wanted confirmation.

So that's about the same that it has been for this baby. And I will say the more babies you've had, I think, the earlier you probably do feel it from the outside. Abs and uterine tone and abdominal tone isn't quite what it was for me 15 years ago. So I'm probably feeling things earlier than a first time mom would.

But when you start feeling these little movements, boy, it can be cool and also kind of crazy. You wonder when you first start feeling, "Is that me? Is that the baby?" Of course, we all have heard the jokes, which are reality. Is that gas? Or is that the baby? Because there really is an overlap, obviously, in your anatomy and in your body where you're feeling these things and a tiny baby. A tiny 16-week baby isn't even a pound. And it's small. So you're not going to feel anything super powerful, at that point.

So for me, when I started feeling movement with this baby, it was kind of in the middle of my body. And I'm saying that because you can feel things off to the side, and often, for me, that'll be more like intestinal. But in the middle of your body, kind of in the middle of your pelvis, your bladder is there but not really that many other things that would make movement. So noticing that and noticing that the movement, again, at like 17—16, 17, 18 weeks feels really internal. And it still does for me. And that's something that just differs from pregnancy to pregnancy, I think, depending on where placentas are and that kind of thing.

So sometimes I would say it feels like swishing or like a fish is kind of swimming or even like a heart thump, which maybe is a weird way of describing it. But I've thought that several times. Just kind of the way your heart will kind of do that little thumpy thing that that's what you're feeling in your body, and that's your baby. What else could it be? Even though it's very easy to question it. And not know. And you don't really know until hindsight. And you look back, and you say, "Oh, I wasn't crazy. That's what it was." And no matter how many babies you have, pretty much you do that every time.

So I was reading online kind of other descriptive words that women have used, and I wanted to share them because I think they're fun. Other people have described that early baby movement like a twitch. I think that one's pretty good. Yeah. The way you can get those body twitches, and baby feeling like that. Gas, of course. Butterflies. Bubbles. Fishy swimming. I think I said that one. Kind of like popcorn. That's another good one. Just like pop, pop. Pop, pop. A flicker. A belly rumbling and just kind of squirming. And I've noticed the squirming too. So those can be really inconspicuous movements. And, again, not everybody has to be this obsessed with baby movement

as I seem to be. I think I think about it all the time and kind of always have it in my brain. Am I feeling anything? And when's the last time I felt anything?

But it's certainly normal and healthy too to just kind of be pregnant and not pay a crazy amount of attention at this gestation and just enjoy being where you're at and then noticing probably when the baby moves straight to kicking. So many women will sort of miss this stage or not know exactly what stage they're in. Many women, especially with their first baby if you were to ask them at this 16, 17 week gestation, "Are you feeling anything," most will say no. Very few will definitively know what they're feeling unless they've had babies. And even then, they're just like, "Well, I think I am but not every day," or it's still just kind of random.

And, again, some women really won't notice anything, but there's no sign of anything being wrong. And then, suddenly, they're 20 weeks, and they say, "I felt a kick." So they move straight from nothing to feeling kicks. So there's so much variation depending on our bodies and how busy we are and what we notice just to name a few. So the very first movement, textbook wise, many of us know are called quickening. I don't love that word. I don't really totally understand it. It just seems like a weird medical word that doesn't apply to a baby, but that's the word. Quickening.

Many midwives, including myself, will just say flutters or insert really whatever. Are you feeling the baby? Are you feeling baby flutters? Or are you feeling the baby move? Who knows? Women will usually come up with their own words. So, again, between 16 to 25 weeks is the range that sort of mainstream world puts on the first baby movement. 25 weeks is pretty late if you ask me, but I'm sure there are women that haven't noticed until then. And everything is fine.

Of course, if it's your first baby, your first pregnancy, then you're probably going to be on the later side although not necessarily. And if you have a lot of body fat, for example, then you might notice later as well just because. There's stuff in between the baby and feeling it from the outside. So that's also a variation that can be completely normal. And, of course, there are no rules. So many first time women, first time moms, notice it early, and there's been moms who have been pregnant many times who don't notice it until later. So who knows?

Some women will notice fetal movement. Ha-ha. As early as 13 weeks. And that's definitely not something I would doubt especially when you have relaxed uterine, like I said, muscles and abdominal muscles and just depending. I think we don't consider the spirit of the baby or anything like that when we talk about this. We act like the baby is

just this funny mechanical creature in there, but certainly there's this personality too. And that carries through the entire pregnancy with movement. Some babies really move a lot. And some are completely normal and healthy, and moms would say they don't move that much. So who knows?

Before 13 weeks, though, I would say is pretty rare. I don't know that I've heard about it. But I'm sure it's out there somewhere. But other things to consider, if someone really feels like they're feeling movement super early is just a unique variation, of course. But maybe there is more than one baby, right? Because that could produce what feels like increased baby movement. Or maybe the dates are off. So not to doubt people, but if someone is questioning their dates and they think they're 12 weeks, but they're feeling movement that they can really identify, what if they're more like 16 weeks, right? What if they're a month off?

So it's not a be all and end all like anything in pregnancy, but we can get clues. So fetal movement can be used as a clue, if someone really doesn't know their dates. And it has to be taken with a grain of salt, for all these reasons, but it can be helpful. So baby movement is great because it means the baby is growing and developing and getting stronger. The early movement is pretty sporadic. So by early, I'm talking about the movement you can feel, and that is around 16 or 17 weeks probably on average.

But you may not feel it every day. So it's, again, sort of a funny time. Unless you are really focused or put a time aside to do so, and even then it's not like a 28-week baby moving or a 38-week baby moving. So it's easy to be unsure or, like I said, skip a day that you don't notice anything. And I would not say that that is weird. I've never had someone that really had anything horrible happen in that regard when they're not feeling movement for a day. It's usually nothing. It's just they're not feeling it. And babies don't have quite the same schedule at that gestation as they do later which I'll talk about.

So allegedly, according to something I read, babies even at this early gestation move up to 50 times an hour. And they're usually asleep like 90% of the time which also was kind of new to me. I felt surprised by that. And at first, I was like, "No. This baby does not move 50 times an hour." But then since I had that little factoid in my brain and I started to pay more attention, I realized it's probably not that far from the truth. Because like I said, even if you listen with a fetoscope, you'll hear in a minute of listening, you might hear six movements that you don't feel. So feeling or having a baby move 50 times in an hour isn't something you're going to feel 50 times. But I guess they've probably done that kind of research by ultrasound unfortunately for the poor baby or those poor babies who are watched by ultrasound.

But I believe it now. I really don't think that's unreasonable. It's just we're not feeling most of the movements. And then the other side of that was that the babies are asleep like 90% of the time. And I do believe that too because I think that's something that they've seen by ultrasound and makes sense. Because think of the rapid growth and development these creatures are going through, and it makes sense. So I've always assumed when you're feeling movement it's because baby is awake. And often when they're sleep especially later gestation, they don't move as much. But apparently, that's not true. That babies are moving kind of all the time even when they're sleeping. And they're sleeping a lot.

Let's see. So we're not feeling a baby move every day at the early gestations. But by the time where even where I am now about 20 weeks feeling it every day several times a day seems pretty normal. Again, if that's where you're at. Some women will just feel it later. But by 28 weeks, by 28, sort of everyone has agreed that feeling regular baby movement is desirable and good. And that's where the kick counts come in.

So kick counts can be very stressful for some people, but I'll just kind of go through it anyway because it might be helpful to some other people. But kick counts. I don't know sort of who came up with that. But it was developed as a way to assess and, again, this is so variable. But assess the health of babies in utero and movement being a strong indicator of health. Someone figured if they got the moms to count movement every day then they, as the doctor or practitioner, would know everything is probably good. And I'm not sure that anybody cared about the mom also then feeling reassured that things are good.

Because really the kick counts can be largely for a practitioner to write down. Are you doing your kick counts? Yes or no? And charting that just to note that the mom is doing them. But, obviously, it's also for the mom if she chooses to. And I don't feel—I mean I guess I do. But I don't they're a bad thing. I mean paying attention to your baby moving is normal. And some women don't. And that's for other various reasons. Maybe they're distracted. Maybe they're stressed. Maybe they're busy. And so making a dedicated time to connect with the baby and feel movement is good whether you want to call it a kick count or not. And it doesn't have to be scary and clinical. If you are going to do a proper kick count, you wouldn't begin that until 28 weeks. So there's no point in doing a kick count before because movement is too variable.

And, I mean, sort of the crude and harsh truth is there's not a whole lot to do with a baby that might not be well or moving, right? At 20 weeks or 21 weeks. What are we going

to do? That baby can't live outside of a mother. So by 28 weeks, theoretically, if a baby was struggling with being in utero for some reason, then we might know based on the lack of movements and be able to help.

But movement or movement counts start at 28 weeks about. And the way I was taught to do them—and there's many ways that you can read. So I guess you can pick. But I like the way that I do it because it makes the most sense to me which is pick the time that the baby is the most active. So for many women, that's after a meal. After dinner is a great time. And this is something women have to pay attention to already. They have to notice that there is a time per day that the baby is sort of consistently active. Some babies are active all day, and it sort of doesn't matter what you pick. But you want to pick a time the baby is actually moving, or it defeats the purpose of the kick count.

And you want to time how long it takes to get ten movements. So any sort of movement. A roll. A punch. A jab. A kick. A poke, whatever. Ten movements. How long does it take? With a normal baby, a health baby at 28 weeks, probably only takes a couple of minutes on average. So that's all. That's all you do. You get to know what's normal for your baby. Two minutes. Three minutes. Whatever. And the point is, theoretically, if something was off with the baby and one day it took you 20 minutes to get those same ten movements, then you might be alerted to something being wrong. And so I do believe that that helps some women and some babies. I do believe that has saved some babies from stillbirth or who knows what.

But it can be stressful to other women. And the connecting part to me is the most important thing. So if you're learning to connect with your baby every day, a little bit of time, then my sense is you would know if something is wrong. And you can talk to your baby. As they mature in the womb, you can literally talk to them and poke them and ask for a response. And so there's all kinds of ways of getting communication from a baby that's in utero. However, if you want to or are told, I guess, to resort to kick counts for someone else's benefit or for your own, then that's another way to do it.

So the kick count kind of leads into the fact that fetal movement can be worrisome as much of pregnancy can be. And so it's just another reason, I think, to have good information and to tune in and to connect with your baby and not take any of this as gospel. Babies move at different rates, at different times. And we all just kind of have to get to know what that means for our baby although there are tools like kick counts to kind of help us through and give us guidelines. In the end, I would say largely nobody knows. Nobody could say exactly what should happen or what shouldn't happen.

So I wanted to talk a little bit about early baby movement because I thought this was so cool. I'm not a huge fetal development buff, to be honest. It sort of stresses me out in a way when I'm pregnant at least to think of the absolute incredibleness of embryo, right? Becoming a fetus. And a fetus becoming a little baby. There's a lot that's going on in there, so it's not helpful to everyone to think about how that happens because, again, there's nothing we can do. And that's also really cool. We don't need to think to grow a baby. We don't need to tell our cells or their cells what to do.

But in any case, early baby movement starts at 6 weeks, right? So you're barely pregnant. And I thought that was just so cool to realize that even though it's not like—I mean it is a person. I'm not discounting the personness of this embryo. But I mean if you look at it, right? In the textbook. A six-week old embryo doesn't even have arms or legs, right? They're just kind of a shape with little tiny protrusions for the limbs, for example.

But a six-week old embryo can arch its back. How cool is that? But, of course, we can't feel it. I mean that would be insane if you could. And maybe we would be insane if we could feel such things. By seven weeks, the embryo can move arms and legs or whatever will become arms and legs. On ultrasound, we see that. And the movement from what I gather is pretty random. I'm sure it has a reason. But in other words, babies don't become coordinated in their movement until later. So at first, the limbs just move kind of together. And then, eventually, we go into separate movements of separate arms and legs.

And then by about ten weeks, a baby as many of us know, we see these ultrasound photos, right? Online or wherever. A baby can stretch and yawn. So we don't think of those kind of things as being movement, but, of course, they are. This is already a functioning person that can move around and stretch and yawn. And we know by 11 weeks, I'm sure it's even sooner really, babies can suck their own fingers. So they have the capacity to coordinate opening their mouth and inserting fingers, which is really fantastic coordination.

So by the time this quickening happens, the fetus really is moving joints and may move in response to being touched, which is also cool. Becomes just more reactive to the environment. And I'm not surprised by that although I don't know that I knew factually that that happened so early. But I feel like even my baby at 20 weeks, if I kind of poke him around, he'll move. So he definitely responds to being touched which is cool.

By about week 21, there is more regular movement, and the baby may follow a circadian rhythm. Man. I really can't talk today. Must be a pregnancy brain thing. So that's cool. Again, I don't know that we can really observe the circadian rhythm necessarily as the mom because, again, we're feeling movement a lot when the baby is sleeping. So even right now I'm feeling kind of little things. And if I go with the fact that the baby is sleeping 90% of the time, I don't really know what the circadian rhythm is that he's following. But I think it's a cool thing and, obviously, it's not just a matter of motor development we're talking about. It's because there's major brain development, obviously, that a baby can start to coordinate these things.

So allegedly, babies, at this gestation even where I am, week 20, 21, are most active from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and then again 7:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. So who knows if that's actually true? And then they start having some reflexes by week 24. So more indication of instinctual movement there. So by about week 28, the movement is pretty regular on average, and this is where the kick counts come in. I already went in there. They talk about kick counts online a lot. So you could have fun with that.

A lot of it talks about people being high risk and doing kick counts. I don't really know that it has to be that. Sure. But really anyone can do them for all the reasons we discussed. The most common way that I've read of doing them is different than what I explained to you which is going for ten movements in two hours. So that seems not very much to me. So, again, I mean how can anyone say. It's really what's normal for your baby. If your baby moves ten times in two hours, and that's normal for you, then that's great. I don't think that would be normal for other situations, but it's so variable.

So one thing that makes this so variable is it really depends how much we're paying attention. And I really want to just say that again. And it's not like a judgment thing if you're not noticing a lot of movement or maybe you have a really busy life, and you're working 12 hours a day or whatever it is. The busier you are the more your attention is outside of your body, for better or for worse, you won't notice as much movement. I think that is fact. And I definitely, definitely know that to be true for me. Maybe it's like half a day that I'm really busy, or I'm driving to a birth, and I'm at a birth. And I'll kind of get to the end of this huge chunk of business and say, "I haven't felt the baby move in awhile."

And at first, I mean pregnancies ago, that used to freak me out a little bit. And I'd have to like, "Oh, gee. Let me pay attention." And it's good to pay attention. But now I know it's so a pattern. It's so a pattern just being busy. Just focusing your energy on anything else, on anyone else means that especially in those early weeks you're not

going to notice. It's just not enough to get imprinted on your brain, at least consciously. And I think that can totally be for the end of pregnancy. I've worked with many women who get worried here or there at the end and sure. You always want to check it out if need be or tell someone and get evaluated. But most of the time, like more than 90% of the time, it's just these women are busy, and they're not paying good attention.

So that's where, again, the kick count idea can be helpful. So you can take that and make it what it is for you. But just that time of connection. So the movement definitely changes, like we've said. Of course, we go from popcorn pops to feeling like gas to full on kicks and jabs where you can see limbs protruding through your belly almost. Maybe an elbow or a heel. You can kind of feel hands often poking down, if your baby is head down into your cervix. You might feel the head actually kind of rolling around as the baby maneuvers that. Rolling is a very common way of describing later fetal movement, not just kicks and punches. Some babies are just more active than others. I've said that a couple times.

I know my second baby, my first boy, was super active. And I remember feeling him at 14 weeks, which now sounds a little crazy. But I was very sure of it, and I'm not—I'm not unsure in hindsight. He is a very active kid even now. So I remember feeling him at 14 weeks. And, honestly, I don't remember a minute of my pregnancy where I wasn't feeling him move. I was never, ever worried. There was never a gap in time. So that's certainly the way some pregnancies go. And then my next son, who is our fourth baby, really didn't move a lot at all in utero. And I remember the movements not even feeling early movements. I remember just kind of going right to kicking, which is normal. But he just wasn't the most active baby. He really just wasn't.

And personality wise, I'd say he's an active kid now. But he's a more subdued personality, so I could say that that is something to do with it. It did bother me, at one point in the pregnancy, just energetically I felt like, "What is up with this baby? He's just not like the others. And maybe I'll get an ultrasound." And so I went through kind of this internal journey. And I didn't. I didn't end up getting an ultrasound. I made peace with just him being the way he was and really what was there to do about it anyway.

So I've experienced both sides of the spectrum in pregnancy. And of course, everywhere in between. Many of my other pregnancies—although I would say they've all been normal as far as movement, I've noticed a pattern sometimes more with some babies than others. Like a really strong sleeping pattern. Or Deva, who is my last pregnancy before this one, she really did sleep at night. Like I didn't really feel her

move a lot at night even when I poked and prodded her, which I often felt horrible about. But I might do anyway just to get the peace of mind. She just really did sleep at night.

So again, so much variation and how can we really compare when our bodies are different and our lives are different and these babies are different and different number of pregnancies. So, again, although it's a fun topic to talk about and that's what women love to do, there really isn't a formula or a way to know what exactly should be happening. So I've mentioned a fetoscope, and I think that's a great tool for someone that might get more worried. And I think it's a great tool. Like there is no reason every woman shouldn't have a fetoscope and know how to use it. You can use it in the way you want to use it. You don't even have to listen and count for a heartbeat, for example. I don't necessarily even enjoy that with this pregnancy. I don't necessarily need to hear his heart. The movement is enough for me.

And if I have a gap of time where I feel like maybe I'm not feeling as much movement as I mentioned, I might just listen for movement, and I'll always hear within a couple of seconds. So I think a fetoscope is a great tool. Not from a fearful perspective but just as a powerful I own my pregnancy perspective. And if I'm worried or even if I'm not worried, if I just want to hear my baby or connect with my baby in that way, I don't need anyone else to do that for me. I don't need to go anywhere and ask someone else.

So, of course though, there is lots of anxiety and worriness and disconnection that we can have just in a normal pregnancy about a baby not moving. And some of that is just the normal process, I think, of being pregnant, and a lot of it is what we're told, right? Like we've talked about. Babies should move this much. And then some of it is trauma for a lot of people like having had a loss or maybe a baby that was stillborn. So it's not to discount that that can be worrisome. And that once in awhile it is an issue in a very, very rare situation, a loss of movement really can be an indicator that a baby is not doing okay.

And you don't wish that on anyone because those are hard calls to make too, and sometimes they are so time sensitive. And sometimes there's nothing that really could have been done. And sometimes there is. And sometimes we really can sort of rescue a baby from the uterus that isn't moving well. And that baby is probably better on the outside.

So there's decreased movement which we most often connect with that kind of anxiety or loss perhaps. But then, of course, there's increased movement, which I feel like is less rare. Maybe it's not. Maybe it's just less rare to me. But moms reporting that the

movement is sort of over the top disturbing. And, again, how do we assess that? What's normal already for this baby? And did she eat something weird? Or is she really anxious? Or what's going on here? But in general, if someone were to be very concerned with increased movement then that is also something that could be checked out and occasionally babies can be struggling and really do a last bunch of violent movements or perhaps be having a seizure or something like that. So, again, it's not a definitive this is happening kind of thing but just on both sides of the coin.

Reduced movement. Increased movement. From what I read online, I was sort of surprised by this, but once source said that increased movement can be associated with maternal anxiety. So, again, that's not to discount when you think something is really wrong, but I agree with checking ourselves first because movement, again, is such a—it's such a worrisome topic sometimes. It's really great and fun, but then it's also what most women go to when they feel like something is wrong. Because what other things do they have? Most women aren't listening for a heart beat with a fetoscope at home, so that's all they have to go on.

But I think checking our own anxiety around this issue—on any issue really relating to our babies is good and helpful and, like I said, I've done that many times wondering, "Oh, is he moving? What did I miss?" And then, "Oh, wait. I was busy. Okay." Deep breath. Nothing is wrong. This is what's happening. And then anxiety. That's certainly a form of anxiety and any other form of anxiety may be about life or job or money or the baby, whatever it is, just kind of taking a moment to come back to center and be calm and communicate with this baby. We really are—truly we are connected, so it's silly to think that our emotions would be separate from our babies and vice versa. And that our emotions wouldn't influence what might be going on with the baby.

So, again, it's not something that you want to ignore, if you feel like movement is not normal for your baby or there's something not reassuring. But in most cases, in most cases, everything is fine. And we're just reacting to something perhaps else. In general, though, of course, an active baby is a healthy baby, and it is reassuring. There is so much normal. So much variation. And like any of these topics, there is no guarantee of what to do to ensure A, B, or C. All we can do is tune into our own babies and our own bodies and have fun thinking about these things and decide for ourselves what is normal.

And if it's not, then we still can't ask anyone. We just have to kind of go seek help for whatever that is. So that's my spiel on baby movement. I hope enjoyed it. I'm continuing to think about that and notice what this baby is up to since this baby has

given me the last couple podcast ideas, which is fun. We'll see what comes up next. All right. Have a great day. Check out the Indie Birth site for new content. We have a retreat coming up in May 2019. That's indiebirthretreat.org.

And I don't say it very often because I think it gets annoying to have these long blabs at the end of podcasts but just because I haven't in awhile. If you would love to leave us a review on iTunes that's positive, that's really appreciated. There is more and more birth podcasts every day, and it's not a competition. But it's always great to have new listeners and kind of expose them to this community and get to know all of you. And the reviews really do help people do that. iTunes doesn't keep all of the podcasts, so it's just a smattering up there. So we always appreciate that since we're doing this for free, and we're not getting money for ads or for sponsorship or anything else. We're really just doing this out of the goodness of our hearts in hopes that you'll spread the knowledge. Have a great day.

(closing music)